New Facility Set For Electric Vehicle Research

09/23/2014

By: Evan Hall — September 23, 2014 -- Utah Public Radio

Groundbreaking for the new Electronic Vehicle and Roadway Research Facility and Test Track is scheduled for Tuesday of this week at Utah State University. The 4,800-square-foot building and track will house the university’s research into electric cars and innovative charging options. The new center will attract academic and industry researchers to work together and advance the viability of electric transportation, according to Dr. Regan Zane of USU’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

“The facility we’re building and its resources [are] really USU driven. So, it’s a facility we’re building here and has a capability we’re adding in that’s going to do some amazing things we’re pretty excited about,” Zane said. “It’s going to be the only one of its kind in the country for the foreseeable future and so we have quite a few collaborators, other universities and industry that are thinking about using this facility and working with us.”

Technology developed at USU that wirelessly charges electric buses has been adopted by the Salt Lake-based bus company Wave. The new facility will bring together several different areas of research under one roof, according to Zane.

“We’re expanding from many individual components. We have my power electronics lab, we have the civil engineering program, the smash lab, [and] we have automation and other work going on in electrical engineering. But now this is going to be a facility where we can bring it all together,” Zane said. “So we see this as cross disciplinary and we’re going to have some fun stuff over there. We’re going to be set up so we can bring in middle school, high school, up to undergraduate researchers to graduate students and Ph.D. students. Everyone’s going to have some things they’re going to be excited about and doing in this facility.”

The track that will accompany the new building will aid researchers in developing electric cars that can be charged while still in motion, he said.