Instructions for 2011 Projects

Full Proposals

See additional details at http://utca.eng.ua.edu/

Completed Proposals are due
By 12 pm November 3, 2010

The University of Alabama System
(UA, UAB, and UAH)

October 17, 2010
INTRODUCTION

This document sets out instructions for preparing proposals for 2011 funds. Instructions for preparation of full proposals are being issued to a limited number of Principal Investigators (PIs) whose brief pre-proposals were found to be most appropriate for funding through a peer review process. Such a recommendation indicates that your project is a strong candidate for (but does not guarantee) funding by the University Transportation Center for Alabama (UTCA).

These instructions are intended to guide the further development of your proposal to help you demonstrate the appropriateness of your topic and research plan (or technology transfer plan), and the importance of your findings in helping UTCA meet its goals.

Previous Instructions

The general information contained in the previous instructions (for pre-proposals) is still applicable. The following items are briefly restated to emphasize their importance.

• **Funding** – The UTCA Executive Committee anticipates funding 8-10 projects using approximately $650k of 2011 U.S. Department of Transportation funds, and it is possible that additional projects will be funded as the year unfolds.

• **Project Topics** – PIs are not allowed to make significant changes in the project topic indicated in their pre-proposals.

• **Special Consideration in Funding** – The review process will help identify the most appropriate projects for UTCA funding, but several issues will receive increased emphasis beyond the review results. Examples include: (1) proposals that address the UTCA theme and topics included in Sections I.1 – I.4 of the UTCA 2011 Annual Research/Training Plan; (2) proposals that address appropriate educational issues, human resources, diversity, and technology transfer; (3) proposals with substantial portions of matching funds provided by external sources; (4) proposals that involve teaming among the UA System faculty members which will promote multi-campus faculty collaborations and develop a network of interdisciplinary expertise; (5) proposals that demonstrate a plan to use UTCA funds as seed money to generate successful proposals to external funding agencies; (6) proposals from new faculty members or from faculty members who wish to affiliate with UTCA but have conducted no previous transportation projects; and (7) proposals with a PI who has published refereed journal papers from previously-funded UTCA projects and/or who has leveraged previous UTCA funding to bring in additional externally-funded projects through UTCA (externally-funded projects that have been assigned a UTCA project number.)

• **Time Frames** – One-year projects are typical; however, projects of longer durations are acceptable. Multi-year projects will be allowed by the UTCA to encourage the faculty members to pursue projects in the high priority areas and to assemble multi-campus and multidisciplinary teams with transportation expertise (as explained in the 2011 RFP instructions for pre-proposals).

• **Project Report** – The PI is expected to submit a summary report in a specified format at the conclusion of a UTCA project, describing in detail the work performed and the results obtained. The report will be peer reviewed by national experts, and the PI may be asked to revise the report based upon the review.
• Project Results – PIs will be expected to present the results of their projects to their sponsors, in appropriate conferences, and to publish the results in appropriate venues.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR “NATIONAL” RESEARCH TOPICS

• Surface Transportation Research Plan – Faculty and staff desiring to conduct nationally-significant research on maximizing traffic efficiency and mitigating congestion should select projects from the 2011 UTC Annual Research & Training Plan Sections I.1 and I.2 or specific national projects identified in such publications as the “Operations and Mobility” theme from the R&T Partnership Report entitled Highway Research and Technology: The Need for Greater Investment (http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/rtforum/HwyRandT.pdf). Optionally, a PI may have specific knowledge of another USDOT agency research plan and may request that a project from that plan be considered for funding.

• To confirm the appropriateness of such high-priority, national-need projects, PIs must contact the federal program administrator responsible for research in the desired topic area. A letter of recommendation from such an administrator attached to the full proposal is a sign to the reviewers that the proposed research has national significance.

• PIs are encouraged to contact their campus Associate Director for assistance in identifying topics or for identifying specific agency programs and specific research program managers for contacts.

Next Steps in Evaluation/Award Process

• UTCA’s Executive Committee and national transportation experts will review the full proposals. An appropriate federal research program director may be asked to review the proposal.

• Proposals will be designated for funding by the Executive Committee based upon the results of the review process. It is expected that PIs will be notified of probable selection for funding on or before November 23, 2010, at which time they may be asked to make certain changes or clarifications to their proposals.

• Any necessary changes or clarifications must be made December 3, 2010, after which authorization for initiation of faculty/staff projects will occur.

• The target date for delivery of “notices to proceed” to PIs is January 2011.
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FULL PROPOSALS

The guidelines for full proposals are very similar to the guidelines for pre-proposals, except that they require increased levels of detail and complexity in describing the project prior to the award of funding.

Proposal Contents

Following the policy on the individual campus, an appropriate university official (e.g., research vice president) should sign the title page. Proposals should not exceed 12 pages (12 point type) including all appendices.

The following sections must be included in the proposal:

- **Title Page**—project number (provided by UTCA Executive Committee); project title (50 characters max); principal investigator’s name and contact information (title, address, department, university, telephone, fax, and email).

- **Objective (maximum 100 words)** – Clearly and succinctly state the purpose for conducting the project.

- **Abstract (maximum 250 words)** – Provide a general description of the project plan, including appropriate highlights from following sections.

- **Introduction** – Briefly identify the problem and discuss research relevant to this topic, describe the technical obstacles, and discuss why this problem is important.

- **Task Descriptions** – Define the tasks to be accomplished in a step-by-step fashion, discussing the work to be performed by the team during the course of the project.

- **Milestone dates** – List the start date and end date of each task (may be in chart form) and deliverables.

- **Project Team Members** (one page max) – Identify the key project team members and their proposed roles. Briefly describe the qualifications of the individuals directly involved in the proposed project.

- **Student Involvement** – Describe the basis for student participation; undergraduate and graduate (e.g., thesis, assistantship, paid employment)

- **Technology Transfer Activities** – PIs are encouraged to distribute the results of their projects through publications, presentations, seminars, etc. If the research is performed for a particular agency, the researchers must present the research results to that agency in a meeting.

- **External Reviewers** – PIs must include the name and contact information for two external reviewers who are competent to review the project’s final report.

- **Plan to Leverage Funds (Optional)** – PIs are encouraged to show how they plan to use UTCA funds as seed money to generate successful proposals to external funding agencies. Such a plan may include a project deliverable of a credible, well-researched proposal to a specific external funding agency.

- **Journal Articles and Externally-Funded Projects (Optional)** – PIs who have been previously-funded by UTCA are encouraged to list examples of refereed journal
articles published from those UTCA projects and list examples of externally-funded projects they have brought into UTCA (projects funded by other agencies that have been assigned a UTCA project number).

- **TRB Keywords** – Keywords must match those used by the Transportation Research Board, accessed at the TRB website.

- **Impact on Governmental Agency** – If the proposed research will impact a governmental entity, or if data is to be acquired from such an entity, or if the cooperation of such entity is needed, etc., the PI must obtain a letter of cooperation from the entity. In addition, UTCA may require that the entity be represented through an advisory committee for the project.

- **Budget** – (see “Faculty Information” on web site for more complete information)
  - For multiyear projects, indicate yearly and total budgets.
  - Explain or demonstrate how the funds will be used according to the previously described milestones.
  - Provide a line-item budget that details cost breakdowns using the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>UTCA funds (cash)</th>
<th><strong>Matching funds (if any)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin staff salaries*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty salaries – projects</td>
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<td>Student salaries (graduate &amp; undergraduate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total salaries and benefits</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarships/grad tuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expendable prop. &amp; supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other - expendable equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic travel</td>
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<td>Foreign travel*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report peer review, editing, printing</td>
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<td>$500***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other – explain</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total direct expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>F&amp;A (indirect) charges</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Normally prohibited except in unusual situations; exceptions must be justified by PI and approved by UTCA Executive Committee and US DOT as appropriate.

**Matching funds are not required but may be used at the preference of the PI.

***A report review/editing/printing fee of $500 is required from each project funded by UTCA.

- Specifically identify and address items such as joint purchase of equipment, use of consultants, and other expenses.

- If a subcontractor is proposed, the subcontractor must submit a letter of commitment and a detailed budget using the line items required of UTCA budgets.
• The start date and duration must be identified in the budget materials.

• Report Editing/Printing – The budget must include a $500 line for report editing and printing. This amount and associated indirect costs will be retained at UTCA headquarters when a project is authorized and initiated.

• Salaries – For each staff member, indicate the percent of time or effort in relation to total professional activities. In computing estimated salary charges, an individual’s base salary represents the total authorized annual compensation that his or her institution would be prepared to pay for a specified work period. The base salary for purposes of computing charges to a DOT grant excludes income that an individual may earn outside full-time duties at his or her institution. If an individual is appointed on less than a full-time basis for the base salary period, indicate the percentage of full-time appointment, e.g., 50 percent of full-time appointment. Where appropriate, indicate whether the amounts requested for the PIs and other personnel are for summer salaries and /or academic year salaries, and indicate the formulas for calculating these salaries.

• Multi-campus Projects – For projects that include multi-campus efforts, the PI must secure a subcontract budget that is approved by the appropriate authorities on the other campus(es) (usually by a cover letter or signature on the budget). The subcontract budgets must use standard UTCA budget line categories.

• Equipment – Items of equipment having a unit acquisition cost of $5,000 or more are considered “permanent equipment,” and written permission must be obtained prior to each such purchase from US DOT. Such purchases must adhere to section III.3 of the “General Provisions” for university transportation centers funded by US DOT. At the conclusion of the PI’s project, the permanent equipment is assigned to the grantee institution.

• Computers – Purchase of computers requires special permission of the UTCA Executive Committee. See the “policy” section of the UTCA website for more information.

• Foreign Travel – Travel to any destination outside of the US and its territories is considered “foreign travel” and advance written permission must be obtained from US DOT prior to such travel. Such travel must conform to III.4 of the “General Provisions” for university transportation centers funded by US DOT.

• Matching Funds

• Matching funds are not required; however, projects that provide significant amounts of matching funds from outside sources may be given higher priority.

• If matching is proposed, the PI must demonstrate the certainty of any matching funding. This might be in the form of the signature of the appropriate campus official for in-kind services, cash, or reduced indirect charges, or a letter of commitment for outside sources.

• The budget spreadsheet and associated narrative must describe the sources used for any matching funds, including the portion of cash and/or
in-kind match for the project. The specific allocation of match should be indicated in the budget spreadsheet.

- Rules governing in-kind and cash contributions as matching funds are set forth in the most recent revision of OMB Circular A-110. Any restriction on the use of federal funds applies equally to non-federal matching funds.

- For UTCA projects, federal funds may not be used for matching purposes with the following rare exceptions: funds provided to a recipient under sections 503, 504b, or 505 of US Code (technology deployment, local technical assistance, and state planning and research programs managed by the Federal Highway Administration).

- **Home Campus Approval** – The PI must secure written approval of the project by appropriate home campus authorities. Typically this is in the form of an approval page or an approval statement attached to the proposal.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

In general, proposals will be evaluated by the same criteria used for evaluation of pre-proposals. Special consideration will be given to those issues mentioned in the first full page of this instruction document and to the most appropriate use of funding to advance the UTCA mission and goals.

**Proposal Submission**

Five single-bound copies are due not later than noon on **November 3, 2010** at the address of your campus Associate Director. PI’s must also submit an electronic copy of their proposal in Word or PDF format via e-mail to their campus Associate Director. **UA electronic proposals should be submitted to UAUTCA@cba.ua.edu.**

**HOW TO GET ANSWERS**

As was the case for pre-proposals, PIs are encouraged to contact the Associate Director on their own campuses to obtain rapid answers to questions and interpretations of this document.

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