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The 104th Transportation Research Board (TRB)
Annual Meeting Recap:
Congestion Pricing, Buses, EVs, Rural AVs,
Accessibility & International Cooperation



The Windels Marx TRB delegation, (left to right): Kim Ramkishun, Administrative Director; Juan Martinez, Esq., Associate; Matt Daus; Lawrence F. Hughes, Esq., Special Counsel; and Eric Richardson, Strategic Mobility Advisor

The Transportation Research Board's (TRB) 104th Annual Meeting took place in Washington, D.C., from January 5–9, 2025, drawing thousands of transportation administrators, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers. Attendees participated in over 600 workshops, lectures, committee sessions, and poster presentations, making it the largest annual gathering of transportation professionals in the world. This conference serves as a vital platform for sharing knowledge and identifying innovative solutions to transportation challenges, with a focus on improving systems across all modes of transportation, from autonomous vehicles to sustainable transit options.

Established in 1920, the TRB is a division of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine dedicated to advancing transportation innovation and addressing critical issues. Its committees, researchers, and staff tackle complex challenges such as building resilient infrastructure, integrating transformational technologies, and prioritizing public health

and safety. By fostering collaboration and disseminating expertise, the TRB continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of transportation globally.

This year, I attended with my staff to present new ideas and research, and to engage with stakeholders from around the world, wearing several of my hats – transportation lawyer, academic, and President of the International Association of Transportation Regulators (IATR). We also took the opportunity to attend sessions and workshops to learn about key transportation technology and policy innovations. On the first day of the conference, I led a workshop looking at perspectives on congestion pricing from around the world. I also co-hosted the International Coordinating Council’s International Networking Reception that evening.

Throughout the conference, I presented on recent developments and projects from the IATR at the International Coordinating Council (ICC). I also attended and spoke at several TRB committees and subcommittees on studies, reports, and projects that I have been involved in on intercity buses, paratransit, automated vehicles (AVs), and the regulatory agency of the future! These committees include the Paratransit Subcommittee, the Intercity Bus Transit Subcommittee, the International Coordinating Council; the Innovative Public Transportation Services and Technologies Committee; and the Rural, Intercity Bus, and Specialized Transportation Committee.

International Perspectives and Experiences with Congestion Pricing and Beyond



From Left: Camille Kamga, *Director of the University Transportation Research Center at the City College of New York*; Magnus Blinge, *an expert with the Swedish Transportation Administration*; Kristin White, *former FHWA Director*; Matt Daus; Christos Xenophontos, *Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation*; Michael Caltabiano, *CEO of Australia’s National Transportation Research*

Organization; Caroline Almeras, Secretary General of the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI); David Do, New York City Taxi & Limousine Chair/Commissioner; Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA; Lauren McCarthy, Senior Director at the Shared Use Mobility Center; Johnathan Peters, Professor of Finance and Analytics at the College of Staten Island; and Maria Eugenia Martinez Donaire, Mobility Planning Director at the Madrid City Council

On the morning of January 5th, nine hours after the launch of Congestion Pricing in New York City, a packed standing-room-only crowd gathered at the workshop called “**Decarbonizing Mobility Globally: International Perspectives and Experiences with Congestion Pricing and Beyond.**” Attendees gathered to hear from global leaders and experts on New York’s new program and congestion pricing programs from around the world.

The workshop was sponsored by the TRB’s International Coordinating Council (ICC). The ICC is co-chaired by **Caroline Almeras, Secretary General of the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI)**; and **Christos Xenophontos, Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation**. The ICC concentrates on the evolution of an international perspective, practices, and research on all facets and services of all modes of transportation. I arranged and moderated the panels, and kicked-off the session by encouraging attendees to develop guiding principles and clear objectives for congestion pricing, while also acknowledging the grave political risk that proponents are asking elected officials to accept.



Kristin White

Attendees then heard a powerful and dynamic keynote speech by **Kristin White**, *former FHWA Director*, who was intricately involved with Congestion Pricing approvals for the federal government. White, who was just announced as the new lead for Google’s Transportation Strategy and Public Partnership, challenged the audience to “focus on the why of Congestion Pricing,” by identifying the program’s benefits for citizens, especially the most vulnerable. She emphasized that the program’s benefits must be better communicated to the public, and even encouraged the audience to jettison the unpopular phrase “congestion pricing” for an alternative like “value pricing” or perhaps something even more persuasive.

Next, attendees heard from a panel of experts including **Lisa Daglian**, *the Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA* regarding the framework and history of New York City’s nascent congestion pricing program, and from **David Do**, *New York City Taxi & Limousine Chair/Commissioner*, on the specialized approach TLC developed to mitigate the impacts of the policy on for-hire vehicle drivers.



Magnus Blinge, *an expert with the Swedish Transportation Administration* spoke about the effectiveness of congestion pricing programs in Stockholm and Gothenburg, and detailed how the policy became much more popular after the program launched and the public could see the benefits of the scheme. **Maria Eugenia Martinez Donaire**, *Mobility Planning Director at the Madrid City Council*, spoke about Madrid’s Low Emissions Zones, an alternative to congestion pricing that successfully slashed pollution, improved air quality, and reduced vehicle miles travelled. Finally, **Michael Caltabiano**, *the CEO of Australia’s National Transportation Research Organization*, detailed how cities in that nation are considering adopting the policy.

A second panel featured **Camille Kamga**, *Director of the University Transportation Research Center at the City College of New York*, who spoke about congestion pricing-related research priorities; **Lauren McCarthy**, *Senior Director at the Shared Use Mobility Center*, who provided a framework to evaluate potential exemptions to the program’s tolls; **Jonathan Peters**, *Professor of Finance and Analytics at the College of Staten Island*, who evaluated the MTA’s finances and provided a skeptic’s perspective on whether congestion pricing would deliver traffic reduction benefits or sufficient revenue for MTA to improve service; and **Binyam Reja**, *Global Practice Manager at the World Bank*, who highlighted market-based policies which complement

congestion pricing. These experts then led breakout workshop sessions with attendees to develop an ideal congestion pricing policy.

International Collaboration at the ICC



Christos Xenophontos, *Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation*; and Matt Daus

The International Coordinating Council (ICC) hosted its 2nd Annual International Networking Reception. The event was co-sponsored by the [International Association of Transportation Regulators](#) (IATR), the [European Conference of Transport Research Institutes](#) (ECTRI), the [International Road Federation](#) (IRF), the [Chinese Overseas Transportation Association](#) (COTA), and the [Union Internationale des Transports Publics](#) (UITP)



From Left: Dr. Guohui Zhang, *President of COTA and Professor at the University of Hawaii*; Dr. Yongsheng Liang, *Vice President of Shenzhen Technology University (SZTU)*; Dr. Jianming Ma, *Past President of COTA and Traffic Management Section Director of the Texas Department of Transportation*; Binyam Reja, *Global Practice Manager at the World Bank*; Sylvain Hoan, *Senior Director of Strategy and Transportation at UITP*; Victoria Sheehan, *Executive Director of TRB*; Kim Ramkishun; Christos Xenophontos, *Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation*; Caroline Almeras, *Secretary General of the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI)*; Ingrid Skogsmo, *President of the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI)*; Matt Daus; and Susanna Zammataro, *Director General at the International Road Federation (IRF)*

Many thanks to everyone who made the International Networking Reception honoring the members, partners, and volunteers of the TRB's International Coordinating Council (ICC) at this year's Transportation Research Board Annual Conference a night to remember! It was truly inspiring to see such a diverse and dynamic group of professionals come together to share ideas, foster collaboration, and celebrate our collective achievements in the transportation sector.



The 2026 ICC Planning Committee (from left): Carol Schweiger, *President of Schweiger Consulting LLC*; Petra Mollet, *Vice-President of Strategic and international Programs at the American Public Transportation Association (APTA)*; Kim Ramkishun; Susanna Zammataro, *Director General at the International Road Federation (IRF)*; Christos Xenophontos, *Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation*; and Matt Daus

I was proud to see the reception was well-attended by hundreds of international guests from across the globe, representing a wide range of expertise and perspectives. We were also delighted to welcome **Victoria Sheehan, *TRB's Executive Director***. We are so thankful for her support of the ICC and its partner organizations.

IATR's Agency of the Future



On the morning of Monday, January 6th, I presented at the meeting of the International Coordinating Council. I delivered an update on the IATR’s newest project titled the “**Taxi & Ride-Hail Regulatory Agency of the Future.**”

The agency of the future report will set forth the history and current status of the regulatory agencies structure and operations, and suggest a new framework to modernize regulation in a multi-modal and streamlined environment. Like past IATR reports, this report will review how agencies around the world are operating to determine best and accepted practices.

The regulatory agency of the future IATR project will include:

- **Enforcement:** Modernizing enforcement practices through technology, such as virtual inspections and automated enforcement inside and outside of the vehicle, to more efficiently enforce regulations;
- **Licensing Policies & Processes:** Creating a more efficient and fair licensing system through policies – incentivizing accessible and fuel-efficient vehicles, expediting licenses for drivers with jobs waiting – and processes, like remote licensing and online transactions;
- **Self-Regulation:** Implementing a system that is similar to the U.S. state TNC model and the U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Model oversight of motor carriers;
- **Governance Framework:** Setting the appropriate governance framework (state vs. local) and who regulates which aspects of the industry (*e.g.*, insurance requirements, driver licensing, vehicle standards);
- **Fees, Revenue & Fines:** Determining equitable and reasonable fees and fines; and
- **Mobility Data:** Setting data sharing and use practices, including determining what data is necessary, data protection and transparency, and use of data for enforcement and other purposes.

At the 2024 TRB Annual Meeting, I spoke at a workshop called “Designing the Transportation Agency of the Future.” The discussion explored how agencies can adapt to meet evolving customer needs and leverage technology and innovation effectively. Participants examined the potential roles of future departments of transportation (DOTs) – whether focused on system management, mobility, or strategic development – and discussed strategies for collaboration with public and private partners to fulfill these missions. PIARC’s **Technical Committee 1.1: Performance of Transport Administrations**, chaired by **Christos Xenophontos, Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Rhode Island Department of Transportation**, is focusing on the transport agency of the future in its 2024-2027 cycle as well. These workshops and research initiatives have inspired the IATR’s work in this area.

Public Transit Innovation

I also presented at the Innovative Public Transportation Services and Technologies Committee (AP020), chaired by **Adam Cohen, Senior Research Manager at the Transportation Sustainability Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley**. I delivered an update

on all IATR activities, highlighting our October 2024 conference, and in particular my contributions to the [Transit Cooperative Research Program \(TCRP\)](#).



[Read "Legal Issues and Emerging Technologies" Here](#)

[Read "Transit Agencies Providing or Subsidizing Innovative Micromobility Projects" Here](#)

One publication I wrote for the TCRP Legal Research Digest (LRD), titled “[Legal Issues and Emerging Technologies](#),” examines critical issues like regulatory challenges, liability and risk management, cybersecurity, data privacy, ADA compliance, civil rights, labor and employment law, and procurement. The report equips legal professionals with the tools to manage risks and ensure compliance in a rapidly changing transportation sector.

The report also highlights the transformative potential of technological advancements, emphasizing benefits such as cost reduction, improved safety, enhanced mobility, and greater operational efficiency. The report was released in October, 2022.

A more recent TCRP LRD report I wrote, titled “[Transit Agencies Providing or Subsidizing Innovative Micromobility Projects](#),” provides legal guidance for effectively, equitably, and safely integrating micromobility modes while complying with applicable laws. It explores key topics like regulating micromobility, addressing risks and challenges, and mitigating legal liabilities. The report emphasizes accessibility, equity, and environmental justice, offering strategies for responsible policy development that promote fairness and inclusivity. It also provides best

practices for data collection and management to help public agencies navigate the complex legal landscape and minimize risks.

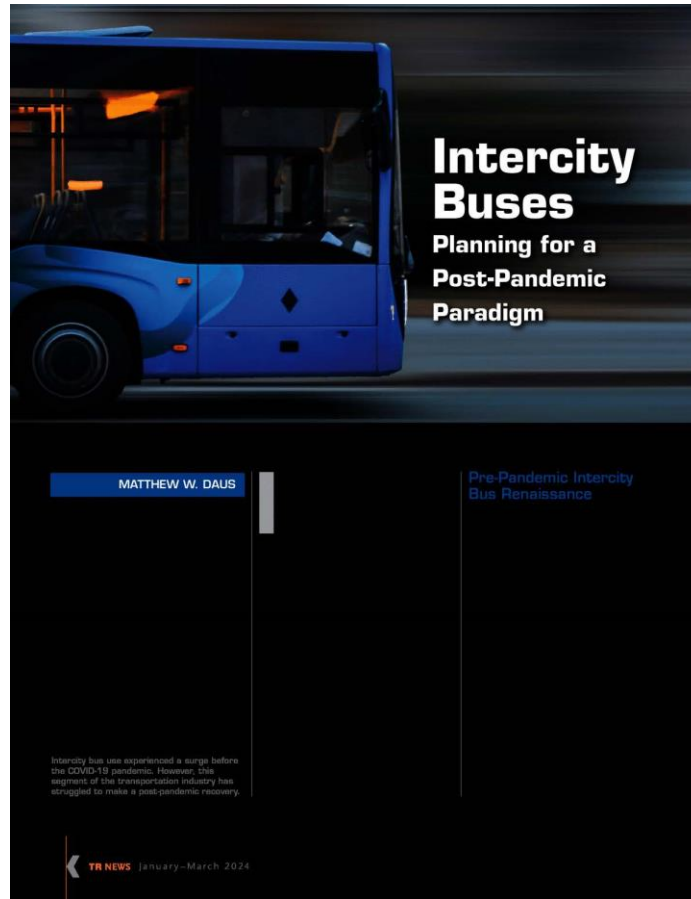
For public agencies, the report acts as a roadmap for navigating the legal landscape, identifying challenges, and implementing practical strategies to mitigate risks. It offers guidance on developing equitable and responsible policies while ensuring robust data collection and management practices. These resources empower agencies to balance innovation with safety and inclusivity in their micromobility initiatives.

For the micromobility community, the report serves as a resource to inform advocacy efforts and equip riders with a clear understanding of legal risks and regulations. It encourages collaboration and open communication between public agencies and micromobility stakeholders, aiming to create policies that balance innovation with safety and equity. By addressing these multifaceted issues, the report offers a roadmap for fostering a more integrated and sustainable transportation ecosystem.

Intercity Buses and Congestion Pricing

I also delivered a presentation to the Intercity Bus Transit Subcommittee, AP055(2), chaired by **Kai Monast, Associate Director at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education**, delivering an update on issues related to the motorcoach industry and New York City's congestion pricing program. Representing our practice group's extensive experience as counsel to key organizations like the Bus Association of New York (BANY), Greater Northeast Motorcoach Association (GNEMA), BUS4NYC, and the New England Bus Association (NEBA), I shared insights into the policies and trends shaping the sector, along with **Windels Marx Special Counsel Larry Hughes**.

I began by discussing New York City's congestion pricing program. While designed to address traffic congestion, the policy raises significant concerns for the motorcoach industry: Current exemptions only apply to "commuter, transit, and intercity buses on fixed schedules and open to the public," excluding charter and sightseeing buses. This distinction is arbitrary, given that all buses reduce congestion and serve as vital mass transportation. Secondly, many bus fleets operate interchangeably, making it impractical to toll based on usage. Inconsistencies in exemption criteria could lead to competitive imbalances, where some operators gain cost advantages over others. Lastly, there is no feasible way for tolling infrastructure to determine how buses are used at any given time, leading to potential inequitable tolling decisions. I argued that all vehicles meeting the legal definition of a bus should be fully exempt from congestion tolls, as encouraging bus transportation aligns with the program's goals of reducing traffic and emissions.



[Read “Intercity Buses: Planning for a Post-Pandemic Paradigm” Here](#)

I also highlighted insights from my 2024 article in TR News #348 titled “[Intercity Buses: Planning for a Post-Pandemic Paradigm](#).” The motorcoach industry has faced unprecedented challenges over the past few years, from the COVID-19 pandemic’s devastating impact to regulatory hurdles. While the industry has regained about 85–90% of its patronage, a full recovery is not anticipated until 2026. Government support during the pandemic was minimal compared to aid provided to airlines and Amtrak, leaving many operators struggling to survive. Acquisitions and closures, such as FlixBus acquiring Greyhound Lines and the cessation of Coach USA’s operations, have reshaped the market, often without thorough review by regulatory bodies. Additionally, increasing regulations and fees for city bus stops, coupled with the closure of terminals, have left operators and passengers without adequate infrastructure, like food, shelter, and restrooms.

Despite these challenges, there are reasons for optimism. Bus manufacturers are making significant advances in battery technology, with current ranges sufficient for popular intercity routes like New York to Washington, D.C. As the industry continues to recover, there is potential for improved infrastructure and regulatory frameworks that recognize the essential role of motorcoaches in reducing congestion and emissions.

IATR's Paratransit Update

I presented at the Paratransit Joint Subcommittee, AP055(2), chaired by **Erin McAuliff, Acting Director of Accessible Services at the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)** recapping the Accessibility Workshop that took place at the 2024 IATR conference. The IATR's Accessible Transportation Committee and the [Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Accreditation Commission \(NEMTAC\)](#), as well as other stakeholders, worked together to host a day-long workshop on developments in the public paratransit and private NEMT arena, with the goal of addressing key issues to update the IATR's [accessible transportation model regulations](#), focusing on modernizing paratransit and NEMT systems through improved accessibility, sustainable funding, technology innovation, and targeted regulatory incentives.

Breakout sessions delved into four discussion areas, including the **Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Accreditation Commission (NEMTAC)**, public paratransit reform, training and technology innovation, and investing in accessibility.

The NEMTAC session highlighted how accreditation can ensure best practices in driver training, safety, and compliance while reducing administrative burdens for NEMT providers. Public paratransit reform discussions focused on promoting shared rides to lower costs and leveraging technology to meet ADA, aging services, and NEMT-sponsored ride needs.

The technology and training innovation session emphasized inclusive ride-booking systems and alternatives for non-digital users, alongside improved training to better serve passengers with disabilities. The investing in accessibility session explored sustainable funding for accessible taxi programs, such as vehicle retrofits, boarding time costs, and targeted driver incentives, emphasizing collaboration among regulators, taxi companies, and nonprofits to maintain accessible transportation.

Rural Autonomous Vehicles



At the **Rural, Intercity Bus, and Specialized Transportation Committee, AP055**, chaired by **Jill Hough, Senior Transportation Planner at KFH Group, Inc.**, I spoke about the current state of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT), rural AV deployment, and accessibility in AVs.

I addressed the obstacles in the deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) in rural areas. While AVs hold immense potential to reduce crashes and enhance mobility for the 19% of Americans living in rural regions,¹ deployment faces unique challenges, such as complex infrastructure and low-density populations. Public grants and subsidies are essential to support research and implementation in these underserved areas. Notable projects, including Grand Rapids, Minnesota², and the University of Iowa's "ADS for Rural America,"³ exemplify promising initiatives in rural AV deployment. These efforts prioritize safety, scalability, and accessibility, providing a blueprint for future endeavors.

The rise of shared, connected, automated, and electric for-hire vehicles (S-CAEVs) introduces new possibilities for sustainable and inclusive urban mobility. However, accessibility remains a significant hurdle. While companies like May Mobility⁴ and Waymo⁵ are making strides with wheelchair-accessible AVs, widespread adoption requires vehicle designs with ramps, lifts, audio/visual cues, and compatibility with medical equipment. Collaboration with disability advocacy groups will ensure these innovations meet the needs of all users.

¹https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2019/acs/ACS_rural_handbook_2019_ch01.pdf

² <https://maymobility.com/locations/grand-rapids-minnesota/>

³ <https://adsfornruralamerica.uiowa.edu/>

⁴ <https://maymobility.com/technology/accessibility/>

⁵ <https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/waymo-blind-and-visually-impaired-options-for-bay-area-transportation/>

E-Mobility World Bank Roundtable



From Left: Michael Berube, *Deputy Assistant Secretary for Sustainable Transportation at the U.S. Department of Energy*; Alycia Gilde, *Senior Director for Transportation at the White House Climate Policy Office*; Ben Prochazka, *Executive Director at Electrification Coalition*; Matt Daus; Aditya Ramji, *Director of the UC David Global South Clean Transportation Center*; and Binyam Reja, *Global Practice Manager at the World Bank*

After TRB, on Thursday, January 9th, I had the privilege of representing the IATR at the World Bank Electric Mobility Salon, where speakers delved into key topics shaping e-mobility around the world. **Binyam Reja, *Global Practice Manager at the World Bank***, organized this insightful event, and formed the panel, which included **Michael Berube, *Deputy Assistant Secretary for Sustainable Transportation at the U.S. Department of Energy***; **Alycia Gilde, *Senior Director for Transportation at the White House Climate Policy Office***; **Ben Prochazka, *Executive Director at Electrification Coalition***; and **Aditya Ramji, *Director of the UC David Global South Clean Transportation Center***.

The group discussed and debated EV infrastructure planning, including how to coordinate between federal, state, and local priorities, as well as the need for a master EV charging plan with significant private sector input. Differing opinions were shared on the role of incentives versus mandates for e-mobility, the readiness of the private ground transport sector, and the role of mobility regulators. Examples cited include Columbus, Ohio, and California’s “Clean Miles” program and NYC’s Green Miles initiative with 2030 e-mobility emissions goals.

The discussion also emphasized the importance of driving down costs, particularly for batteries and developing the necessary infrastructure and power supply sustainably. It was noted that transitioning from fossil fuels requires critical materials to be sourced responsibly. There is significant momentum from both private and public sectors towards achieving a net zero transportation network, with a focus on hard-to-reach sectors like heavy-duty off-road agricultural equipment. The transition to electric mobility is not only about climate change but also national security. Building strong public-private partnerships and integrating sectors like rail, trucks, and boats into the conversation is crucial. Additionally, it is essential for industries such as TNCs to be involved in site selection for EV charging infrastructure, especially during airport redevelopment

projects, to ensure their charging needs are met. These discussions are pivotal as we continue to innovate and collaborate towards creating sustainable, accessible, and equitable transportation systems globally.

The Future of Transportation with TRB



From Left: Kim Ramkishun; Matt Daus; and Shailen Bhatt, *Former Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, and Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for U.S. & Latin America at AtkinsRealis*

The TRB's annual meeting brings together the brightest minds in transportation to solve complex challenges and shape a brighter future. **Victoria Sheehan, *Executive Director of the Transportation Research Board***, builds on many years of successful planning and administration by **Neil Pedersen, former TRB Executive Director**, and **Professor Susan Shaheen, former TRB Chair**. Director Sheehan came to the National Academies from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT), where she was commissioner for seven years. Responsible for an operating budget of over \$650 million, she oversaw a staff of more than 1,600 employees representing diverse areas such as aeronautics, rail, transit, construction, operations, finance, and administration.

The TRB Annual Meeting fosters collaboration through events like the ICC's networking reception, connecting transportation professionals, academics, and industry leaders globally. These gatherings promote the exchange of ideas and best practices, driving a unified approach to transportation challenges. By facilitating connections across disciplines and borders, the TRB empowers a global community to address key issues, advancing innovation, sustainability, and equity in transportation. The diverse participation, from discussions around buses, accessibility, and AVs, to international networking, demonstrates the TRB's vital role in shaping the future of transportation. You can learn more about how to get involved with the TRB through [attending webinars](#), [volunteering](#), [subscribing to their newsletter](#), and [attending the Annual Meeting here!](#)