

On-Time Arrival App Wins Six-Minute Pitch

Young Member's Council Sponsors Annual Meeting Challenge

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The TRB Young Members Council sponsored a special session at the TRB 92nd Annual Meeting, “The Six Minute Pitch: Transportation Innovation and Entrepreneur’s Challenge,” featuring four young transportation professionals with innovative, research-based transportation business ideas—each idea presented in six minutes. Panelists Sean O’Sullivan, Avego and SOSVentures; Chicago Department of Transportation Commissioner Gabe Klein; Ryan Rzepecki, Social Bicycles; Jeff Chernick, RideAmigos; and Kate Chanba, Articulate Maps, evaluated the pitches based on their viability in the commercial marketplace and their innovativeness in solving real-world transportation problems.

Robert Rodden, American Concrete Pavement Association, presented the winning pitch, “On-Time Arrival.” Rodden, a registered professional engineer, developed the mobile application with Susan Paulus, Lakeside Engineers. Paulus, a professional engineer and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Associate, was a Federal Highway Administration Eisenhower Fellow, and like Rodden is an active member of TRB standing committees.

On Time, Every Time

On-Time Arrival analyzes an air traveler’s current location and the in-airport traffic conditions to provide an estimated time of arrival at a flight’s gate. The idea for On-Time Arrival occurred to Rodden as he sought a solution to help air travelers such as his boss, who tended to arrive at the airport just before the door closed and often risked missing the flight, as well as a coworker who preferred to be at the gate with plenty of time to spare.

When he heard about the Six-Minute Pitch competition, Rodden shared the idea with Paulus, whose expertise focused on the people-moving side of transportation engineering. Using technology similar to BlueTOAD, a device that calculates real-time travel delays through work zones and alternate routes, the On-Time Arrival system assists users in determining when to head to the airport. Bluetooth sensing devices are strategically placed at the airport to isolate the various paths between the airport entrance and each terminal—for example, after parking a car, returning a rental car, or getting dropped off.

By isolating each path, anonymously detecting the media access control addresses of passing devices, and recording the time as they pass, On-Time Arrival can calculate the amount of time it takes to complete any such path. If the airport parking lot is filling up, the system can detect that in the data as well as the delay at each security checkpoint in real time. Details and filters such as accounting for priority access through security are under development.



Photo: Megan Macoio

The Six-Minute Pitch competition at the 2013 TRB Annual Meeting featured presentations of research-based solutions to transportation problems.

Refining the Focus

Rodden credits the Six-Minute Pitch for emphasizing the value of their idea and for providing the fuel the developers needed. Before the Six-Minute Pitch, Rodden and Paulus had not shared the idea with many people and did not know how it would be received. Based on panel feedback, they are refining their firm and its focus—On Time Arrival is now ΔT Data, or Delta T Data—and will apply to programs focused on jumpstarting technology startups and connecting startups with potential investors.

For more information on the On-Time Arrival app, visit <http://deltatdata.com/>. The TRB Young Members Council will be reprising the Six-Minute Pitch for the TRB 93rd Annual Meeting in January 2014. Information on the Six-Minute Pitch session—including instructions on applying to present—will be posted this fall to the Young Member’s Council Groupsites, <http://ymc.groupsites.com>.



Susan Paulus and Robert Rodden are developers of the On-Time Arrival app.

The author is Senior Transportation Planner, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, Inc., Rockville, Maryland. This article was adapted with permission from a February 2012 review by Mobility Lab and from the article “Young Professional Transportation Innovators Win TRB’s Inaugural Six-Minute Pitch,” which appeared in the spring 2013 edition of Mobility Matters.