

E-Bike Pitch Wins Annual Transportation Entrepreneur Contest

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Kevin McLaughlin sees a bright future for e-bikes—electric bicycles—and wagers that his business model will help travelers switch from cars to e-bikes in the United States and Canada. McLaughlin’s vision won this year’s Six-Minute Pitch contest at the TRB 99th Annual Meeting, held in January in Washington, D.C.

McLaughlin is the founder and CEO of Zygg, North America’s first e-bike subscription service. Zygg is designed for people taking trips that are too long for conventional bicycle use—but who want to avoid driving a car or making multiple transit transfers.

Sponsored by the TRB Young Members Council since 2013, the Six-Minute Pitch is a transportation version of the TV show “Shark Tank.” Four entrepreneurs propose a new transportation technology product or service in 6 minutes or less to a panel of industry entrepreneurs and investors, who judge the ideas on their commercial viability and how well the product or service brings transportation research into practice to meet real-world challenges.

“Our goal is to get more people riding electric bikes, especially for trips of 3 to 20 miles,” McLaughlin comments. “We believe there are enormous benefits for climate change, congestion, personal health, as well as economic and social benefits.” He notes that technology



Photo: Kevin McLaughlin

E-bike subscription service Zygg won the Six-Minute Pitch contest in January.

advancements have focused attention on street space use along with changes in consumer demand and civic attention.

“Scooters were a start,” McLaughlin observes. “I fully believe that we are going to move from ‘bike lane’ to ‘slow lane’ for new modes, but there is still much work to do through political, social, and cultural channels.”

Updates from the National Academies Transformation Initiative on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many studies, webinars, and other activities at TRB and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have explored research in social science, medicine, transportation, and other fields that can shed light on the factors that drive systemic racial inequities—not only in society at large, but also within the sciences, engineering, and medicine—with the goal of finding solutions based on evidence.

More information on this research can be found at <https://www.nationalacademies.org/topics/resources-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>.

CENTENNIAL QUOTE

“I believe we should do what we love! My passion for transportation engineering dates back to when I saw my father start his first job as a junior transportation engineer. From then on, there was no looking back. I scored straight As in all transportation-related classes while working on my bachelor’s degree. Then I decided to go to graduate school and to get a PhD in the field I fell in love with.



—MAHMOUD ARAFAT

PhD Candidate, Florida State University, Tallahassee

Other Six-Minute Pitch competitors included

- Ken Kershner, Cofounder and CEO of Trio Motors, whose mission is reducing greenhouse gas emissions through vehicle miles traveled and trip reduction;
- Nima Kargah-Ostadi, Transportation Data Scientist at Transconomy, which integrates the latest advances in computational research into practice-ready solutions for transportation asset management; and
- Regina Clewlow, Cofounder and CEO of Populus, a data platform for cities to manage the future of mobility.

Judges included Sean O’Sullivan of SOSV, Gabe Klein of Fontinalis Partners, David Zipper of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at the Harvard Kennedy School, and W. Celeste Davis Stragand of Ford Mobility. Panelists commended all entrants for addressing practical traveler and system needs with a focus on sustainability.

The Six-Minute Pitch is organized and hosted by Shana Johnson, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning; Susan Paulus, Lakeside Engineers; and the author.

Telly Awards for TRB Centennial Video

A video on the future transportation workforce, created as part of TRB’s centennial celebration, has received three 2020 Telly Awards, which annually showcase the best work created within television and across all types of video production. The video, “Your Future in Transportation,” highlights the excitement, challenges, and fulfillment of a career in transportation.

The video was produced as a partnership between the Texas A&M Transportation Institute and TRB. It was recognized for excellence in the following three categories:

- General Recruitment (Gold Award)
- Craft Writing (Silver Award)
- General, Not-for-Profit (Silver Award)



The award-winning video, “Your Future in Transportation,” was produced by TRB and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

The award-winning video was one of more than 12,000 entries from all 50 states and across five countries. TRB turns 100 years old on November 11, 2020, and its centennial celebration promotes the value of transportation research and celebrates the achievements of TRB’s volunteers, sponsors, affiliates, and staff.

To view the video, visit <https://www.tellyawards.com/winners/2020/non-broadcast/general-recruitment/trb-centennial-video/232288>.

CENTENNIAL QUOTE

“ On a summer evening in 2007, I glanced at the TV while eating dinner and saw the news bulletin: the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis had collapsed. The road over the Mississippi was so far above the river, strong and unmovable. You would be forgiven for not realizing you had traveled 1,800 feet suspended in the air. I had to be in south Minneapolis the next morning. I would have driven down 35W with tens of thousands of my neighbors without so much as a second thought. Over the next few days, the traffic patterns fascinated me. Transportation officials had 3 hours to ensure the safety and mobility of more than 25,000 Minnesota Twins fans seated just blocks from the collapse, with detours in place before the end of the 9th inning. Then, road crews had 10 hours to deploy significant signage to help 140,000 Minnesotans find a new route for the morning commute, coordinating with local news to disseminate information in an age before widespread smartphone use. Transportation engineers can spend decades exploring a single mobility solution but must also be prepared to deliver solutions in minutes. Out of the smoke and waves of the collapse emerged my calling. I fell in love with transportation.



—SHANNON WARCHOL

Senior Engineer, Kittelson & Associates, Inc., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania