

**RITA 2-10**

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### **U.S. DOT Announces Challenge to Researchers to Improve Road Safety Through New Weather Data**

Stressing the need to provide timely, high-quality road weather information to the American public, Research and Innovative Technology Administrator (RITA) Peter Appel today announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation will sponsor up to seven innovative ideas for using the *Clarus* weather information system to improve roadway safety during severe weather. The Department intends to provide up to \$80,000 per award in an open competition.

“Nearly a quarter of all vehicle crashes happen when severe weather strikes, and many of those crashes can be prevented using available technology,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Having access to highly accurate, live weather information will raise the level of safety on our roads and save lives.”

Launched in 2004, *Clarus* provides near real-time atmospheric and pavement observations from more than 2,000 environmental sensor stations and 45,000 road sensors deployed by state departments of transportation. The result is a comprehensive picture of the weather along the nation’s roads that is available to any user, at anytime, anywhere in the U.S.

Transportation managers and weather providers in 36 states and three Canadian provinces currently contribute data to *Clarus* and use it to make critical decisions. By offering researchers and other innovators full access to *Clarus*’ unparalleled, live weather data, RITA Administrator Peter Appel believes that the Department can truly tap into the program’s vast potential.

“Applications developed using *Clarus* data could help someone decide not only whether to grab an umbrella, but also when they should travel and what routes they should take,” said RITA Administrator Peter Appel. “This competition will lead to new safety products and ideas that are bound only by the limits of our imagination.”

The Federal Highway Administration's Road Weather Management Program, in conjunction with the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Joint Program Office, established the *Clarus* Initiative in 2004 to reduce the impact of adverse weather conditions on surface transportation users. Proposals will be accepted until April 14, 2010. Additional information on how to submit a proposal can be found at [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov), Solicitation number DTFH61-10-R-00015.

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