

CALLING ALL TRANSPORTATION INNOVATORS: SHOWCASE YOUR IDEA AT THE TRB SIX MINUTE PITCH

By Alex Bigazzi

Do you have an innovative idea that could be the next big thing in transportation? Are you a startup looking for opportunities to share your vision? Are you a researcher with an impactful product idea and ready to commercialize? If so, you need to apply for the *Six Minute Pitch: A Transportation Startup Challenge*, in which selected presenters pitch their cutting-edge, research-based concepts for a new transportation product or service in just six minutes. All transportation sectors are encouraged to apply. Previous competitions have included new digital tools for industry and the public, new urban travel modes, tools to increase the efficiency and sustainability of freight, and more.



Judges and winner of the 2017 Six Minute Pitch, from left to right: Chris Thomas, Emily Castor, Hooman Parvardeh, David Zipper, and Jessica Robinson.

Organized by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Young Member Council (YMC), the *Six Minute Pitch* has become one of the most well-attended sessions of the TRB Annual Meeting taking place in January. Four presenters are selected from a pool of applicants to showcase their idea to a panel of esteemed judges. Presentations are judged on the basis of the commercial viability of their concept, potential business plan, and on the demonstration of how the proposed idea meets a critical transportation challenge. Judges treat each presentation as an individual “investment” and must decide immediately after the presentation and discussion if they are in or out. The presenter with the most votes wins the competition.

While no actual financial investments are made at the Six Minute Pitch (per TRB rules), a one-year membership to the Union by 1776 is awarded to the winning pitch. Union is a global platform enabling the next billion entrepreneurs to succeed by breaking down barriers and empowering world-changing startups to access the resources they need, regardless of location. In addition, winners of the Six Minute Pitch are featured in various media outlets.

All presenters receive valuable feedback from the distinguished panel of investors and entrepreneurs. Judges for previous Six Minute Pitch competitions have included Jessica Robinson of Ford Smart Mobility, Emily Castor of Lyft, David Zipper of 1776, Chris Thomas of Fontinalis Partners, Sean O’Sullivan of SOSVentures and Co-founder and Managing Director of Carma, and Gabe Klein of CityFi and Special Venture Partner at Fontinalis Partners.

In the past five years, the Six Minute Pitch has showcased many successful early-stage transportation technology companies. The winner of the 2017 Six Minute Pitch was Bridge Intelligence (www.bridge-intel.com), a software start-up company bringing digital solutions to bridge practitioners with their flagship bridge inspection app, InspectX. Previous winners included:

- 2016: TotalPave (<http://totalpave.com>), with new technology that gives cities the ability to collect standard pavement condition data at a fraction of the cost of current technology using off-the-shelf smartphones;
- 2015: Transfix (<http://transfix.io>), which provides needed tools for interstate truck drivers to plan their trip, manage their loads, and get paid fast;
- 2014: TransitScreen (<https://transitscreen.com>), which provides real-time availability and schedule information for a suite of sustainable transportation modes; and
- 2013: On-Time Arrival, an app that provided estimated time of arrival at your flight’s gate given your current location and the current conditions between you and your flight’s gate.

TransitScreen has since brought one of the Six Minute Pitch judges, Gabe Klein, on as a strategic advisor, and its inventor even had the opportunity to pitch TransitScreen to President Obama. Other past participants have used their experience at the pitch to refine the way they approach potential investors and successfully gained funding for further product development and commercialization.

Information on how to submit a proposal to present at the 2018 Six Minute Pitch can be found at: www.sixminutepitch.com. Applications will be accepted from September 3 to October 6, 2017. [itej](#)



Hooman Parvardeh presenting the Bridge Intelligence pitch at the 2017 TRB Annual Meeting.