

A Letter from Dan Sperling, December 2013

2013 was a breakthrough year for ITS-Davis. In January, we settled in to our new offices in the university's West Village, the largest planned zero net energy community in the United States. In September, we learned that we had won \$11.2 million to lead the new National Center for Sustainable Transportation, the largest single research project in our 22-year history (with half the funding from U.S. Department of Transportation and the matching half from local and state agencies). And in October, I was honored with the 2013 Blue Planet Prize, which has been described as the Nobel Prize for the environmental sciences. The prize really is recognizing the accomplishments of our entire team of outstanding and increasingly influential researchers in creating the leading university center in the world on sustainable transportation.

The \$11.2 million DOT grant for the National Center for Sustainable Transportation will help federal, state, regional and local agencies reduce greenhouse gas emissions from passenger and freight travel that contribute to climate change. Under the direction of Professor Susan Handy, ITS-Davis will lead a consortium of leading universities—UC Davis, USC, UC Riverside, CSU Long Beach, Georgia Tech and University of Vermont—that will conduct research, education and outreach in four thematic areas: zero-emission vehicle and fuel technologies; low-carbon infrastructure and efficient system operation; low-impact travel and sustainable land use; and institutional change. We are honored to lead this effort.

When we moved into our new West Village buildings last January, we became a real-world showcase for the university's energy priorities. Now we are truly walking the talk. West Village, planned with the core principles of environmental responsiveness and quality of place, is a perfect location for ITS-Davis and our affiliated energy research groups to advance our world-renowned environmental sustainability research.

Stroll through our buildings clustered around a central green and you might hear researchers cheerfully challenging each other on the merits of electric and fuel cell vehicle technology, new smart mobility services for ride-sharing and car-sharing, advanced biofuels, or the latest greenhouse gas modeling results. You might be invited to try out a new smart-phone app that helps consumers improve their eco-driving behavior, or to join a debate on the implications of the current U.S. oil production boom. And you might encounter energy and automotive industry executives, engineers and strategists exchanging ideas with policymakers, campus researchers and graduate students during one of our hosted seminars.

By offering these opportunities for stimulating hallway interactions as well as formal research partnerships with government, industry and non-governmental organizations, ITS-Davis is advancing public discourse on key transportation, energy and environmental issues. Our researchers are playing pivotal roles in designing and analyzing policies and creating the tools government and industry need to steer our transportation system toward a more sustainable future.

In 2013, ITS-Davis counted more than 55 affiliated faculty and researchers and 124 graduate students. Our Transportation Technology and Policy (TTP) graduate program brings together

M.S. and Ph.D. students from anthropology to electrical engineering. The success of our unique interdisciplinary approach is evident in the diverse careers of almost 300 alumni in academia, industry and government worldwide.

In 1991, the University of California Board of Regents endorsed our vision to create an institute that marries engineering, public policy, human behavior, environmental sciences, geography and other disciplines—and engages industry and government to solve transportation, energy and environmental challenges. We need all these disciplines and this outward-looking culture to solve the world's pressing mobility needs.

Twenty-two years later, the Asahi Glass Foundation has validated my optimism, honoring me with the 2013 Blue Planet Prize at a remarkable ceremony in Tokyo. I could not have achieved this success—the Institute's success—without the accomplished researchers, superb staff and highly motivated graduate students who are the heart and soul of ITS-Davis. Every day, they are advancing the Institute's mission of bringing science to policy, playing hugely important roles in helping solve the globe's vehicle, fuels and mobility challenges.

I look forward to being part of ITS-Davis's intellectual excitement and great achievements in 2014 and beyond.