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PRESS RELEASE

FIRST INTERNATIONAL RAIL FORUM FOR NORTH AMERICA HIGHLIGHTS THREE MAIN THEMES AFFECTING THE INDUSTRY

13 DECEMBER 2016

The inaugural meeting of the UITP (International Association of Public Transport) International Rail Forum for North America brought together domestic and global transport executives and highlighted three main themes affecting rail in the region.

The Forum took place from 8-9 December at the New York MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) and assembled top executives from rail-operating public transit agencies such as New York, Portland, Los Angeles, Washington, San Francisco, Toronto and Montréal with executives from London, Paris, Barcelona, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Brussels and Hong Kong. The Forum looked at a range of hot topics and highlighted three main themes that are affecting the rail industry in North America but also globally: **keeping rail systems in a state of good repair, innovation** and the **renaissance of light rail**.

“Renewing track, upgrading signalling, re-building tunnelling and bridges may not be the most politically appealing work but if nothing is done, performance and safety will suffer, leading to customer complaints, pressure from politicians and even network shutdowns. This work is essential and can ultimately affect cities’ vitality and competitiveness,” said UITP Regional Manager for North America, **Andrew Bata**. “Continuous modernisation is an essential need to meet the needs and demands of the public,” added **Claude Andlauer** from RATP in Paris.

Closely linked to modernisation is innovation, which can be slow in many transit agencies because there is often a general management reticence to push innovations. “Recent improvements in service quality, integrated door-to-door services and smart information are all enhancing customer experience. Safety is often taken for granted in transit, but recent events demonstrate that the industry needs to constantly work and to innovate to keep-up with high safety standards,” said UITP Secretary General, **Alain Flausch**. “True innovation is to do what the Metro is generally not doing routinely,” explained **Nadine Lee** from LA Metro.

Meanwhile, light rail has been enjoying a dramatic renaissance in North America with more than 30 cities in the US and Canada currently introducing or expanding light rail. This revival is going hand-in-hand with new features such as low-floor design, clever urban planning and transit oriented development, which have all triggered



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high interest around light rail in the US.

Looking ahead, the second International Rail Forum for North America will be held in the autumn of 2017 in the USA. In the meantime, North American transport professionals will convene again with their international counterparts at UITP's flagship event, the [Global Public Transport Summit](#) in Montréal, May 15-17, 2017.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP) is a passionate champion of sustainable urban mobility and is the only worldwide network to bring together all public transport stakeholders and all sustainable transport modes. We have 1,400 member companies giving access to 18,000 contacts from 96 countries. Our members are public transport authorities and operators, policy decision-makers, research institutes and the public transport supply and service industry. Visit our website www.uitp.org. Follow us on Twitter: [@UITPpressoffice](https://twitter.com/UITPpressoffice)

UITP member companies in North America include some of the region's largest operators in metro (New York, Washington, Montreal and Toronto) and light rail systems (Denver, Portland, Honolulu, Edmonton and Vancouver). UITP opened its first office in North America in New York City in 2015 to support the growth of urban transit in the region and will hold its flagship event, the Global Public Transport Summit, in Montreal in May 2017. Find out more about UITP's activities in [North America](#).

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