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PRESS RELEASE

## **Rapid-bus-service research solves traffic problems**

**The Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) has established a new Centre of Excellence, in Santiago, Chile, performing research on Bus Rapid Transit Systems. The results will be applicable to efforts worldwide to transform urban mobility systems.**

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an alternative that can provide high-performance, high-capacity public transport in many rapidly-growing cities of the developing world.

BRT systems combine the punctuality and frequency of rail-based transit with the low construction and maintenance costs and flexibility of bus systems. This can often be achieved through integrated improvements to existing infrastructure, vehicles, scheduling, etc.

### **Political support**

Growing experience with new BRT systems suggests that implementation is not straightforward but, in fact, fraught with complexity. The implementation phase contains a variety of processes that require decision making and coordination to ensure successful operation. Examples of such processes include planning, design, management, procurement, operations, enforcement, performance monitoring, and feedback mechanisms, as well as building and maintaining political support.

“The primary goal of this Centre of Excellence will be to support more successful BRT deployment by developing a new framework for bus rapid transit planning, design, financing, implementation and operation in diverse urban areas. We can offer clear guidelines to decision makers on when and how such projects can enhance mobility and meet accessibility needs,” says Juan Carlos Muñoz from the College of Engineering and the Department of Transport Engineering and Logistics of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and Director of the newly-established Centre.

An essential objective is to make knowledge developed at the Centre widely available. Identifying elements that are transferable between existing and prospective systems will be of particular importance.

Muñoz envisions that the Centre will be an agent for change in cities worldwide that seek to transform their public transport systems.

### **Public transport system**

“We plan to participate in specific projects that need our scientific background and tools. We also expect to become a valuable resource to city planners looking for advice on how to improve and transform their public transport systems, how to promote such changes among decision makers, citizens and the media, and of course how to design, implement and operate BRT systems,” says Muñoz.

The Centre will act as a consortium, collaborating, for example, with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Instituto Superior Técnico of the Technical University of Lisbon, the University of Sydney's Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, and EMBARQ (The World Resources Institute Center for Sustainable Transport) Network.

The focus will be not only at the project level, but also on how projects interact with other elements of the urban system, transforming the total urban mobility system.

**Facts: VREF**

The Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) is a collective term for four independent foundations. The Board of VREF initiated the Future Urban Transport (FUT) research programme.

FUT addresses the complexity of urban transport, with the aim of making urban transport more sustainable. FUT supports a number of Centres of Excellence (CoE), with the goal of establishing an international collaborative network within and across scientific disciplines.

Each CoE is financed by VREF for five years at a level of SEK 25 million (ca. EUR 2.6 million). The Centres are encouraged to attract additional funding.

**Facts: Bus Rapid Transit**

Some 50 BRT systems are in operation globally, with a further 25 in various stages of planning/implementation in China, India and South Africa alone.

When well planned and implemented as part of a comprehensive, integrated system, BRT is cost-effective and efficient. BRT systems can attain high performance, with speeds and capacities often exceeding light-rail systems and approaching those of metros, at a fraction of their life-cycle cost.

*For additional information, contacts and press photos see: [www.vref.se](http://www.vref.se)*