

UVM to expand research on transportation-related research and development

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The University of Vermont was designated Wednesday as one of 10 national University Transportation Centers to study transportation issues that affect northern and rural areas.

The designation brings \$16 million to the University over the next five years and is seen as "enormously important" to the university's position as a research institution, UVM President Daniel Fogel said.

"It solidifies and validates our work in the specific research areas we are addressing," Fogel said, "and it fuels our drive to be the nation's premier environmental university."

The funding was part of the \$286.4 billion transportation spending bill signed into law Wednesday by President Bush, who said it would create "good-paying jobs," upgrade transportation systems and save lives. Critics said it was filled with pet projects to benefit nearly every member of Congress.

Vermont stands to receive about \$1 billion from the bill during the next five years.

The university grant was one of several additional projects included in the bill and announced by Sen. Jim Jeffords, I-Vt.

UVM will be charged with building on its own transportation-related research and developing new ways to promote more efficient and environmentally sound transportation policies.

The university receives more than \$120 million a year in state, federal and other agency funding. Known for its environmental, agricultural and medical research, UVM's current transportation-related studies include research on environmentally safe road de-icing, and techniques -- such as ground-penetrating radar -- to help assess the safety and condition of roads and bridges.

The five-year funding package will pay for existing and new research and for additional research scientists, faculty, and doctoral and graduate students. The Transportation Center's activities will be housed in existing space on campus.

"This is not a bricks-and-mortar grant," Fogel said. "There will be a director, but it will exist as more of a virtual center. This is an investment primarily in people and in scientific research equipment and capacity."

The federal highway bill also includes an additional \$1 million for research at UVM on hydrogen and renewable fuels in the transportation sector. Robert Jenkins, a mechanical engineering professor at UVM and

an expert in energy utilization and hydrocarbon fuels, will lead this research.

The university plans to work with Jeffords' office, the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the federal Transportation Agency in developing other avenues of transportation research, Fogel said.

The University of Minnesota, Northwestern University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison were among those chosen to become University Transportation Centers.

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