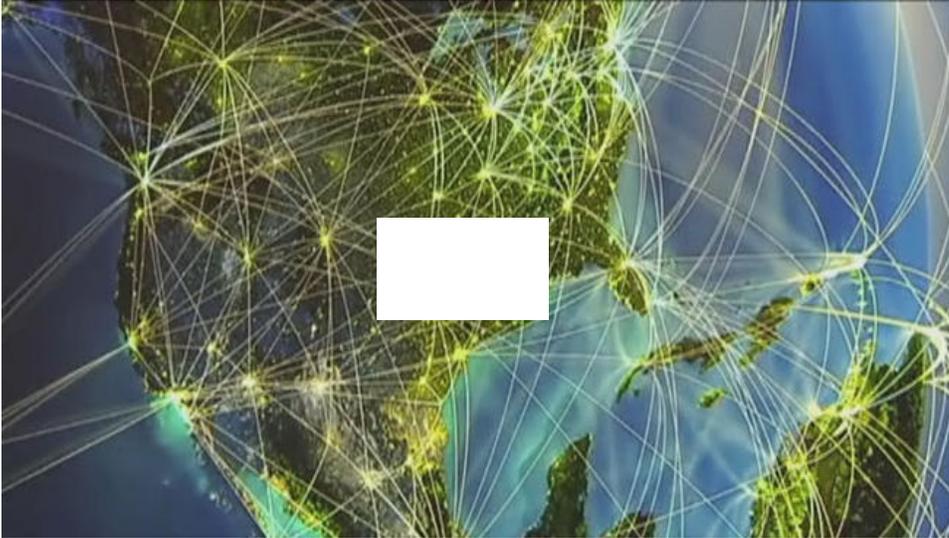


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Transportation Summit in Irving Focuses on the Future

Hundreds of transportation experts gather at the Irving Convention Center

By [Christine Lee](#) | Wednesday, Aug 15, 2012 | Updated 6:07 PM CDT



Christine Lee, NBC 5 Irving Reporter

The 15th Annual Transportation and Infrastructure Summit in Irving includes 800 participants from 10 countries and 23 states, to talk about the future.

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Hundreds of elected officials and transportation experts are in Irving for the 15th Annual

Transportation and Infrastructure Summit under way at the Irving Convention Center.

In a span of four days, 800 people from 10 different countries and 23 different states will attend the summit including some of the key figures that can change the scope of the way our country moves.

Former Governor of Pennsylvania and NBC News Political Analyst Ed Rendell flew in to take part as a keynote speaker.

He said every developed nation prioritizes infrastructure revitalization, and the United States of America needs to follow suit.

"The US Chamber of Commerce estimates that we are leaving one trillion dollars off of our GDP because our transportation systems underperform and hinders productivity," said Rendell.

The summit covered the third and fourth floors of the convention center. Vibrant visuals depicted various modes of transportation, and a model of a bullet train showed how the Dallas-Fort Worth area and Houston can be connected in the years to come.

"Ridership on things like mass transit and inter-city passenger rail are achieving the highest levels many have seen in 50 years," said Joseph Szabo with the Federal Railroad Administration.

The goal of the summit is to figure out how to move transportation forward despite huge budget cuts.

"Rail can be the most cost-effective, the most fuel-efficient, the most environmentally friendly way of moving both people and goods," said Szabo.

Speakers at the summit range from national figures to local leaders.

Garland Mayor Ronald Jones presented to his audience the different types of public transportation in his city and their impact on the city's economy. He also addressed eco-friendly partnerships with neighboring cities.

"We are establishing a bike trail that will go from Mesquite, Garland, all the way up to Richardson," he said.

Summit participants hope their days together can lead to decisions that will keep the U.S. at the forefront of the global economy.

"America has to rebuild its infrastructure with a very significant program if we're going to stay economically competitive, if we're going to make sure that the public is safe, and if we're going to improve the quality of our lives," said Rendell.

The summit ends Friday, August 17.

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