

UVM will host transportation r&d center

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The University of Vermont will receive \$16 million in federal funds to establish a national center for research and development on rural transportation issues.

The funding, won by Vermont's independent Sen. James Jeffords, will make UVM one of 10 National University Transportation Centers. It is part of the federal highway bill that was signed Wednesday by President Bush.

UVM President Daniel Fogel said the center would build on engineering, environmental and other academic disciplines already under way at the university.

"We have had a good deal of work over the years on rural transportation issues, some of them have to do with very nuts and bolts issues," UVM President Daniel Fogel said Wednesday. "Some of them go to larger systemic regional multi-modal transportation issues."

Fogel wasn't specific about what issues the new center would focus on. He said university officials would work with the Vermont Agency of Transportation and other organizations to find areas to focus on.

"The research we will be doing will be national in scope but Vermont in heart," he said.

A director will be hired to oversee the center, but Fogel said the different disciplines would not be housed under one roof.

"I think you could think of it more as a virtual center," Fogel said.

A lot of the work will fall in civil and environmental engineering, natural resources and the department of agriculture where, for example, scientists could look for environmentally sensitive products to deice roads.

"It wouldn't make sense to draw all those people together," Fogel said.

The highway bill that includes the money for UVM will bring over \$1 billion to Vermont for highway projects through 2009.

"We must develop more efficient and environmentally friendly transportation policies at a state and federal level," Jeffords said in a statement. "UVM's reputation for academic excellence and cutting edge research directly contributed to its designation as a National University Transportation Center."

In addition, the bill includes several special appropriations directed at Vermont. They include \$100 million for highway, road and rail improvements for western Vermont; \$30 million toward repair of bridges in small towns; \$25 million for improvements to Vermont's interstate

highways; and \$18 million to complete the Missisquoi Bay Bridge at the northern end of Lake Champlain.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Democrat, announced on Wednesday a number of other transportation projects included in the funding package. They included:

- _ \$5 million to improve U.S. Route 2 in the Danville area;
- _ \$5 million to rehabilitate two bridges in downtown Johnson;
- _ \$6 million to repair the Church Street Marketplace in Burlington;
- _ \$7 million to improve the U.S. Route 2 and Interstate 89 interchange in South Burlington.

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