The purpose of the Messenger is to inform M-CASTL faculty, students, sponsors, and friends about the Center’s activities.

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words from the m-castl director

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the first edition of the Messenger, the quarterly newsletter of the Michigan Center for Advancing Safe Transportation throughout the Lifespan (M-CASTL). M-CASTL is a University of Michigan (U-M) Transportation Center housed at the U-M Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI), and administered by the Social and Behavioral Analysis Division of UMTRI. Our theme, “Safety and Mobility throughout the Lifespan,” was chosen to highlight our focus on helping to increase the safety and mobility of both young and older adult users of the transportation system. We chose this theme because the U-M has vast and relevant expertise in these areas and the theme is closely aligned with the US Department of Transportation’s (US DOT’s) strategic planning goals. M-CASTL is also dedicated to several operating principles: providing top quality education and training to students, professionals, and the community; collaborating with U-M units, other Universities, industry, government, and other partners; and making our research and knowledge accessible to a global audience.

Since receiving funding from the US DOT’s Research and Innovative Technology Administration in August 2007, the M-CASTL staff and faculty have been very busy getting our various programs started. We have developed a website (http://m-castl.org), and I encourage you check the site regularly to get the most up-to-date information on M-CASTL’s activities. The Center will have many exciting opportunities for the faculty and students of the U-M, as well as others. Each year, M-CASTL will bring together researchers and professionals to share knowledge and help plan upcoming activities. You can read about these activities in this issue of the Messenger. If you have questions or feedback about M-CASTL, or you wish to contribute financially to our activities, please contact me at: m-castl@umich.edu.

My best regards,

David W. Eby, PhD
M-CASTL Feature

The University of Michigan has established the M-CASTL to increase understanding of and address — across the different dimensions of the roadway, vehicle, and driver — the risks related to the two ends of the age spectrum. Both young people and older adults present unique safety and mobility challenges. Specific thrusts of the Center will focus on understanding and addressing: the changing perceptual, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities of older drivers; the transportation needs of young people and older adults when they are unable or choose not to drive themselves; and the elevated crash risk of young drivers. M-CASTL will address these issues with three main activities: research, education, and technology transfer.

M-CASTL research activities will include the funding of research projects each year that fall within the Center’s themes. The award process will be competitive, and will include peer review of proposals. Each research team will implement a “quad” approach, with the team comprised of faculty members from at least two different U-M units, students, and at least one government/industrial/community representative.

The educational activities of the M-CASTL will include the development of a certificate program in transportation safety and mobility at the U-M. Additional educational activities of the center include a Professional Education program to educate working transportation safety and mobility practitioners; a Global Education Program; and an Outstanding Student of the Year Award Program.

Nearly all activities at the Center will include some aspect of technology transfer, or dissemination of information. Please see our website at http://m-castl.org for more information.

Save the Date

The first annual M-CASTL Transportation Research and Education Conference will be held May 6, 2008 at the U-M Michigan Union. Detailed information to follow.
“Concerns about safe driving by elderly and young drivers may lead to greater restrictions on drivers’ license privileges, requiring more public transit and opportunities for walking and bicycling…”

-US DOT's Research, Development and Technology Plan

Meet Jeffrey B. Halter, MD

Jeffrey B. Halter, MD, serves on M-CASIL’s Executive Committee, whose purpose is to develop and implement the Center’s strategic plan, develop research areas and educational opportunities, select research projects, and provide guidance for M-CASIL activities. Dr. Halter is a U-M professor of internal medicine, chief of the U-M Division of Geriatric Medicine, and director of the U-M Geriatrics Center and Institute of Gerontology. He says, “I’m pleased to serve on the M-CASIL executive committee. Driving issues are a big challenge for many of our elderly patients and their families. I hope that M-CASIL will give us new insights about how to identify people at risk and how to intervene to improve outcomes in this area.”

Dr. Halter’s clinical interest is diabetes mellitus in older adults. His research interests include pathophysiology of age-related changes of glucose metabolism, regulation of autonomic nervous system function in aging, and impaired homeostasis. Dr. Halter has authored over 200 research papers and book chapters, and is senior editor of the sixth edition of Principles of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology, to be published in 2008. He is a member of several national advisory panels on aging and geriatric research. He has served as president and chairman of the board of directors of the American Geriatrics Society, and as associate editor of the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. He has been elected as a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation and as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Halter earned his MD from the University of Minnesota Medical School and completed a fellowship in metabolism, endocrinology, and gerontology at the University of Washington.
Meet “Amby”
Nancy Ambrose Gallagher

Nancy Ambrose “Amby” Gallagher, RN is a PhD student in the U-M School of Nursing. Ms. Gallagher is currently working on her dissertation, “Environmental Influences on Walking in Older, Urban, African American Adults.” The research aims to identify the neighborhood environmental determinants of walking in older African American adults living in urban settings. Despite the benefits of regular physical activity, most adults over age 65 do not participate in any leisure-time physical activity.

She says, “One of M-CASIL’s goals is to focus on the changing perceptual, cognitive, and psychomotor abilities of older adults. My research will examine the unique challenges that older adults may face in navigating their physical environment, as well as the influences on their choice to use walking or public transit as alternatives to automobile transportation.”

Ms. Gallagher is a research assistant at the U-M School of Nursing, and is a registered adult nurse practitioner at Ann Arbor Family Practice. She holds Master degrees in clinical research training from the U-M School of Public Health and in community health nursing from the U-M School of Nursing. She is a member of the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Nurses Association, the Midwest Nursing Research Society, the American Diabetes Association, and the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society. She is also the first recipient of the Patricia F. Waller Scholarship.

Meet Amanda Dallaire

Amanda Dallaire joined the U-M in early 2008 as the M-CASIL administrative assistant. Ms. Dallaire serves as the “face” of M-CASIL, providing general administrative and clerical support, including setting up the M-CASIL office and its filing system, sending out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for research projects, and managing M-CASIL financials. She says, “As the new administrative assistant for M-CASIL, I am looking forward to working with everyone who collaborates on this project and I hope to make working with the Center a pleasant endeavor for all involved.”

Before coming to UMTRI, Ms. Dallaire worked for three and a half years as the box office manager for Perani Arena and Event Center, home of the Flint Generals ice hockey team. She set up events in the ticketing system and managed a Ticketmaster outlet. Prior to that, she worked as a realtor in residential sales for eight years at Red Carpet Keim. Ms. Dallaire attended Western Michigan University, majoring in psychology and economics; Baker College, studying accounting; and Mott Community College, taking classes in communications technology.

It is widely recognized that simply taking away the driving privileges of older adults who are having difficulty driving safely is not the answer to retaining safe mobility.
M-CASTL Activities

On November 5, 2007, M-CASTL kicked off Center activities by holding an inaugural reception at Palmer Commons on the U-M campus. During the reception, Peter Sweatman, UMTRI Director, welcomed everyone and David W. Eby, the Center director, provided an overview of the M-CASTL and introduced staff and contributors. Guests at the reception included U-M faculty and staff, industry collaborators, and several political representatives who supported the M-CASTL’s implementation at the University.

M-CASTL also had a presence at the annual conference of the Gerontological Society of America Conference (GSA) held in San Francisco, CA on November 16 through 19. M-CASTL co-sponsored the reception of the GSA’s Transportation and Aging Interest Group along with the New England University Transportation Center. During the meeting, Dr. Eby described M-CASTL and discussed future activities of the Center.

Dr. Eby and Lisa J. Molnar, were in Washington, D.C. on December 6 and 7, to run a workshop related to M-CASTL activities. The workshop, planned and managed by Dr. Eby and Ms. Molnar, focused on licensing policies for older drivers in North America, and was sponsored by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS). The three objectives of the workshop were to synthesize the present state of knowledge related to older driver safety, assessment, and interventions; develop a set of recommendations for stakeholders; and identify the most important knowledge gaps in this area and provide research recommendations for AAAFTS to pursue to address those gaps.

At right: M-CASTL team members enjoy a light moment during the inaugural reception. Left to right: Jonathan Vivoda, project coordinator, David Eby, director, Sarah Curmi, legal assistant for Michigan representative Rebekah Warren, Andy LaBarre, field representative for U.S. representative John Dingell, and Lisa Molnar, assistant director.
M-CASTL Research News

As research activities for M-CASTL got underway, the Center was pleased to announce the formation of a Research Subcommittee, comprised of several members of the Executive Committee. This subcommittee will be instrumental in both the peer review and actual selection process of research projects. Different members of the Executive Committee will be invited to join the Subcommittee each year of M-CASTL funding.

On January 11, M-CASTL issued an RFP for the first series of research projects. Prior to distributing the RFP, input was gathered from the Executive Committee of M-CASTL, as well as other experts in research and industry, as to the most salient topics within the theme of the Center. Based upon that input, the first series of research projects are required to address one or more of the following three priority topics: functional abilities related to the driving performance of older drivers; available, accessible, acceptable, adaptable, and affordable transportation options of young people and older adults when they are unable or choose not to drive themselves; and driver drowsiness and distraction among young drivers. Proposals will be evaluated based upon significance, approach, innovation, investigators, and practical application. Each proposal will be peer reviewed and scored, with the final project awards decided upon by the Research Subcommittee. The maximum award for any individual project will be $100,000 for the first year of the Center. Proposals are due on March 4, with research activities beginning on April 15.

Did you know?
Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers, with 40% of all teenage deaths resulting from traffic crashes.

M-CASTL Technology Transfer News

In order to effectively communicate M-CASTL activities to all interested parties, the Center has launched a website at http://m-castl.org. The website is the best place to find out about the latest M-CASTL activities, RFP information, and other important happenings around the Center. To contact M-CASTL staff directly, please send an email to m-castl@umich.edu.

As part of the technology transfer activities of the Center, David Eby and Lisa Molnar are serving on the planning committee for a spotlight conference of the Transportation Research Board (TRB). The conference is supported by both TRB and the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), and is entitled “Changing Demographics on the Transportation System.” It is scheduled to be held October 27 and 28, 2008 in Washington, D.C.

M-CASTL staff are pleased to announce the date of the first annual M-CASTL Transportation Research and Education Conference. The conference will include a meeting of the Center's Advisory Board and Executive Committee to elicit topic areas for the next round of M-CASTL funded research projects. The Conference will also feature several presentations related to the M-CASTL theme. Look for more details about the presentations in the next issue of the Messenger. The Conference will be held on May 6 at the U-M Michigan Union.
One of M-CASTL’s educational objectives is to examine the feasibility of creating a certificate program at U-M related to transportation safety and mobility. The certificate will serve as a precursor to a longer-term goal of establishing a Master’s degree program. Activities are currently underway to examine existing courses across all departments at the University to assess which ones would be appropriate for the program.

Another important educational objective of M-CASTL is described as our Professional Education Program. As part of this program, M-CASTL will expand the U-M’s role in continuing education for transportation safety and mobility practitioners through the use of various media. The Professional Education Program will also provide funding for M-CASTL’s experts to give lectures and talks, serve on advisory boards, and conduct other similar activities. Lisa Molnar, the assistant director of M-CASTL, recently gave a talk at the Turner Senior Resource Center as part of this program. Her presentation focused on an older driver self-screening instrument (http://um-safedriving.org) that was recently developed at UMTRI; an updated resource guide entitled “Promising Approaches for Promoting Lifelong Community Mobility;” and upcoming M-CASTL activities.

The Patricia F. Waller Scholarship was recently awarded to Nancy Ambrose “Amby” Gallagher, a PhD student in the U-M School of Nursing. The purpose of the scholarship is to provide funds for highly qualified U-M graduate students who elect a curriculum, thesis, or special project that addresses the human impact of transportation practice. For more information about the scholarship, see http://www.umtri.umich.edu/pdf/WallerSchol.pdf. Ms. Gallagher’s research on identifying the environmental determinants of walking in older adults will add to the knowledge related to understanding the mobility needs of people as they age, an important theme of M-CASTL.