

Making a Pitch for Innovations

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Entrepreneurs pitched transportation technology ideas to transportation industry investors and business leaders—and a standing room-only crowd—at the Six-Minute Pitch Start-Up Challenge during the Transportation Research Board (TRB) 2017 Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. A panel of judges—Jessica Robinson of Ford Smart Mobility, Emily Castor of Lyft, David Zipper of 1776, and Chris Thomas of Fontinalis Partners—evaluated the proposals for commercial feasibility and effectiveness in meeting critical transportation challenges and in implementing transportation research and offered advice to the business owners.

The winner of the Six-Minute Pitch was InspectX, a bridge inspection app from the software company Bridge Intelligence. Cofounder and managing director Hooman Parvardeh commented that observing outdated, inefficient bridge inspection practices motivated him to create an app to improve accuracy and efficiency. Acting on the judges' advice, Parvardeh has expanded the company's target market to include consulting firms; he also is refining product offerings and developing marketing activities.

According to Parvardeh, the validation of the InspectX business model was particularly helpful. "The feedback that we received from the judges was invaluable," he noted.

The session was sponsored by the TRB Young



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(Left to right) Six-Minute Pitch judges Chris Thomas and Emily Castor, contest winner Hooman Parvardeh, and judges David Zipper and Jessica Robinson.

Members Council and moderated by Shana Johnson of Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, Susan Paulus of Lakeside Engineers, Robert Rodden of PNA Construction Technologies, and the author. The winner also received a one-year membership in the 1776 Union, a global platform for entrepreneurs and start-ups.

For details on the Six-Minute Pitch and to start planning a pitch for 2018, please visit sixminutepitch.com.



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Hooman Parvardeh (far right) makes his winning pitch for start-up funding for the bridge inspection app InspectX during the TRB Annual meeting in January.