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RURAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS ARE FOCUS OF INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY GRANT AT UNH

DURHAM – A two-year grant recently awarded to the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire will address important issues that people with disabilities and others who may not drive in this society struggle with everyday: Access to practical and affordable transportation in less-populated areas.

Rural transportation access in the state and the country is limited and has a significant impact on the ability of people who do not or choose not to drive to participate in community life, go to places of employment, attend educational opportunities, and visit friends and families – activities that drivers take for granted.

The *Rural Transportation Access Network Project* (RTAN) is a two-year, \$100,000 grant awarded to the Institute on Disability at UNH by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Developmental Disabilities. The project seeks to:

- Identify and evaluate best practices in inclusive rural transportation
- Collect and compile data about the impact of barriers to transportation access on persons with disabilities and their communities
- Develop Web-based materials to share best practices in rural transportation
- Identify and disseminate funding resources and practices to develop and maintain transportation opportunities in rural communities
- Organize and host a national summit on transportation for individuals with developmental disabilities residing in rural communities

RTAN will also identify strategies to increase and coordinate existing services, funding resources and gaps in funding structures and policies. It is anticipated that the project will produce recommendations for policy changes, model practices and model organizational structures.

“As long as transportation remains a struggle to access for those who do not drive, our society keeps a large group among us from having equal opportunity to all that America offers,” Sönke Dornblut, *RTAN*'s project coordinator, said.

“We hope that our research and development activities will result in new options for persons in need of transportation.”

The Institute on Disability's mission is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities into their schools and communities. The Institute works with students and faculty, offers workshops and training sessions, participates in grant-funded model demonstration projects, conducts research and engages in collaborative partnerships with other statewide organizations that are committed to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

The Institute on Disability, together with the Center for Genetics and Child Development at Dartmouth Medical School; the Institute for Health, Law, and Ethics at Franklin Pierce Law Center; and the Center for Community Economic Development at Southern New Hampshire University comprise New Hampshire's University Center for Excellence (UCE).

For more information, visit the Institute on Disability's Web site at www.iod.unh.edu.

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The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, is a University Center for Excellence, established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.