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The Year in Transportation Research

Posted by Greg Winfree

The New Year is an occasion synonymous with *hope* —an opportunity to take the lessons of the past and apply them to the future. And there is no better time than the holiday season to take a moment and reflect on what was accomplished over the past 12 months before turning the page and focusing on the work that needs to be done in 2016. As someone who has led a research-focused organization for nearly five years, I have come to recognize the true value and versatility of *transferable lessons*.

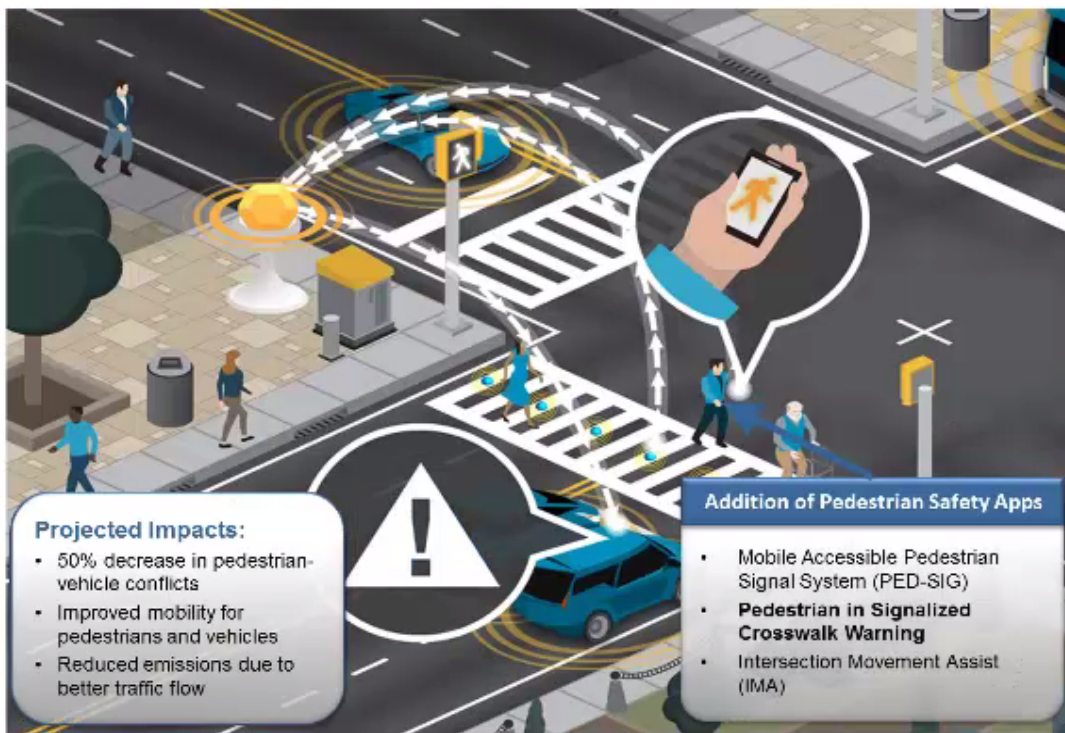
One moment that stands out for me is when I took part in the White House [summit](#) earlier this month on transportation's role in promoting the health of pollinators, the animals —birds, bees, etc.— that assist plants: "Transportation Leaders' Summit: Restoring the Nation's Pollinator Habitat." The summit was coordinated by President Obama's [Pollinator Health Task Force](#), and although the summit addressed a nationally significant issue you might think would be far afield of transportation, it demonstrated the breadth of issues that transportation assets and infrastructure can impact. It helped cement both Administration and bipartisan Congressional support for improving pollinator habitat on transportation assets, and provided a truly remarkable window of opportunity to advance beneficial, cost-effective land-management practices.



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Research pays off for taxpayers when it leads to enduring, innovative solutions and real progress — when it ensures that the problems of today aren't left for the next generation to solve. This year the U.S. Department of Transportation made tremendous progress in advancing safety, mobility, and environmental sustainability through new opportunities for cooperative transportation research and innovation:

- Secretary Foxx kicked-off the [Smart City Challenge](#), a nationwide competition which will make up to \$50 million available for the winning city to test pioneering Intelligent Transportation Systems technologies, including automated vehicles;
- [We launched](#) the Connected Vehicle Pilots Initiative in September at three competitively selected sites, which will provide up to \$42 million for the implementation of cutting-edge connected vehicle applications, including vehicle automation;
- Our Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) and Volpe National Transportation Systems Center provided critical data and outreach for the Secretary's draft framework for the future, [Beyond Traffic: Trends and Choices 2045](#), a broad, data-driven analysis outlining the challenges and choices facing our transportation system in the years ahead; and
- DOT-supported University Transportation Centers, like the [Rail Transportation and Engineering Center](#) at UIUC, across the nation continued to educate the next generation of transportation professionals through world-class research and facilities.



Research, like the start of a new year, offers the promise of greater clarity —it provides a vantage point for effective decision-making and solutions to problems like pollinator health and transportation land use. It can help us understand how we can improve the way we get around, and how we can meet the freight challenge created by a growing population.

America's investment in transportation research is an investment in a better future, one shaped by ideas and solutions that provide enduring benefits.

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