

NITC Request for Proposals

For more information, visit: <http://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/>

1 Overview

The **National Institute for Transportation and Communities**, or NITC, is a program of the [Transportation Research and Education Center](#), or **TREC**, at Portland State University. NITC is the U.S. Department of Transportation's national center for livable communities and one of five U.S. DOT national university transportation centers.

The NITC program is a [Portland State](#)-led partnership with the [University of Oregon](#), [Oregon Institute of Technology](#), [University of Utah](#) and [University of South Florida](#). We pursue our theme – safe, healthy and sustainable transportation choices to foster livable communities – through research, education and technology transfer.

NITC is focused on contributing to transportation projects that support innovations in:

livability, incorporating safety and environmental sustainability

We will award at least \$600,000 to research and technology transfer projects that support NITC's theme. Projects should range from \$30,000 to \$150,000. Projects must focus on research. All projects submitted for this RFP will undergo peer review by two academics and one practitioner as outlined in section 5.1. The proposals will also be scored by NITC staff based on programmatic criteria outlined in section 5.2. The NITC executive committee will review the ranked projects and approve awards. All awards require a 1:1.2 non-federal match in the form of cash or in-kind services from project partners—to include universities, transportation and other public agencies, industry, and nonprofit organizations. Projects awarded under this RFP may start as soon as August 1, 2016 and must be completed by December 31, 2017, including the final report.

Separate RFPs will be released in 2016 for the doctoral dissertation and small starts programs.

Successful research proposals will fit the NITC theme, linking to articulated USDOT priorities, specifically livability, environmental sustainability and safety. Technology transfer proposals should support the application of transportation research to practice, including dissemination of research results, continuing education, and training.

1.1 Key dates

March 2016	Abstracts due March 15
April 2016	Proposals due April 15
May 2016	Peer Reviews
June-July 2016	Project selection, Awards and Task Orders
August 2016	Projects begin

1.2 What's New in this RFP

- Technology transfer and education projects are no longer eligible for the general research fund. Information on these funding programs can be found on the [NITC website](#).
- Non-NITC partners including universities and private consultants may be included in the proposal. If PIs anticipate the **sub-consultant role will be 20% or more** of the budget, justification and budget details must be submitted to Susan Peithman (peithman@pdx.edu) at least two weeks before the proposal deadline for approval by the executive committee. Approval is granted when it is determined that success of the project requires significant involvement (ie - 20% or more of the budget) from the sub-consultant.

2 Theme

The NITC theme connects directly with the U.S. DOT strategic goal of livability, incorporating safety and environmental sustainability. All proposals must be consistent with this theme, as defined below:

- **Improve health and safety for all users:** Research should address both a key outcome of a livable community—improved physical and mental health—and an essential input—a safe transportation system. Safety research should focus on understanding how design, operations and users affect safety outcomes. It embraces the *U.S. DOT Strategic Plan's* strategy to “increase safe, convenient, and attractive facilities for non-motorists.”
- **Increase the efficiency and understanding of bicycle, pedestrian and transit modes:** Research that examines the behavioral decisions behind walking, bicycling, and transit use. An emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach—that includes urban planning and design, economics, modeling, and engineering—is critical in including and integrating non-auto modes and transit. This research complements the *U.S. DOT Strategic Plan's* Livable Communities strategies for improved public transit experience and improving networks to integrate pedestrians and bicycles.
- **Make the best use of data, performance measures, analytical tools and new technologies:** MAP-21's Declaration of Policy states that “Performance management will transform the Federal-aid highway program and provide a means to the most efficient investment.” In support of this goal, projects should aim to fill the gap and lead development in multimodal performance metrics, data and tools that will allow decision makers to create more livable transportation systems.
- **Integrate multimodal transportation and land use:** *U.S. DOT's Strategic Plan* clearly outlines a coordinated approach to livable communities that integrates transportation and housing while considering environmental concerns. NITC projects should focus on the nexus of multimodal transportation (passenger and freight) and land use that is the heart of creating sustainable, prosperous and safe communities.
- **Take long-term action on transportation emissions and climate change:** The *U.S. DOT Strategic Plan* recognizes the need to transform our transportation system into one that burns less oil and emits less carbon, another key aspect of livable communities. Recognizing the importance of both mitigating and adapting to climate change, projects should focus on modeling and program evaluation of new technologies (electric/alternatively-fueled vehicles and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)), infrastructure, demand management and land use strategies.

3 Priorities

All proposals must contribute to the NITC theme of livability, incorporating safety and environmental sustainability as detailed in Section 2. Research projects must focus on transportation. In carrying out this

theme, NITC emphasizes meaningful engagement of citizens and a focus on equity and diversity. Additional consideration will be given to projects that emphasize equity and diversity in their research and partnerships. If you have any questions about whether your proposal topic is appropriate, please contact your university's Executive Committee member or NITC staff in advance.

NITC is looking for research proposals that show strong potential to move transportation research into practice, inform other researchers, shape national and international conversations on transportation research, and respond to the needs of practitioners and policymakers. Research grants typically range between \$30,000 to \$150,000 per project. Priority is given to projects that are collaborative, multi-disciplinary, multi-campus and support the development of untenured-tenure-track transportation faculty.

4 Eligibility

Faculty members and research faculty must be from Portland State University, the University of Oregon, the Oregon Institute of Technology, the University of South Florida, or the University of Utah to be eligible to serve as PIs and may submit proposals.

Proposals may include multiple investigators, and collaborative projects across disciplinary and campus boundaries are encouraged. Proposals including multiple investigators must identify one lead PI contact responsible for reporting and associated administrative tasks. PIs may submit more than one proposal. NITC Executive Committee members are allowed to submit proposals, but are not allowed to be involved during deliberations and decisions related to their proposals.

5 Criteria for Evaluation

All proposals will be reviewed externally by at least three peer-reviewers, including at least one practitioner from the public or private sector. Proposals are also scored by NITC staff using the programmatic criteria (Section 5.2). The external peer-review and programmatic numerical scores are then used in the proposal selection process. The Executive Committee selects the final slate of proposals via consensus. Executive Committee members with conflicts of interest around specific projects will excuse themselves from discussions that could influence funding outcomes from which they would benefit.

5.1 Peer Review Criteria

Peer reviews are single-blind and reviewers will remain anonymous. Reviewers are selected from universities, local, regional, and national agencies, private sector practitioners, and other university transportation centers. An established procedure for reviewer conflict of interest is followed. Peer-reviewers assess the proposals based on intellectual merit, broader impacts, relevance to NITC's theme and the national transportation research agenda. The specific peer-review criteria include:

- **Intellectual merit.** What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity? How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?
- **Broad Impacts.** Does the proposed activity have broad impacts? How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender,

ethnicity, disability, geographic, modal, etc.)? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research, education and technology transfer, such as partnerships or activities beyond the funded project that will live on past the life of the specific project and further NITC's objectives? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?

- **Budget.** Is the project budget reasonable given the tasks proposed?
- **Overall Rating.**
 - Excellent: Outstanding proposal in all respects; deserves highest priority for support
 - Very Good: High quality in nearly all respects; should be supported if at all possible
 - Good: A quality proposal worthy of support
 - Fair: Proposal lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed
 - Poor: Proposal has serious deficiencies

5.2 Programmatic Criteria

Each proposal is also scored by NITC staff using programmatic criteria. These criteria are:

- **Does the proposal fit the NITC theme?** See Section 2 for a description of the theme.
- **To what extent is transportation the focus?** Priority is given to projects where primary focus is on transportation.
- **To what extent does the proposal support and mentor students?** Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate meaningful student involvement in the project. Examples include being research assistants, co-authoring publications, and making presentations.
- **Does the proposal support untenured tenure track (junior) faculty?** Additional priority will be given to core transportation junior faculty. For example, faculty who teach transportation classes and/or whose research agenda focuses on transportation.
- **To what extent does the proposal leverage matching funds?** Priority will be given to external cash match and active in-kind match (e.g., active participation of partners in the research project).
- **To what extent does this project support substantive and meaningful collaboration?** Collaboration may include more than one discipline; external agency, nonprofits, private industry, or other state/country, etc. Priority will be given to demonstrated collaboration. Collaborative proposals should clearly describe the structure of the collaboration, the management and decision-making process, and justify the need for collaboration on the proposed research.
- **To what extent does the project support multi-disciplinary and/or multi-campus collaboration?** Priority is given to projects that demonstrate collaboration such as co-PIs from other campuses and disciplines.
- **Is the research relevant nationally?** Priority is given to projects that involve national data sets or multiple sites. PIs need to demonstrate relevance of research at a national level.
- **Does the proposal support equity and diversity?** Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate the potential to increase access to resources and opportunities for historically underserved populations.
- **What is the PIs past performance on other UTC projects (on time reporting, etc.), likelihood of successful completion, potential for technology transfer?** NITC will not accept proposals from PIs or co-PIs with incomplete projects and outstanding final reports.

6 Project Requirements

PIs will be asked to provide bi-annual progress reports and performance metrics related to their funded research for federal reporting. Adequate progress and performance on previously funded research is an

overriding consideration for the funding of future grants, including this RFP. Those that have not submitted progress reports or final reports will not be considered for funding and risk having funds withheld from current grants. Similar restrictions will apply to any future NITC funding opportunities.

6.1 Progress Reports

Bi-annual progress reports are required according to NITC's funding requirements. These reports will support NITC's federal reporting responsibilities. Reports will be submitted online and include: accomplishments, dissemination activities, products (e.g. submitted publications, conference presentations, etc.), impact of the project, and changes/problems. As part of each progress report, we will also require information regarding undergraduate and graduate students participating in the research, as well as information relating to publications and presentations presented at academic/professional meetings resulting from the funded research.

6.2 Publications and Presentations

PIs and students who are funded by NITC will be expected to prepare articles based on research findings for publication in refereed journals and make presentations at national conferences. Through these venues, researchers and students will receive additional peer-review feedback on their work and should incorporate this into their projects. Electronic copies of all papers submitted to journals or conferences that are based on the project research should be provided to NITC. NITC support should be acknowledged in all work that results from NITC funding. Student contributions to research should be acknowledged in publications via acknowledgement, footnote or co-authorship. Travel funds in the amount of \$2500 per proposal will be provided by NITC for sharing and presenting results at conferences or similar opportunities. PIs are also expected to present their work in a NITC webinar, or at the Transportation and Communities Summit to ensure that results are shared with a broader audience.

6.3 Final Reports/Products

Research projects will produce a final report that will be peer-reviewed externally. For proposals for this RFP, PIs should plan on submitting a draft report conforming to style guidelines (templates will be available on the NITC website) no later than one month prior to the project end date. Final invoices will only be paid once the draft report is submitted. The report should document the research project in total, including a complete description of the problem, objectives, approach, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The report should document all data gathered, analyses performed, and results achieved.

The draft report will be peer-reviewed. We will send the draft research report to at least two peer-reviewers. As applicable, at least one representative of the matching/partner entity will be asked to provide a review. PIs are responsible for incorporating peer-review comments into the final report. Before publishing, final reports that incorporate peer review comments will be reviewed by an editor to ensure standard formatting requirements are met. When a report is produced as part of a joint effort, NITC will work with the matching/sponsoring entity to ensure that one report will meet the requirements of all partners. All final reports will be produced as part of a numbered report series, and will include the OST-R disclaimer and NITC funding attribution. All final reports will be posted online. More details about project requirements can be found in the "[*Principal Investigator's Guide to Sponsored Activities*](#)" posted online.

7 Budget

Applicants must use the NITC Budget Form. Proposal budgets should be conservative and cost-effective, and should be primarily directed at new and original work. Funds should be spent in a manner that provides publishable results. In general, faculty salary (summer or academic year), student support, and tuition/fee reimbursement are allowable expenses. An appropriate amount of funding for travel for data collection purposes and materials and supplies may be included, provided that they are a direct expense related to completing the work.

Please provide a narrative of how these research travel funds are planned to be used. The project budget should not include travel funds to present project results at conferences. Instead, each funded proposal will be awarded a separate travel budget of \$2,500. This travel budget will be administered separately by their home institution and will be available to PIs to support presentations of project results.

Funding for students is expected in all projects, such as research assistant tuition and salary. Federal indirect costs (overhead) specific to each NITC university and OPE (fringe benefits) should also be included in the budget. *Tuition charges are not subject to indirect costs.*

Equipment purchases (equipment is generally defined as items over \$5,000) and international travel are not permitted unless specific justification is provided and *prior* approval is obtained from NITC and the US DOT. Budget for expenses normally considered part of university F&A (phones, facilities, regular office supplies, computers, etc.) should not be included.

Non-NITC partners including universities and private consultants may be included in the proposal. If PIs anticipate the **sub-consultant role will be 20% or more** of the budget, justification and budget details must be submitted to Susan Peithman (peithman@pdx.edu) at least two weeks before the proposal deadline for approval by the executive committee. Approval is granted when it is determined that success of the project requires significant involvement (ie - 20% or more of the budget) from the sub-consultant.

Funding for salary that goes beyond normal academic or summer compensation will not be allowed. In the case of joint projects with faculty from other NITC universities, the second university activity should be budgeted as a separate budget for that university. In addition:

- Projects should be budgeted to begin on or after August 1st, 2016 and completed by December 31st, 2017. Please plan to submit the draft final report no later than one month prior to the project end date.
- New awards to prior investigators will depend on successful completion of previously-funded projects and timeliness of research progress and reporting.
- NITC reserves the right to request reductions or other changes to budgets of submitted proposals. Budgets should be justified and cost-effective, and should follow all budget guidelines for indirect cost rates, allowable expenditures, etc.
- Awards are cost-reimbursable.

7.1 Matching Funds

All awards require 120% match. In addition, match funding is a good indication of local partner commitment to the project and will be considered in the programmatic review. Some federal funds will qualify as match: specifically funds under U.S.C. Title 23, Sections 503, 504(b), or 505, which refer to technology deployment, local technical assistance, state planning and research (SPR) programs and national cooperative highway research program (NCHRP) managed by the Transportation Research Board. PIs should use the Budget Form to indicate match commitment. Letters of intent or other

documentation of match commitment, signed by an institutional official authorized to obligate cost share, must be included with the Proposal Form; *awards will not be finalized without confirmation of the match commitment*. Sample match commitment letters can be found on the NITC website. NITC follows the rules set forth in OMB Circular A-110 (www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a110/a110.html#23) for the use of in-kind and cash contributions as matching funds. The start date of matching funds is October 1st, 2013.

8 How to Apply

8.1 Project Abstracts

All proposers must first submit a proposal abstract online (<http://ppms.otrec.us/>). The abstract should consist of 1-2 paragraphs describing the project objectives and proposed methods. The abstract should also briefly explain how it fits the NITC theme. NITC will only accept proposals for projects for which the PI has submitted an abstract online. The abstract is used for two purposes: to make sure that the project fits the NITC theme, and to aid staff in identifying potential peer reviewers. A PI may decide for other reasons not to submit a proposal after submitting an abstract. However, a PI may not submit a proposal for which an abstract was not submitted. Abstracts are due **March 15, 2016 at 5:00 PM PDT**.

8.2 Project Proposals and Budgets

All forms can be found on the NITC website (<http://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/for-researchers>). Complete the **proposal form** as a PDF and **budget form** as an Excel spreadsheet and submit online (<http://ppms.otrec.us/>). Proposals are typically 10 to 12 pages long. Do not use prior year forms. **Proposals are due April 15, 2016 at 5:00 PM PDT**. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered.

Proposals and budgets must be approved by the PI's home university research office prior to submission and ***will not be considered without their approval***. PIs must follow their university's requirements for approval of proposals, including match commitment and use of human subjects (if applicable). Further questions regarding university approval should be directed to the home university research administration office or the home university Executive Committee member:

- **OR Tech:** Office of Strategic Partnerships: <http://www.oit.edu/faculty-staff/sponsored-projects-grants-administration>
Preliminary approval form: <http://www.oit.edu/docs/default-source/spa/proposal-approval-form.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
- **PSU:** Proposal Internal Approval Form (PIAF): <https://sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/research/lifecycle/proposal/psu-proposal-approval>
Note that an additional NITC-specific form will also be required and sent to PIs after they submit their projects abstracts.
- **UO:** Apply through Electronic Proposal Clearance System (E-PCS) and Office of Research Services and Administration: <http://orsa.uoregon.edu/>
- **USF:** Division of Sponsored Research: <http://www.research.usf.edu/dsr/sponsored-research.asp>
- **UU:** UU Office of Sponsored Project: <http://www.osp.utah.edu/>

9 Contact Information

For questions about research proposals, please contact Susan Peithman, Research and Education Program Administrator, 503-725-2838, peithman@pdx.edu. Each campus has a representative on NITC's Executive Committee who can discuss the process:

- Marc Schlossberg, University of Oregon, 541-346-2046, schlossb@uoregon.edu
- Keith Bartholomew, University of Utah, 801-585-8944, bartholomew@arch.utah.edu
- Roger Lindgren, Oregon Institute of Technology, 541-885-1947, roger.lindgren@oit.edu
- Jenny Liu, Portland State University, 503-725-4049, jenny.liu@pdx.edu
- Joel Volinski, University of South Florida, 813-974-9847 volinski@cutr.usf.edu

For other questions, please contact Hau Hagedorn, TREC Associate Director, 503-725-2833, hagedorn@pdx.edu.

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