

TRANSPORT CHICAGO 2017 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS SUPPORT VALUE OF PLANNING
TO BUILD VIABLE TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

32nd Annual Conference Drew 300 From Transportation Industry to Exchange Ideas and Knowledge

CHICAGO (June 2017) -- Sound and forward-thinking planning policies build strong transportation networks and strong communities. That statement summarizes the messages delivered by the two keynote speakers at the Transport Chicago 2017 conference June 9.

Now in its 32nd year, the annual conference attracted some 300 transportation professionals, academics and students for a day of workshops and presentations on a broad range of the latest transportation research and developments.

At the breakfast keynote presentation, former two-time San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown noted how new public transportation was critical in the successful development of the University of California campus in the city and construction of AT&T Park, home of the Giants baseball team. Both sites can be reached by rapid transit service and offer minimal parking to encourage greater pedestrian mobility.

Transportation should be high on the agenda for elected officials, along with issues like public safety, housing, jobs and taxes, Brown said. "Politicians need to know what transportation means to people," he added.

Charles Marohn, a professional engineer and founder of the Strong Towns organization, said the nation's "illusion of wealth after World War II created a culture that turned its back on sound planning." The luncheon keynote speaker, Marohn maintained that big suburban developments and sprawl lead to short-term benefits, but liabilities for future generations.

Present development patterns make it challenging for communities to maintain roads, bridges and other necessary infrastructure because tax revenues don't provide a sustainable source of needed funding. Municipal leaders, Marohn said, need to revisit the "wisdom of how our ancestors built things" and redevelop communities block by block.

Transport Chicago 2017 was held at the Holiday Inn Mart Plaza Hotel. The conference featured a dozen sessions, more than 40 presenters or panelists, a poster session that detailed 12 recent transportation research projects and a tour of Chicago's newly expanded downtown River Walk. Transportation topics addressed included enhancing mobility, "last mile" issues, Illinois and regional long-range planning, transit oriented development and others.