School has started after a very busy summer break. Looking back at the past year, our Transportation Research Group continues to grow and advance to a higher level.

Our graduate students have once again won the first (Xuan Wang) and second (Patrick Hu) places for the best student papers at the ITE Intermountain Section. Xuan Wang, a Ph.D. candidate was awarded by ITE District 6 for the 2008 Van Wagoner Award. This award is given annually to a District 6 member for the best paper published in the ITE Journal. Our ITE student chapter (UNITE) won $1,000 for a trip generation data collection fund from ITE’s District 6. Six group members attended the TRB annual meeting in January in Washington D.C. A total of five technical papers were presented at the meeting.

The economic downturn has created many challenges to our program, but I am confident that we will overcome the difficulties because of our dedicated members and continued support from many agencies and alumni. Particularly, I’d like to express my gratitude for NDOT, and both RTCs in the north and south.

I am looking forward to another new exciting and productive academic year!

Tian’s Message

Special points of interest:

* The Transportation Research Group at UNR is leading a multi-disciplinary team on conducting a research project for NDOT and RTC on new transportation financing alternatives. The team involves faculty members from more than five departments from both UNR and UNLV.

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Russian Delegation Visit UNR

On March 5, 2009, a Russian delegation of five transportation officials visited the University of Nevada, Reno. Members of the delegation are primarily officials of various government transportation agencies in Russia. Dr. Tian made a presentation to the delegation regarding our transportation education and research programs at UNR. Dr. Tian also addressed several key transportation policies and research topics in the U.S. which could benefit the Russian transportation development. The delegation also visited some local transportation projects, including the downtown Reno railway tunnel and the I-580 new freeway construction.
Research Projects and News

New Projects

Continuing Projects
1. “Evaluation of Video Detection Systems and Development of Application Guidelines at Signalized Intersections”, sponsored by the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTCSN) and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) (1/1/08-12/31/09).
4. “Feasibility of Implementing an Automated Trucking System along the I-80 Freeway”, sponsored by NDOT (9/1/08-12/31/09).

These research projects are all led by Dr. Tian at UNR as principal investigator. The “VMT User Fee” study is to design a pilot program for the State of Nevada for a possible implementation of a vehicle-mile-traveled (VMT) based user fee system to replace the current gas tax system. A multidisciplinary team is conducting the study. Members of the team include faculty from both UNR and UNLV of the following departments: Political Science; Economics; Electrical Engineering; Civil Engineering; and Geography.

Academic Exchange

Members of the Transportation Group attended several major transportation conferences and meetings over the past year. Six members attended the TRB annual meeting and presented five technical papers. Dr. Tian traveled to China in July to attend the 2009 International Conference of Chinese Transportation Professionals (ICCTP 2009). In June, Dr. Tian attended the first Transportation Education Conference in Portland, OR.

Other travels and academic activities occurred in the past year include: (1) a visit in March to the Utah Traffic Lab at the University of Utah by Dr. Tian and two other members, Dr. Yi Zhao and Ahmed Abdel-Dayem; (2) a seminar in August on Traffic Signal Control Systems at Beijing Jiaotong University, China; (3) NCHRP 3-90 research panel meeting in February in Phoenix, AZ; (4) NIATT advisory board meeting in April in Moscow, ID; (5) TRB Highway Capacity and Quality of Service Committee midyear meeting in June in Newport Beach, CA; (6) TRB Traffic Signal Systems Committee midyear meeting in July in Raleigh, NC; (7) the annual Nevada Pedestrian and Bicycle Conference in May in Lake Tahoe.

UNR’s work with RTC is an outstanding partnership between the research community and transportation practitioners. The solutions to real world problems developed through this collaboration have improved the efficiency and productivity of the regional transportation system. As a result, the public is getting increased benefit for every dollar invested in this essential infrastructure.”

Derek Morse
Interim Executive Director
RTC of Washoe Country

Members of the Transportation Group at the TRB Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Members of the Transportation Group visiting the Utah Traffic Lab at the University of Utah.

In January, Professor Sun Quanxin, Dean of College of Transportation, and Professor Mao Baohua, Director of National Key Transportation Lab, both from Beijing Jiaotong University, China visited the Transportation Group at UNR.

Dr. Zong Tian with seminar participants at Beijing Jiaotong University.
UNITE Activities

The University of Nevada ITE Student Chapter (UNITE) conducted several activities over the past year. A group of student members attended the 2009 ITE District 6 Annual Meeting in Denver, CO in July. Xuan Wang, current president of UNITE received the Van Wagoner Award (see cover page).

Xuan Wang and Patrick Hu also traveled to Jackson Hole, WY in May to attend the ITE Intermountain Section Annual Meeting, where they received the First and Second prizes for the best student paper competition.

In April 2009, Dr. Robert Bertini, Professor of Portland State University visited the Transportation Research Group. During his visit, several group members presented their research projects in the weekly seminar series. Professor Bertini also made a presentation regarding one of his on-going research projects on dealing with identification of active freeway bottlenecks.

UNITE successfully won one data collection fund from ITE District 6, where students conducted trip generation data collection for Mega Sporting Goods Stores. UNITE received $1,000 for the effort, which will be used for conducting various UNITE activities.

UNITE sponsored an evening social on December 3, 2008 as part of the Traffic Engineering class, where students presented their course projects to a group of professionals from local agencies and consulting firms. Presentations were rated by the professionals and a $50 gift certificate was awarded to the highest ranked group. The evening provided the students with an opportunity of getting to know several transportation professionals and to better prepare for their careers.

On July 13, 2009, Dr. Tian conducted a seminar on traffic signal controls to a class of junior high school students. This was part of the Summer Engineering Camp organized by the College of Engineering at UNR. After a classroom presentation on basic traffic signal control concepts, Dr. Tian took the students on a field trip to observe the actual signal operations near the UNR campus. The students were especially fascinated by the traffic simulation models and learned well about some basic signal terminologies.

New Faces

Our transportation group welcomes the following new members.

1. Samuel Kofi Ahiamadi joined the group in the fall semester as a graduate research assistant and is pursuing a Ph.D. degree. He is from Ghana, Africa, and was a lecturer in the Civil Engineering Department of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

2. Sushil Joshee joined the group in Spring 2009, and is pursuing a M.S. degree in Transportation Engineering. He is currently working in the California Department of Transportation’s Truckee office.

3. Timin Punнакال joined the group in Spring 2009, and is pursuing a M.S. degree in Transportation. He obtained his B.S. in Civil Engineering from UNR.

“Coming from Ghana to study Transportation Engineering at UNR is a dream coming true. The classes are quite interesting and I am certain the decision to come over to UNR is a good one. I also consider it a great privilege to have a very supportive advisor, Dr. Zong Tian guiding me through the duration of study.”

Samuel Kofi Ahiamadi
Graduate Research Assistant

Dr. Zong Tian explains traffic signal operations in the field to the Summer Engineering Camp students.

Samuel Kofi Ahiamadi from Ghana, West Africa.
The Transportation Group and the Transportation Program were launched in 2004 after Dr. Zong Tian joined the Civil & Environmental Engineering Department at the University of Nevada, Reno. Our Theme, Vision, and Mission statements are:

Theme: Efficient and Environmentally Friendly Transportation Systems.

Vision: A focal research and education center in the desert southwest region (primarily covering Nevada, California, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico) that emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration in applied transportation research.

Mission: (1) Develop operationally efficient and environmentally friendly transportation systems for the state of Nevada, the desert southwest region, and the United States; (2) Educate the next-generation of transportation professionals equipped with advanced technical skills and strong practical motivations.

REAL answers received on exams given by the California Department of Transportation’s driving school.

Q: Do you yield when a blind pedestrian is crossing the road?
A: What for? He can’t see my license plate.

Q: Who has the right of way when four cars approach a four-way stop at the same time?
A: The pick up truck with the gun rack and the bumper sticker saying, “Guns don’t kill people, I do.”

Q: What changes would occur in your lifestyle if you could no longer drive lawfully?
A: I would be forced to drive unlawfully.

Q: What are some points to remember when passing or being passed?
A: Make eye contact and wave “Hello” if he/she is cute.

Q: What is the difference between a flashing red traffic light and a flashing yellow traffic light?
A: The color.