

A letter from Dan Sperling, director of ITS-Davis

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Despite many conflicts around the world and political tensions here in the United States, I find myself more optimistic and more personally inspired than ever. Why? Because for the first time in half a century, real transformative innovations are coming to our world of passenger transportation—with the promise of huge societal benefits.

I see three transportation revolutions at various stages of development: vehicle electrification, vehicle automation, and the sharing economy. Policy is critical in each, bringing about vehicle electrification, and guiding the other two toward the public interest. Good policy needs good research. Not since the advent of interstate highways in the U.S., high-speed rail in Japan and Europe, and containerized movement of goods, have we seen such transformative opportunities. What an exciting and important time!

As we begin our 25th year here at ITS-Davis, with our pioneering commitment to sustainable transportation now widely embraced, I'm looking forward to continued growth and leadership. The world is changing around us and we are playing a bigger role than ever.

In addition to our flagship research programs on vehicles, energy, environmental impacts, travel behavior, and pavements, we are launching two exciting new research initiatives in 2016 and expanding a third. Each is tied to our central theme of sustainable transportation.

The first is our Future Mobility Initiative, designed to tackle questions posed by the rapid adoption of on-demand mobility services and the emergence of connected and automated vehicles.

The second is our Sustainable Freight Initiative. Goods movement accounts for an ever larger share of pollution, energy use, and greenhouse gases. We will provide foundational knowledge and critical research to support policymakers and other stakeholders in developing cost-effective policies, choices and actions in creating more sustainable freight.

The third is our rapidly expanding China Center for Transportation and Energy, which provides research and guidance to help China's transition to more sustainable transportation. On the heels of launching the novel China-U.S. ZEV Policy Lab in collaboration with the Chinese and California governments, we have aspirations of more actively engaging other countries, especially in Asia.

Meanwhile, our Sustainable Transportation Energy Pathways (STEPS) program is thriving, now in its third set of four-year research initiatives. The current theme is transition strategies. This multidisciplinary research consortium brings together the world's leading automakers, energy companies, and government agencies to explore sustainable vehicle and energy solutions.

And our Plug-in Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Research Center continues its world-leading research on rapidly evolving consumer markets, policy, and technology. Its researchers are playing a key

role not just in California but across much of the U.S. and China, and in collaborations around the world.

Reflecting our extraordinary expertise across disciplines—in mobility, fuels, vehicles, freight, and infrastructure—ITS-Davis continues to lead the U.S. DOT's National Center for Sustainable Transportation, a consortium of six leading national university research centers.

This fall, I'm looking forward to two significant events that will allow us to shine a spotlight on our multidisciplinary bridges across academia, government and industry. On September 21-25, ITS-Davis and the broader UC Davis community will co-host the annual conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists. And then, on October 7 and 8, we'll host our 25th Anniversary Celebration. I like a good party!

As Ghandi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Our contribution to that change is just beginning.