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News

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FRA Announces University of Illinois to Receive \$5 Million to Establish the National University Rail Center of Excellence

First of its kind effort made possible through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) today announced the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) as the selected institution for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023 Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence (CoE) program.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has been awarded up to \$5,000,000 to establish the National University Rail Center of Excellence (NURail CoE), a pioneering initiative dedicated to developing the future workforce while advancing research and expansion that enhances the safety, efficiency, and reliability of both passenger and freight rail transportation.

Led by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the NURail CoE comprises a consortium of nine partner institutions, including the University of Illinois Chicago, University of Delaware, Kansas State University, Michigan Technological University, Morgan State University, Rutgers University, University of Texas at Austin, and Tuskegee University. This collaborative effort represents another step forward in President Biden's plan to deliver the 21st century rail network Americans need and deserve, allocating much-needed investment in the pursuit of cutting-edge rail solutions and workforce development.

The NURail CoE will appropriate its resources towards research areas encompassing a wide range of critical topics. Potential research topics may include the development of groundbreaking technologies to advance rolling stock, Positive Train Control systems, human factors, rail infrastructure enhancements, shared corridor solutions, grade crossing safety innovations, trespasser prevention strategies, inspection technology advancements, remote sensing

applications, rail systems maintenance approaches, network resiliency solutions, operational reliability enhancements, energy efficiency measures, and other pioneering subjects aimed at promoting and improving rail transportation.

“This summer, I had the chance to visit the Urbana-Champaign area to celebrate investments we’re making there to improve railroad safety,” said **U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg**. “Today, we are proud to provide UIUC with funding to establish the National University Rail Center of Excellence, which will pursue pioneering research and innovation to make railroads safer across the country.”

FRA Administrator Amit Bose commended the selection of UIUC and the NURail CoE, stating, "The establishment of the NURail CoE is a testament to the dedication and expertise of these institutions. This initiative exemplifies our ongoing commitment to building a safer, more efficient, and sustainable rail network for the benefit of all Americans."

Under the NURail CoE program, FRA will provide up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing and operating the center of excellence and supporting research activities. Each of the nine universities within the NURail CoE consortium will contribute a portion of the total non-Federal match, demonstrating their commitment to the advancement of rail research and development.

The NURail CoE is set to operate for a three-year duration, allowing ample time for the pursuit of transformative rail solutions and innovations that will contribute to a safer and more modern rail network across the country.

Detailed information about the NURail CoE and its proposed projects can be found on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign website.

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