

Opening Remarks by Chairman Shukuri  
for the  
Rail Symposium 2024: Value Creation for a Sustainable Society

Good afternoon, everyone. I am Masafumi Shukuri, Chairman of the JTTRI, Japan Transport and Tourism Research Institute, and of the JITTI, Japan International Transport and Tourism Institute, USA.

I would like to thank everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to join today's symposium in-person and online.

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Honorable Shigeo Yamada, Ambassador of Japan to the United States for his video greeting for this symposium.

Ambassador Yamada has been incredibly busy attending Prime Minister Kishida's official visit to the US and arranging official events including the US-Japan summit, the trilateral summit with the US, Japan and the Philippines, and PM Kishida's invitation to speak at the US Congress, but he kindly spared us his time to give his message here.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to our two keynote speakers:

Ms. Jennifer Mitchel, Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation

Ms. Masako Okano, Deputy Director-General, Railway Bureau, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

In addition, I would like to thank our two distinguished moderators and eight panelists from railway companies in the US and Japan for taking time out of your busy schedules to gather with us here in Washington, D.C. from all over the United States and Japan.

Today's symposium is co-sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the JITTI USA, the US branch of the JTTRI, to discuss the role and significance of rail as a public transportation system, and to discuss the situation of railway systems in Japan and the U.S.

With APTA, we have co-organized a number of events, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we had to cancel the March 2020 symposium on railway safety measures, and we were obliged to hold the December 2021 roundtable on the recovery of railway from pandemic online.

Today is the first in-person event we are co-hosting with APTA since the end of the pandemic. Thank you, Chairman Skoutelas, thanks to your support, we have a wonderful symposium today. Thank you very much.

Also, this symposium is held as an official event of the annual National Cherry Blossom Festival, as was our symposium “U.S.-Japan International Exchange and Tourism Symposium,” which was held in March,2023.

For more than 100 years, cherry blossoms flowering along the Potomac River have been coloring landscapes of the Capital and feasting the eyes of citizens of Washington D.C. as if they are symbolizing the perpetual friendship between the US and Japan.

Ms. Daiana MAYHEW, President of the National Cherry Blossoms Festival, is joining us. Thank you very much for your exceptional support for today’s event.

Today, I would like to focus on the social and economic benefit of the railway system, and how we can work together to build a sustainable rail system in the United States and Japan.

Here's a little bit of history for you.

It was the United States that brought the first railway to Japan in 1854.

When Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry visited Japan on the Black Ships, he brought various gifts for Tokugawa Shogun among which included a steam locomotive.

It was only 2.4 meters long, a quarter-scale model of the real thing, but it was coal-fired and could run at 20 miles per hour.

The train, which ran on a circular track about 100 meters long, aroused the curiosity of the Japanese people at the time, and it was recorded in Commodore Perry's diary that everyone wanted to ride on the train.

The train brought by Commodore Perry opened the eyes of Japanese people to the situation of railways overseas, especially the aspect of railways as industrial infrastructure. As a result, the Meiji government was able to open the first full-scale railway between Shinbashi and Yokohama, a distance of about 29 km, as early as 1872.

Subsequent investment by the public and private sectors led to the construction of a nationwide railway network originated from Tokyo, which stimulated urban development centered on railway stations.

Against the backdrop of these developments, Japan's railway-related technology has made remarkable progress.

In 1964, the world's first high-speed railway, the Shinkansen, was put into service, leading to the development of the superconducting maglev Shinkansen, which runs at a speed of 500 km/h.

In the 1980s, Japanese railway technology made its way back to the United States.

In 1983, Kawasaki Railcar Manufacturing co. delivered its R62 railcars to the New York Metro.

Since then, Japanese-made railcars have been operated in transportation systems throughout the U.S., some of which have been produced by the local factories in the U.S., contributing to the creation of jobs in the country.

In Washington, D.C., where Hitachi Rail has a contract to deliver 256 cars to Washington Metro, a production facility will begin operations this summer in Washington County, Maryland.

A mock-up of the "Fleet of Future" vehicle that will be manufactured there was on display at the National Mall until last week.

We hope you were able to see it.

The new vehicle, which has been designed with a variety of customer-oriented features, will be in service in the near future, and we can't wait to see it in service for the residents of the capital city.

With this historical relationship as a backdrop, both the U.S. and Japan have benefited from the railway system.

Nowadays, the significance of railways is attracting renewed attention in order to address new challenges unique to modern society, such as achieving carbon neutrality society, maintaining and securing urban functions such as easing traffic congestion and maintaining service during disasters, and economic growth in a mature society.

Needless to say, the relationship between the two countries in the field of railways is becoming closer and more important, as evidenced by the participation of Japanese companies in urban rail and high-speed rail projects, such as the Texas Highspeed Railway, in the United States.

At today's symposium, we would like to invite Japanese and U.S. government officials and practitioners involved in the railway business to discuss this new significance given to railways, the social and economic value they create, and sustainable railways.

I would like to consider these issues together with you.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my hope that today's symposium will contribute to further application of the railway system in order to solve social issues that both countries face in common, and that it will lead to further development of U.S.-Japan friendship.

Thank you very much for your kind attention today.