

**R-SEAT Center Annual UTC Conference – Tallahassee, Florida
April 16 - 17, 2026**

Theme: *Technology-Driven Transformation in Transportation within the Rural–Urban Divide*

Invitees: Federal and State DOT representatives, regional and local agencies, transportation practitioners, industry partners, researchers, advocacy groups, and students.

Agenda

DAY 1 (APRIL 16)

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM: Registration, Breakfast, and Networking

Participants check in, receive conference materials, and engage in informal networking among researchers, agencies, industry partners, and stakeholders.

9:00 AM – 9:20 AM: Welcome Remarks

Opening remarks by R-SEAT and university leadership introducing the Center, partners, and conference purpose.

9:20 AM – 9:30 AM: Conference Overview and Theme Introduction

Overview of the conference theme “*Technology-Driven Transformation in Transportation within the Rural–Urban Divide,*” session structure, and expectations for participant engagement and discussion outcomes.

Session 1 - R-SEAT Research Aligned with the Conference Theme

9:30 AM – 10:00 AM | Moderator: Dr. Anil Yazici, Stony Brook University, NY

This session provides a short technical briefing on ongoing R-SEAT projects that demonstrate technology-driven transportation transformation in the context of the rural-urban divide. Each presentation (5–7 minutes including Q&A) focuses on applied research outcomes, implementation challenges, and workforce implications.

Planned discussion focus areas:

- Automated vehicle readiness challenges, including algorithm bias and limited rural training data (Dr. Qin / Dr. Xu)
- Autonomous Electric Ferries (Auto ferry) - Low Carbon Connectors (Dr. Dillon)
- TBD (Dr. Moses and Dr. Ozguven)
- TBD (Dr. Kidando)
- Workforce recruitment and skill requirements needed to support emerging transportation technologies and system deployment (Dr. Yazici)

Session 2 - Workshop: User Perceptions of Transportation Transformation

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM | Moderator: Dr. Eren Ozguven, FAMU-FSU COE

Format:

This is an Interactive round-table discussion. Participants are divided into themed tables, each with a moderator who guides discussion and records key insights. The session gathers qualitative contributions from participants on how users perceive, trust, and adopt emerging transportation technologies in rural and urban contexts.

Discussion Themes:

- **Automated Vehicles & ITS:** Adoption motivations, trust, behavioral change, and reliability perceptions in rural settings.
- **Mobility / MaaS / Ride-hailing / Public Transportation:** Availability, accessibility barriers, trip-planning behavior, and service gaps between rural and urban users.
- **Resilience & Emergency Response:** Use of technology during extreme events, information access, and barriers to technology adoption among rural populations.
- **Transportation Safety:** Interaction with in-vehicle safety technologies, behavioral adaptation, and user-perceived effectiveness of safety innovations.

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM: Lunch & Keynote Address

Keynote (12:30 PM – 1:00 PM): Dr. Rupert R. Giroux, Florida Department of Transportation, Tallahassee, FL

Dr. Giroux will discuss data-driven safety programs, monitoring challenges in rural networks, and strategies to reduce disproportionate rural crash risk.

Safety Data Coordinator at the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) State Safety Office. He leads data teams for roadway safety initiatives, manages contracts for safety projects, and oversees safety data analysis and GIS-based tools for crash and transportation safety monitoring.

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM: Live Technology Demonstrations & Student Poster Session

Demonstrations from industry partners and research teams showcasing emerging transportation technologies, equipment, tools, and applications aligned with the conference theme. Concurrent student poster session highlighting R-SEAT research and outcomes.

2:30 PM – 2:45 PM: Closing Remarks

Speaker: Dr. Ren Moses, R-SEAT Center Director

Summary of key findings, stakeholder feedback, next steps for research collaboration /implementation, and laydown expectations for the next day's sessions.

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Advisory Board Meeting

Focused discussion with advisory members on strategic guidance, partnership opportunities, and alignment with USDOT priorities. (Agenda to follow).

DAY 2 (APRIL 17)

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM: Breakfast & Networking

Informal networking among researchers, agencies, industry representatives, and students.

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM: Welcome Remarks (Day 2)

Speaker: Dean/Provost (TBD)

9:45 AM – 10:00 AM: Day-Ahead Overview

Overview of the day's sessions, expected outcomes, and engagement goals aligned with the conference theme, *Technology-Driven Transformation in Transportation within the Rural–Urban Divide*.

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM: Panel Discussion — Scalability of Transportation Technologies Across Rural and Urban Areas

Moderator: Dr, Emmanuel Kidando, Cleveland State University, OH

Format: Expert panel discussion followed by audience interaction. The panel examines implementation readiness, operational constraints, and deployment pathways of emerging transportation technologies across rural regions.

- **Automated Vehicles & ITS**

Panelist: Dr. Raj Ponnaluri, WSP Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O), former Manager of Emerging Technologies at FDOT with 25+ years of experience in ITS, CAV deployment, traffic operations, and policy development; co-author of Connected and Automated Vehicles: Developing Policies, Designing Programs, and Deploying Projects.

Focus:

Statewide CAV deployment experience, readiness differences between rural and urban environments, and infrastructure and policy considerations for scalable implementation.

- **Mobility, MaaS, Ridehailing & Public Transportation**

Panelist: Christopher D'Antonio, Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning, Long Island, NY

Principal Planner involved in multimodal mobility planning and the Reimagine Transit initiative, integrating modern transit and mobility services.

Focus:

Integration of transit and on-demand mobility services, lessons from suburban deployment, and strategies to improve accessibility and first/last-mile connectivity.

- **Resilience & Emergency Operations**

Panelist: Christian Levings, Apalachee Regional Planning Council, Tallahassee, FL
Emergency Preparedness Manager coordinating regional emergency planning, evacuation strategies, and mitigation planning across multiple counties.

Focus:

Transportation system resilience, coordination among agencies, and planning approaches to address rural preparedness gaps.

- **Safety & Data-Driven Operations**

Panelist: Dr. Rupert R. Giroux, Florida Department of Transportation, Tallahassee, FL
Safety Data Coordinator leading statewide safety analytics, GIS-based monitoring tools, and proactive crash-prevention initiatives.

Focus:

Data-driven safety programs, monitoring challenges in rural networks, and strategies to reduce disproportionate rural crash risk.

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Lunch & Networking

11:30 PM – 12:00 PM: Keynote Address

Speaker: Cipriana D. Patterson – Director of Operations (Mid-Atlantic), Toole Design

Cipriana Patterson is a transportation engineering and operations leader with extensive experience in municipal traffic safety planning and multimodal design. Her work includes Vision Zero initiatives, Safe Routes to School, High-Injury Network analysis, neighborhood traffic studies, and bicycle facility implementation. She collaborates with local governments to develop practical safety solutions for diverse roadway users.

12:00 PM – 2:00 PM: Student Research Presentations

Format: Two students each from the consortium and affiliated universities.

- 10-minute presentation
- 3-minute Q&A
- 2-minute transition and introductions

2:00 PM – 2:15 PM: Conference Closing Remarks

Speaker: Dr. Ren Moses, R-SEAT Center Director

Conference summary, takeaways, and action items for future research direction and next year's conference theme.