NEWS

UTRC SEEKS TO REDUCE NYC TRAFFIC, BUILD RAPPORT WITH FOR-HIRE INDUSTRY

By collecting and analyzing GPS and other data, the Region 2 University Transportation Research Center (UTRC) is seeking to change city policies to reduce traffic and emissions in New York City. The UTRC works with the International Association of Transportation Regulators and conducts federally-funded studies and analyses on transportation for the New York City Taxicab & Limousine Commission.

"Ground transportation was never a big piece of the puzzle until GPS was installed in taxicabs," explains UTRC Director, Dr. Camille Kamga, "That data has now become very important to us; it tells us a lot, and we hope to use it to help steer policies that will improve the city."

According to Dr. Kamga, there have currently been no studies on the for-hire industry because data has not been made available to the UTRC.

"We have seen too many rules made without proper studies to determine their environmental impact," says Dr. Kamga. "We're looking to build a partnership with the for-hire industry, and hoping to work with base owners to use their GPS data to help develop policies that make sense for everyone."

Topics of discussion have included increasing parking for drivers so that they aren't "circling" more than necessary and specialized training that would teach drivers how to use less fuel. Dr. Kamga also points out that during certain times of the day, many buses are nearly empty on certain routes; he notes that perhaps Black Cars could be employed to improve traffic and reduce emissions.

In one study, the UTRC determined through taxi GPS data why there were often too few taxis at JFK airport during inclement weather. Dr. Kamga points out that "cab drivers don't want to travel all the way to JFK when so many people in the city need rides... short trips that pay well." The UTRC has made several recommendations to fix the problem – including incentives for taxi drivers – but no new policies have been implemented as of yet.

"The UTRC does great work that is often overlooked," notes Ira Goldstein, Executive Director for the Black Car Assistance Corporation. "It gives city kids a chance to participate in something that affects everyone who lives in and visits the city."

The UTRC is one of ten University Transportation Centers established in 1987 by the U.S. Congress to support research, education and the transfer of technology in the field of transportation. The theme of the Center is "Planning and Managing Regional Transportation Systems in a Changing World." Presently, under the direction of Dr. Camille Kamga, the UTRC represents USDOT Region II, including New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Functioning as a consortium of 19 major universities throughout the region, UTRC is located at the CUNY Institute for Transportation Systems at The City College of New York, the lead institution of the consortium.

For more information, visit www.utrc2.org.