

Opening Remarks by Chairman Shukuri
for the Railway Symposium 2026

Good afternoon, everyone.

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

First, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of you who are attending this symposium, co-hosted by the American Public Transportation Association, or APTA, in person and online.

Second, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Shigeo Yamada, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the United States of America, for his presence in spite of his busy schedule, right after Prime Minister Takaichi's visit to Washington D.C. and the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Trump last week.

In addition, in this memorable year of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, I would like to express my utmost appreciation to Mr. Skoutelas, APTA's President and CEO, and everyone at APTA for their cooperation and support in planning today's event.

Next, I would like to express my special thanks to the keynote speakers:

Mr. David Fink,
Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration; and

Mr. Yoshimichi Terada,
Vice-Minister for Transport, Tourism and International Affairs at the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both of you.

Panel Discussion 1 involves four (4) railway experts under the theme of railway investment and its economic effects:

- Mr. Roger Harris from Amtrak;
- Mr. Janno Lieber from the New York MTA;
- Mr. Hidetoshi Miura from Hitachi Rail; and
- Mr. Nobuhiko Takeichi from West Japan Railway.

In addition to the four panelists,
Mr. Tom Wright, as the moderator.

Panel Discussion 2 invites five (5) experts, focusing on the relationship between mega events and public transportation:

- Mr. Conan Cheung from LA Metro;
- Mr. Ryan Coholan from MBTA;
- Mr. Kiyoshi Eguchi from Osaka Metro;
- Ms. Jannet Walker-Ford from APTA and WSP; and
- Mr. Noriyoshi Yamagami from Tokyo Metro.

In addition to the five panelists,
Mr. Carlos Braceras, as the moderator.

Thank you very much to all the experts in the railway industry from Japan and the United States for joining us.

Since 2019, JITTI's annual spring symposium has been held as an official event of the National Cherry Blossom Festival with the endorsement and cooperation of its president, Ms. Diana Mayhew. After the symposium, please enjoy the gorgeous cherry blossoms on the Potomac River.

At the "Railway Symposium 2024" co-hosted by APTA in April 2024, we discussed the social and economic value of forming a railway network between and within cities, as well as the effects of improving urban attractiveness and resilience.

Since then, the economic importance of railways has been further emphasized in both Japan and the United States. Large-scale urban development projects are currently underway in Japan, mainly in Tokyo and Osaka, and in the United States, mainly in the Northeast Corridor and international event venues, with railway development and station-centered urban development, as will be presented later in detail by respective panelists. Moreover, significant investment in the United States by Japanese comprehensive railway manufacturer has also been made.

Now, one of the scenes that comes to mind, when I think about American railroads is "500 miles", a folk song that was sung by Peter, Paul and Mary, and took the world by storm in the 1960s and continues to be covered today. While today's youth may not be familiar with it, it is a song that gained great popularity in Japan at the time with its melancholy melody and lyrics, lamenting that "If you miss the train I'm on", I will be 100, 200, and finally 500 miles away from my hometown and "I cannot go back home this way." It's a song I love, and the record I listened to repeatedly when I was young was sung by The Brothers Four.

On October 1st, 1964, when this song was popular, the Tokaido Shinkansen, or bullet train, opened between Tokyo and Osaka, and 10 days later, the opening ceremony of the first Tokyo Olympics Games was held. Six years later, in 1970, the first Expo was held in Osaka.

Speaking of 500 miles, that is the distance between Tokyo and Hiroshima in Japan. It used to take more than 11 hours by limited express train, but with the opening of the Shinkansen, the travel time required has been dramatically reduced. At that time, PPM were singing, "I can't go back home", but in fact, it was no longer so impossible in Japan.

And now that the second Tokyo Olympics Games and the Osaka-Kansai Expo have been held, half a century after PPM, the travel time between Tokyo and Hiroshima is only 3 hours and 49 minutes by Shinkansen, and 500 miles is a distance that can easily be traversed by rail for business and pleasure day trips. I am really looking forward to seeing what kind of economic and social transformation and innovations will emerge, when the long-awaited Chuo Shinkansen by Super Conducting MAGLEV technology from Tokyo to Nagoya, and further to Osaka, starts operating at ultra-high speed of 500 kilometers per hour, or about 311 miles per hour, in the near future.

Indeed, railway investment creates significant economic effects and innovation by increasing visitor traffic and creating new businesses. In addition, mega events encourage investment in safety and accessibility and will continue to contribute to improving customer experience and quality of life through upgrading the quality of railway service itself.

In closing, I sincerely hope that today's symposium will serve as a cornerstone for deepening cooperation between Japan and the United States in the field of railways and transportation.

Thank you very much.

(End)