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NEWS RELEASE

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New Transportation Center receives \$277,000 to advance work zone safety research

Cleveland State University's new Transportation Center for Work Zone Safety and Efficiency has received \$277,000 in funding from the National Science Foundation, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and The Laborers-Employers Cooperative Education Trust (LECET), enabling the Center to move forward with much-needed and beneficial research, it was announced today.

Nancy Grugle, assistant professor of industrial and manufacturing engineering, was awarded \$107,000 from the National Science Foundation's Major Research Instrumentation Award for the purchase of a driving simulator.

"The simulator gives us an opportunity to study drivers' responses to various on-road conditions and in-vehicle technologies without putting the driver at risk," said Grugle.

The DriveSafety DS-600c Research Simulator will allow for improved human factors research, helping to build the Transportation Center's growing research and education infrastructure. By using a high-fidelity simulator that replicates naturalistic driving conditions, driving simulation studies will expand the capabilities of current work zone safety data collection methods by varying work zone infrastructure components, weather and ambient traffic while simultaneously monitoring the driver's behaviors. This allows researchers to collect data that was previously unavailable, such as driver behavior data on near-crashes and other incidents that typically go unreported. Ultimately, the simulator provides the ability to perform behavioral driving research as well as applied research to test the effectiveness of safety initiatives.

Grugle also received \$70,000 from ODOT for the ODOT Partnered Research Exploration Program (OPREP). The award is the first of many future research projects that will focus on improving work zone safety for the driving public and highway construction workers.

"In the OPREP project, we will study driving data from a large, groundbreaking study conducted in the Washington, D.C. area in which over 100 drivers were monitored over a one-year period," Grugle explained. "By looking at these drivers' behaviors in highway work zones specifically, we can better understand the driving behaviors that cause crashes and near-crashes in work zones." As a result, researchers can develop better methods for protecting drivers and highway workers.

Along with Grugle's awards, the Transportation Center received a generous gift of \$100,000 from LECET.

"Members of the Laborers' union are on the front lines in highway work zones, and unfortunately they seem to have targets on their backs," said Stephen Duffy, professor of civil and environmental engineering and Center director. "As recent tragic events at the I-480/I-77 cloverleaf have shown, construction work is a very dangerous occupation -- and when construction work is performed inside a heavily traveled highway corridor, safety has to be uppermost in everyone's mind on a daily basis. Developing a close relationship with their union and Cleveland State's Transportation Center just makes a lot of sense."

(More)

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Prior to receiving the award, Duffy spoke at a July LECET board meeting that included Ralph Cole, business manager, Laborers' District Council of Ohio; Anthony Liberatore, Jr., business manager, Local 860, member of the LECET Board and member of the Transportation Center Advisory Board; Mark Potnick of the Ohio Contractors Association and member of the LECET Board and Transportation Center Advisory Board; and Rich Murray, LECET director.

Duffy asked for LECET's help in providing local funds for the Center to match the federal grant. After learning how the Center would further LECET's goal of greater work zone safety in Ohio, the Board unanimously approved the donation.

For further information on Cleveland State's Transportation Center for Work Zone Safety and Efficiency, please visit <http://www.csuohio.edu/utc/>.

For more information, please call Cleveland State's Department of Marketing and Public Affairs at (216) 687-2290.

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