



Memorandum

To: Todd Muck, Deputy Executive Director
From: Christina Watson, Principal Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: August 23, 2017
Subject: **American Public Transportation Association Rail Conference**

On June 12-14, I attended the American Public Transportation Association Rail Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. This was an excellent networking opportunity with rail experts and transportation officials from around the country. For all rail modes – urban, commuter, high-speed, and intercity – this technical conference featured sessions on technology, operations, maintenance, safety and security, planning, finance, capital projects, and workforce development.

Sessions I attended this year included:

- **Opening General Session: Where Public Transportation Goes, Community Grows**
 - This welcome session highlighted the importance of transit to communities and to Baltimore in particular, where light rail is expanding and becoming more user-friendly with the “Baltimore Link” project.
- **Capital projects, large case studies**
 - This session included presentations on the Baltimore Metro, Zurick cross-city tunnel, and Honolulu light rail project.
- **General Session: Federal Partners Perspectives**
 - The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Executive Director, Matthew Welbes, talked about the FTA’s safety priority and funding challenges under the new administration, such as strategies for using Public-Private Partnerships (P3) for transit projects.
 - The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Executive Director, Patrick Warren, addressed the connectivity issues for railroads as the backbone for local and regional transportation networks. He also noted that the deadline for Positive Train Control (PTC) implementation is now Dec. 31, 2018, and that while progress is being made, the funding is not sufficient for all operators to meet this deadline.
- **Capital projects, small case studies**
 - This session included presentations on a rail bridge rehab project in Pennsylvania, a rail bridge project in San Diego, and a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – Light Rail Transit (LRT) conversion project in Ottawa, Canada.
- **Making the case for rail in the region**
 - This session included presentations on the Baltimore waterfront neighborhood revitalization project, the Virginia Railway Express corridor extension project, and a BRT project in Portland, Oregon through a very congested and built-out corridor.

- **High-Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail: A Global Update**
 - This session included presentations from the Shinkansen (in operation since 1964 with no injuries and no train collisions), the Texas-Oklahoma high-speed rail project (which is also studying a train connection to Monterrey, Mexico), and a new high-speed rail line from Berlin to Munich.
- **General Session: Appealing Directly to the Voters: How 2016 Became a Record Year for Transit Ballot Measures**
 - A panel of transit agency CEOs discussed the lessons learned from various transit ballot measures around the nation, including BART, LA Metro, Seattle, and Atlanta. Some key tips included continuing to nurture relationships with potential campaign committee members even when not actively seeking a sales tax (or reauthorization), celebrating successes (no matter how small), using plain language such as comparing costs per capita using coffee cups, and knowing your audience.
- **Rail Accessibility**
 - The panel discussed accessibility requirements for transit projects – including a minimum 8 feet width for platforms, vehicle requirements, elevators and public address systems.
- **Career pathways for women in transit**
 - This workshop provided information on the challenges facing women, especially minority women, seeking careers in transit. Barriers to jobs that are typically dominated by men include stereotypes, education, awareness of options, and exposure to alternative career options. Speakers also discussed the benefit to workforces of being more diverse.

Since I was so close to Washington, DC, I also took the opportunity to travel to the nation's capital to meet with Congressman Panetta's and Senator Kamala Harris' transportation legislative specialists.

Videos are available on the conference website, <http://www.apta.com/mc/rail/Pages/default.aspx>.