



For Immediate Release:  
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### **Southeast U.S. Automotive Research Initiative Unveiled**

**NASHVILLE** (May 16, 2007) – Seven of the Southeast’s most prominent universities along with the National Transportation Research Center, Inc. (NTRCI), the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) today launched the Automotive Research Alliance (ARA).

The ARA will provide a broad range of research resources to automotive manufacturers and suppliers, including technology and manufacturing solutions as well as academic and training programs.

“We want to position the Alliance as a preferred source of industry-specific expertise, research, intellectual property and academic programs for the U.S. automotive industry,” said Ben Ritchey, acting president of NTRCI, which will serve as the umbrella organization for the ARA.

The seven Southeastern universities are Auburn, Clemson, Mississippi State, Alabama at Tuscaloosa, Alabama at Birmingham, Kentucky and Tennessee. All of the schools are leading research institutes and all are located in states with major automotive manufacturing and supplier facilities.

In making the announcement at a meeting of the Tennessee Automotive Manufacturers Association preceding the *Automotive News* Manufacturing Conference, Ritchey described the ARA as a “clearinghouse” through which the automotive industry can access an “exceptional network of automotive-focused scientists, engineers, researchers, laboratories and specialized equipment.”

NTRCI, a not-for-profit research corporation affiliated with the National Transportation Research Center in East Tennessee, will function as that clearinghouse, Ritchey said.

The benefits ARA will provide to the automotive industry as outlined by Ritchey at today’s announcement include:

- A single point of contact for information on automotive research and technology resources in the region
- A connection between industry, researchers and funding organizations interested in automotive-related issues.
- Solutions to complex and diverse problems facing the industry.
- A forum for the exchange of technical information and ideas.
- Industry partnerships with national laboratories and universities.

- Expedited research and technology requests through pre-negotiated arrangements.
- Experience in dealing with non-disclosure agreements and intellectual property rights issues.

“No activity reflects our commitment to a technology-based economy more than the Automotive Research Alliance. Southeastern states rely on the automotive industry, both OEMs and suppliers, for so many of their manufacturing jobs today,” said Dr. Dana C. Christensen, Associate Director for Energy and Engineering Sciences at ORNL.

“The Alliance between seven Southeastern universities, ORNL, TVA and NTRCI represents a truly unique opportunity for the region to compete for automotive R&D work by collaborating across state boundaries.”

At the end of the announcement, a representative from each of the ARA members signed a cooperative agreement that formally establishes the alliance.

“We’re open for business,” said Ritchey

Representatives from the University of Kentucky (UK) and the University of Tennessee (UT) also announced that each school planned to establish Centers of Excellence focused on specific automotive research programs.

Dr. Larry Holloway, director of the UK Center for Manufacturing and the Kentucky Utilities Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering announced that UK would establish a Center of Excellence in Automotive Advanced Manufacturing.

Dr. Fred D. Tompkins, president of the UT Research Foundation and Associate Vice President for Research, announced that UT will open a Center of Excellence focused on Automotive Supply Chain issues.

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**To learn more information about ARA, please visit our website, [www.autoresearchalliance.com](http://www.autoresearchalliance.com) or contact Ben Ritchey at 865-946-1200.**