

Five Years of the Six-Minute Pitch

A Transportation Startup Challenge

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The Six-Minute Pitch is one of the best-attended sessions at the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting. In the session, which is sponsored by the Young Members Council, four transportation entrepreneurs are selected from a pool of applicants to pitch their new transportation technology product or service—in six or fewer minutes—to a panel of transportation industry entrepreneurs and investors.

The pitches are judged on commercial viability and on whether they address 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,” providing immediate feedback on the market potential, business model, and the incorporation of innovative technologies or techniques.

Since its debut at the TRB 92nd Annual Meeting in 2013, the Six-Minute Pitch has seen growing applications and attendance. At the 2017 event, winners will receive a prize valued at approximately \$1,200—a one-year membership to the 1776 Union, a global entrepreneur support platform. All participants receive exposure and feedback for their ideas, and the winning submission typically receives media coverage.

In the past 4 years, the Six-Minute Pitch has showcased many successful early-stage transporta-

tion technology companies. The winner of the 2016 contest was TotalPave, a Canadian pavement technology startup that enables municipalities to collect standard pavement condition data relating to the Pavement Condition Index and the International Roughness Index, by using off-the-shelf smartphones. Since winning the Six-Minute Pitch, TotalPave founder Coady Cameron and colleagues have been working with local Canadian municipalities to refine the technology.

“People have reservations about sharing their business plan or idea because they convince themselves it won’t work or are paranoid someone might steal their idea,” Cameron comments. “If you don’t take it out of your basement, that’s where it’ll stay.” The panel of judges at the 2016 event included Sean O’Sullivan of SOSVentures and Chris Thomas and Gabe Klein of Fontinalis Partners.

Previous Six Minute Pitch winners have included Transfix, which provides tools for interstate truck drivers to plan their trips, manage their loads, and get paid quickly, and TransitScreen, which offers real-time availability and schedule information for a suite of sustainable transportation modes.

For more information on the upcoming Six-Minute Pitch event at TRB’s 96th Annual Meeting in January 2017, please visit www.sixminutepitch.com.



PHOTO: SHANA JOHNSON

A contestant receives panel feedback during the Six-Minute Pitch competition, January 2016.