

# Director's Letter from Dan Sperling

February 2017

Each year, as I sit down to write this letter, I marvel at the many changes sweeping through transportation. It's never been more exciting and rewarding to be a transportation researcher. ITS-Davis just celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year, but it feels like we are just getting started. I'm energized!

The pace of innovation is stunning. Three transportation revolutions – vehicle electrification, vehicle automation, and shared mobility – are about to transform our cities, lifestyles and much more. In anticipation of these changes, we've launched our Three Revolutions (3Rs) initiative to build the research foundation to steer innovation toward the public interest.

Much is at stake. These innovations provide the potential for huge societal benefits: greater safety, more affordable accessibility for more people, less environmental impact, and a raft of economic benefits. But left alone, the dream could instead become a nightmare of more sprawl, vehicle use, greenhouse gas emissions, and inequities.

Last fall we convened leading thinkers in the inaugural 3Rs conference. They generated a series of briefs that lay a foundation for future policy considerations. We're publishing those briefs, along with a report with colleagues in the European Union on global impacts of the 3Rs. We're riding the electric, autonomous, shared vehicle wave. Stay tuned...

Meanwhile, our core research programs, focused on sustainable transportation, continue to flourish.

In December 2016, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded our National Center for Sustainable Transportation (NCST) a five-year grant of \$14 million. The NCST consortium, led by ITS-Davis, comprises six university research centers nationwide: University of California, Davis; California State University, Long Beach; University of California at Riverside; University of Southern California; Georgia Tech; and the University of Vermont.

Our Sustainable Transportation Energy Pathways (STEPS) program, now in its third, four-year cycle, also continues to flourish. With sponsorship from 28 major companies and government agencies, it conducts interdisciplinary research on the transition to a sustainable transportation energy future for California, the U.S. and the world.

Our China Center on Energy and Transportation (C-CET)—in partnership with the California Air Resources Board, and Chinese government ministries, regional governments, and major Chinese universities—facilitates information exchange and knowledge-sharing to help shape that country's rapidly evolving transportation energy sector. Researchers have played a central role in informing the design of zero emission vehicle policies in China, and we are expanding

our role to other transportation challenges. C-CET is also conducting consumer behavior research under the U.S.-China Clean Vehicle Center, a major U.S. Department of Energy-funded program.

Our Plug-in Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Research Center is the leading center in the world for the study of consumer electric vehicle purchase decisions and charging behavior. And our new Sustainable Freight Initiative provides research and advice to California's Sustainable Freight Action Plan.

Here on campus we're delighted to announce creation of the new Energy Graduate Group (EGG), modeled after and partnered with ITS-Davis's successful Graduate Group in Transportation Technology and Policy (TTP).

Despite, or perhaps because of, the tectonic political shifts around the world, life in our corner is good. Our research on sustainable transportation is valued more than ever. It's exhilarating, demanding, challenging, and rewarding. We've come so far in the past 25 years, thanks to the many accomplishments and contributions of our faculty, researchers, students, and staff. And yet, we face more challenges than ever.

I look forward to another year, and our next 25!