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NEWS RELEASE

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TWO CITIES RECEIVE "SMART" VEHICLE GRANTS FROM UMTA

Brian W. Clymer, head of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), today announced approval of two grants aimed at encouraging the development of "smart" vehicle technology to promote mass transit use in Houston and Portland, Ore.

An UMTA grant for \$90,000 will be awarded to the Texas A&M Research Foundation, which is carrying out the Houston project. Portland's Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (Tri-Met) will receive UMTA funds in the amount of \$54,000 for its "smart" vehicle effort.

So-called "smart" technology refers to Intelligent Vehicle Highway Systems (IVHS), which provide greatly enhanced communication to drivers through the use of onboard computers. The information includes data on traffic conditions and possible alternate routes. IVHS can also be used to send messages to and from drivers, dispatchers, and carpool members.

"These projects are far more important than is suggested by the relatively small amounts of federal funds involved," Clymer said. "It is becoming clearer every day that "smart" technology will provide us with benefits that can be applied to the various forms of mass transit, from carpools to full-size buses."

The project in Portland will be used to evaluate a "smart" system used on buses in West Germany and to determine what features of the system are most appropriate for managing American public transportation services. The Houston project will emphasize the use of IVHS technology with carpools and vanpools.

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One special feature of such electronic communication systems is that they make possible the immediate matching of potential riders with existing carpools or vanpools.

"I'm confident that this technology will grow in popularity very quickly once people see how it can improve mass transportation and even reduce the time it takes to commute."

Clymer noted that the two grants are appropriate under the National Transportation Policy, a comprehensive strategy to maintain, modernize and expand the nation's infrastructure and advance transportation into the 21st century.

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