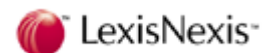




New research advances energy efficiency, safety, performance of public transit; Rochester Institute of Technology partners with Rochester bus company to implement innovative fleet monitoring technology

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Rochester Institute of Technology's Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies (CIMS) and the Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA) are collaborating on a joint research project designed to implement state-of-the-art vehicle monitoring technology into public transit fleets. The monitoring system will assist the fleet in increasing energy efficiency, improving vehicle performance and increasing overall safety. Ultimately, the project will also assist the authority in testing the effectiveness of alternative fuel use in its bus fleet.

"Rising gas prices and increased emissions regulations are placing significant pressures on our nation's large vehicle fleets," says Michael Thurston, CIMS senior staff engineer and the project's team leader. "This research effort is assisting operators and managers in more properly assessing vehicle health while also providing a tool to more accurately analyze the performance of a wide variety of technologies."

"Data drives the process at RGRTA," says Mark Aesch, the authority's chief executive officer. "RGRTA developed an innovative route evaluation program which utilizes a 'trip scoring index' that balances customer demand with cost efficiency. By combining the index with vehicle monitoring technology, the authority will further improve the performance of every single daily trip a bus takes."

The center's monitoring system incorporates asset health management technology to collect fleet data, monitor performance and better analyze life cycle costs of the vehicles. A package of sensors is integrated into the bus's own system to more accurately assess the performance of key vehicle components and alert operators and maintenance personnel when there is a problem. The system also utilizes a Web based, virtual common operational picture to allow managers to view bus health and location, in real time, from a remote location.

A previous version of CIMS' technology, incorporated into the U.S. Marine Corps' Light Armored Vehicle, won the National Center for Advanced Technology's 2004 Defense Manufacturing Excellence Award.

"This technology provides an additional level of data and analysis that will assist organizations in making better decisions regarding fleet operations," adds Thurston. "The enhanced monitoring aspect will also reduce breakdowns and enhance vehicle safety."

CIMS is currently testing a prototype system on a Rochester city bus and will next look to implement the system for use in the authority's new fleet of hybrids, buses that operate on diesel fuel and electricity. They have also recently received \$1.35 million from the Department of Defense to further the use of fuel cell technology in military vehicles. The center hopes to eventually transfer this research for use in their partnership with RGRTA.

"A quality public transportation system is built around one concept, connecting people to where they want to go, in the most economic and efficient manner," notes Aesch. "Rising fuel costs, double digit increases in health care costs, and workers' compensation costs, have jeopardized the Authority's ability to keep fares stable for our customers. Our partnership with the Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies will enable us to improve our fleet's performance and efficiency, reduce costs and allow us to keep our fares at \$1.25."

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