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SRI International, TERC and Girls Inc. Partner With AC Transit to Inspire High School Girls to Create Greener Public Transportation Solutions

MENLO PARK, Calif., Dec. 15, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- SRI International, Girls Incorporated of Alameda County (Girls Inc.), TERC, and Alameda - Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) announced a new, scalable community action project, "Green Riders: Innovative Transportation Systems," that encourages high school girls to develop clean and green public transportation ideas.

Teen girls will be challenged to increase public transportation ridership while decreasing environmental impact. They will examine plans and prototypes for fuel systems, bus technologies and access to public transportation. Girls will act as ambassadors for their peers and larger community by advocating and engineering design solutions for their local transportation municipality.

"Providing girls the opportunity to present their innovations to a real audience encourages them to think and learn like scientists and engineers," said Melissa Koch, InnovaTE3 principal investigator and a senior education developer at SRI International. "The more they can expect to do well in science and engineering and see the value that these careers have for making our world a better place, the more likely they will be to choose these careers for themselves."

The transportation solutions project guides girls in developing real-world innovations for their own community and serves as a model for youth development programs that promote youth-led science and engineering projects.

AC Transit employees will serve as professional role models and provide a real world, meaningful context for the youth to experience careers needed to develop innovation for their increasingly environmentally challenged world.

"This is a wonderful project. We are thrilled to be involved in providing experiences that expose young women to professional career tracks," said AC Transit Interim General Manager Mary King. "I am particularly gratified that AC Transit is involved in this effort that develops young women for future leadership positions."

The collaborative project is part of the National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded InnovaTE3 program, developed by SRI, TERC, and Girls Inc. of Alameda County (California) to challenge high school girls to develop ecologically sustainable innovations such as green buildings and clean transportation solutions for their communities. The goal of the InnovaTE3 program is to motivate girls to explore Earth system science, and the science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) fields and careers needed to address these important problems.

"Our collaboration with SRI, AC Transit and TERC importantly engages girls in the sciences and improves the opportunities that we are able to offer them by leveraging resources and expertise and sharing effective strategies," said Linda Boessenecker, CEO, Girls Incorporated of Alameda County.

The four-month AC Transit project is part of the second year of a three-year InnovaTE3 program within Girls Inc.'s out-of-school Eureka! Program, serving 8th through 12th grade girls.

During the three-year grant period, InnovaTE3 will be offered at Girls Incorporated of Alameda County and will reach 135 girls. Beyond the grant period, InnovaTE3 will be disseminated through the national Girls Inc. network, which reaches more than 900,000 girls annually through 1,500 program sites in the U.S. and Canada.

InnovaTE3 (Grant Number: DRL-0833692) is funded through the National Science Foundation's Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) program (<http://www.nsf.gov/> (<http://www.nsf.gov/>)). The NSF established the ITEST program in direct response to current concerns and projections about the growing demand for STEM professionals and information technology workers in the U.S. It seeks solutions to help ensure the breadth and depth of the STEM workforce. ITEST supports research studies to address questions about how to find solutions. It also supports the development, implementation, testing and scale-up of implementation models.

For more information about InnovaTE3, see <http://www.sri.com/policy/GreenRiders> (<http://www.sri.com/policy/GreenRiders>)

About SRI International

Silicon Valley-based SRI International (<http://www.sri.com/>) is one of the world's leading independent research and technology development organizations. SRI, which was founded by Stanford University as Stanford Research Institute in 1946 and became independent in 1970, has been meeting the strategic needs of clients and partners for more than 60 years (<http://www.sri.com/about/60years.html>). Perhaps best known for its invention of the computer mouse and interactive computing (<http://www.sri.com/about/timeline/mouse.html>), SRI has also been responsible for major advances in networking and communications (http://sri.com/focus_areas/comm.html), robotics (<http://sri.com/robotics/index.html>), drug discovery and development (<http://sri.com/biosciences/indexN.html>), advanced materials (http://sri.com/focus_areas/materials.html), atmospheric research (<http://www.sri.com/esd/cgs/index.html>), education research (http://sri.com/focus_areas/education.html), economic development (<http://sri.com/policy/csted/>), national security (http://sri.com/focus_areas/defense.html), and more. The nonprofit institute performs sponsored research and development (<http://sri.com/crad.html>) for government agencies (<http://sri.com/about/clients.html>), businesses (<http://sri.com/about/clients.html>), and foundations (<http://sri.com/about/clients.html>). SRI also licenses its technologies (<http://sri.com/rd/hot.html>), forms strategic alliances (<http://sri.com/innovation/index.html>), and creates spin-off companies (<http://sri.com/about/spin.html>). In 2009, SRI's consolidated revenues, including its wholly owned for-profit subsidiary, Sarnoff Corporation (<http://www.sarnoff.com/>), were approximately \$470 million. Sarnoff Corporation, a leader in vision, video, and semiconductor innovations, will be fully integrated into SRI effective January 1, 2011.

About Girls Incorporated of Alameda County

Girls Incorporated of Alameda County is a local affiliate of the national Girls Inc. nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart and bold. Currently serving over 7,000 girls ages 5 to 18 annually, Girls Inc. of Alameda County offers year round academic, enrichment and skill building programs, as well as counseling services to youth, and their families, from low-income communities. Girls Inc. challenges girls to explore their potential, attend college, build careers and to expand their sense of what is possible.

About AC Transit

AC Transit is one of the largest transit agencies in California, serving over 64 million passengers a year throughout a 360-square-mile region. For 50 years, AC Transit has been recognized as a national leader in the transit industry, particularly with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It was the first California transit agency to join the Climate Action Registry to monitor and minimize tailpipe pollution, and the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EES) of Washington, D.C. named AC Transit a "National Clean Bus Leader" for its advanced environmental technology initiatives. AC Transit has received the American Public Transportation Association's, "Best of the Best" Award for excellence in both operations and maintenance. Additional information about AC Transit's environmental programs is available at www.actransit.org/environment (<http://www.actransit.org/environment>).

About TERC

Led by a group of experienced, forward-thinking math and science professionals, TERC is an independent, research-based organization dedicated to engaging and inspiring all students through stimulating curricula and programs designed to develop the knowledge and skills they need to ask questions, solve problems, and expand their opportunities.

TERC's mission is to improve mathematics and science education. TERC works at the frontiers of theory and practice to contribute to a deeper understanding of learning and teaching; enhance instruction through teacher professional development; develop applications of new technologies to education; create curricula and other products; and support reform in both school and informal settings.

TERC imagines a future in which learners from diverse communities engage in creative, rigorous, and reflective inquiry as an integral part of their lives—a future where teachers and students alike are members of vibrant communities where questioning, problem solving, and experimentation are commonplace. This vision is grounded in the belief that science and math literacies are critical to strengthening and preserving a democratic society.

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