HOW TO EVACUATE A BIG CITY

27-year-old Egyptian Hossam Abdelgawad will be honoured today at the International Transport Forum, the leading global mobility summit in Leipzig, Germany. The PhD-candidate from the University of Toronto, Canada, will receive the Young Researcher of the Year Award 2010 for his study, which offers a novel approach to the mass evacuation of major cities in case of a catastrophe.

The destruction of New Orleans by hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the undetonated car bomb on New York’s Times Square on 1 May 2010 again highlighted the topicality of Hossam Abdelgawad’s research. It addresses the growing concern that wide-scale evacuation of a city may become necessary in the event of a natural disaster, or of a terrorist attack. “The numerous man-made catastrophes that menace major communities accentuate the need for proper planning for emergency evacuation”, explains Abdelgawad, “my research focuses on coordinating, controlling and optimizing the utilisation of the existing transportation network capacity.”

The young Egyptian’s study is a first step towards enabling the most efficient evacuation for major emergencies, using different transport modes. Hossam Abdelgawad proposes a novel framework that integrates car-based and mass transit-based evacuation. His integrated approach has been successfully used during a simulated evacuation of the City of Toronto with rapid transit, buses and automobiles.

The Award will be presented today during a Gala Dinner at the International Transport Forum in Leipzig by German Transport Minister, Peter Ramsauer. In all, 31 papers from participants of 32 different nationalities (including co-authors) were received. “The Young Researcher Award is obviously filling a gap in the transport research scene”, said Jack Short, Secretary General of the ITF. “We are particularly impressed with the wide range of approaches to pressing problems transport faces.”

For further information, please contact Michael Kloth, Head of Communications, International Transport Forum at + 33 (0)1 45 24 95 96 or michael.kloth@oecd.org.