WALTA PROGRESS REPORT

T. Anderson, H.-G. Berns, R. Corn, J. Cramer, S. Elliott, R. J. Wilkes,
Dept. of Physics, University of Washington, Seattle, USA

WALTA (WAshington Large-area Time-coincidence Array) aims to study ultra-high energy (>10e18 eV) cosmic rays (UHECR) by placing detector elements in Seattle area secondary schools, and linking their data acquisition systems to the University of Washington via a computer network. The goal of WALTA is to have teachers and students be active participants in forefront scientific project, while building a long term partnership between the schools and the university-based physics research community. During a recent meeting in Seattle, WALTA joined other similar projects in the USA and Canada to form NALTA, a North American consortium of school-based cosmic ray detector network projects. In addition to the usual motivations for studying UHECRs, such as the puzzles of their origin, acceleration, and apparent abundance beyond the GZK cutoff, the NALTA consortium will allow us for the first time to search for coincident parallel showers, or even single ultra-giant showers, covering distance scales of 100s to 1000s of km at the earth's surface.