



Florida Department of Transportation Research

Analysis of the Status and Impact of NCTR Projects

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The National Center for Transit Research (NCTR) was established in 1999 at the University of South Florida. NCTR examines public transit issues with an emphasis on innovation applied to public policy and a multidisciplinary, multimodal focus. NCTR has conducted numerous projects for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), including 30 projects from 2007 to 2010. In this project, NCTR assessed the implementation status and identified outcomes and impacts of these projects.

The reviewer focused on basic questions: (1) How well did the research results reach the customer; (2) How did the customer utilize the research results; and (3) How did the research results impact the customer. These questions were addressed for each project, and the findings were the basis of a discussion of process improvements that might inform the selection of projects most likely to have widespread impacts and ensure that selected projects produce desired impacts.

Qualitative data were captured through interviews with principal investigators, other research team members, and individuals associated with conducting or utilizing the research. Quantitative data were obtained through a Web-based survey distributed via listserves. Additional data were collected through Google Scholars and Web statistics for the NCTR Web site, such as page views, average time on page, etc.

Data collection captured a variety of information: number of participants engaged; quantifiable improvements, such as incident reduction, behavioral change, or cost savings; federal, state, or local policy changes; tools or software developed/deployed; best practices; standards; strategies developed/deployed; publications; and project-specific quantifiable outcomes.

Many specific impacts of NCTR research were identified. Transportation professionals expressed particular support. Numerous products of NCTR research, including software tools and patents,



NCTR's innovative products and analyses have helped public transit serve Florida communities more effectively and with more efficient use of resources.

are in use across the nation, thus extending the research impact. Nevertheless, opportunities for improvement were identified.

Evaluation of the data suggested that customers utilize NCTR research *when* they are aware of it. Quantitative measures showed that awareness of research findings fades too quickly, indicating the need for more consistent and continuous outreach utilizing a variety of communication channels.

Some groups within NCTR were better at technology transfer than others; specifically, the Transportation Demand Management program had the best record in this area. A number of institutional barriers were identified that hampered these efforts, including limited funds devoted to technology transfer, limited time available for this part of the project, and a lack of incentives to pursue technology transfer efforts.

NCTR's value to FDOT and the transportation industry in general is well established. The results of this study promise to extend the impact of this valuable research.