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Innovations Gaining Traction: Rail and Port Tech Take Center Stage

Advances for high-impact solutions shared during FreightWeekSTL's Innovation Day.

[ST. LOUIS/June 3, 2025] High-tech solutions to enhance the global movement of freight on rail and waterways were highlighted during FreightWeekSTL 2025, an annual conference hosted by the St. Louis Regional Freightway. The Innovation Day panel featured Adam Strachan, Chief Engineer at Intramotev, a St. Louis-based manufacturer of battery-electric, self-propelled rail cars; Noel Hacegaba, Chief Operating Officer at Port of Long Beach, the nations' second busiest container seaport and an international leader in sustainability and innovation; and Jason Carter, Founder & Chief Executive Officer at UNCOMN, a technical consultancy headquartered at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois that has partnered with the Port of Long Beach to develop the Supply Chain Information Highway.

Intramotev's Autonomous Rail Cars

Strachan said it has been a year of achievements for Intramotev. The company raised \$14.4 million in Series A funding in 2024, enabling it to continue to grow its team and scale technology with new customers across the country. Intramotev deployed several of its TugVolt vehicles at the Carmeuse mine in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and now has a six-car train in active operation there daily, moving materials safely and efficiently. The TugVolt moves with the flexibility of a truck, without breaking the existing model of rail operations. Strachan said it has been tested in below freezing conditions and is performing well.

"This is the only self-propelled, battery-electric freight rail car system in operation in the world," Strachan said, adding that Intramotev is ready to deploy its technology across the United States and internationally to serve a number of different in industries.

He also predicted another exciting year for Intramotev. The company has signed a purchase order with a major line producer to deliver two of its TugVolt vehicles and it is working through a number of negotiations with both mining and plant-based operations throughout the United States, filling up the company's production pipeline.

"We are also working on a contract with a major international railroad that we look forward to being able to talk about in the coming months. We are looking to add a few key team members. It is definitely going to be a big year for us," said Strachan.

Supply Chain Information Highway

Carter talked about the latest advancements for the Supply Chain Information Highway, which was created by the Port of Long Beach and UNCOMN to give beneficial cargo owners the ability to access, analyze and integrate data from freight moving through the nation's largest ports in a way that helps improve in-transit visibility. Among the many highlights Carter shared is the implementation of more complex, real-time feeds supporting the Supply Chain Information Highway. In March 2025, the integration of Class I Railroad data was announced, and the railroads are now using the Supply Chain Information Highway to make more timely resource optimization decisions.

The partners have also implemented remote sensing devices using computer vision capabilities to provide real-time visibility of cargo as it moves through critical corridors. Carter said they have rolled out a unified appointment system enabling truckers to make appointments using a single portal to pick up and deliver cargo to the port and expanded the Supply Chain Information Highway from just container cargo to also include noncontainerized cargo. They are currently working with ports to develop standards needed for that type of cargo. Collaboration with international ports is helping to establish earlier forecasting for ship arrivals to optimize the efficiencies of ships moving in the Trans-Pacific Corridor. Carter said they also have added capabilities to the Supply Chain Information Highway to assist ports in their environmental impact programs, such as the Port of Long Beach's Green Flag program that monitors the carbon impact of cargo moving through the port.

Hacegaba shared that the Port of Long Beach was awarded a \$7.8 million grant last summer from the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, also known as GO-Biz. This funding is being used to support all the progress made to date. Looking to the year ahead, he said the vision remains the same.

"We want to make sure the Supply Chain Information Highway benefits the nation's transportation system. The intent is to have port authorities across the nation be a part of a national vision where the Supply Chain Information Highway is the common digital corridor and each port authority, using its own discrete community portal system, will serve as an on ramp," said Hacegaba. "Building the interport pieces of the Supply Chain Information Highway remains priority one. We are excited about the future and will be working closely with UNCOMN to make the vision a reality."

Hacegaba explained they would be rolling out the broader vision to other ports in California thanks to the GO-Biz initiative. Recent achievements with the Supply Chain Information Highway are going to be part and parcel to the vision, including expansion to exports, providing visibility to rail service providers and building on developments like the port operations dashboard and the public track and trace feature.

Carter also reinforced the importance of interport connectivity. "The Supply Chain Information Highway was initially developed during COVID, a time of intense supply chain disruption. Since that time, we have seen more disruption with Panama Canal drought, the Baltimore Bridge accident and now tariffs, making it necessary to continue the national focus on supply chain resiliency. The Supply Chain Information Highway is a critical element of that," said Carter.

Hacegaba added that their work enables and enhances competitiveness. As shippers are trying to get ahead of changes in trade policy, he said it becomes increasingly important to have access to data and the visibility needed to optimize operations.

The virtual panel session was moderated by Mary Lamie. She leads the St. Louis Regional Freightway and is Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises for Bi-State Development.

"It's exciting to see the additional milestones these companies have reached over the past year and how their innovations are already helping to increase the efficiency of freight movement through various parts of the national and global Freight network," Lamie said. "We look forward to continuing to track the progress and the role the St. Louis region is playing in these advancements."

FreightWeekSTL 2025 continues through June 6. To learn more, register for the remaining panel sessions or view today's or other past sessions for FreightWeekSTL 2025, visit FreightWeekSTL.com.

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About St. Louis Regional Freightway

A Bi-State Development enterprise, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is a regional freight district and comprehensive authority for freight operations and opportunities within eight counties in southwestern Illinois and eastern Missouri, which comprise the St. Louis metropolitan area. Public sector and private industry businesses are partnering with the St. Louis Regional Freightway

to establish the bi-state region as one of the premier multimodal freight hubs and distribution centers in the United States through marketing and advocacy for infrastructure development that supports the movement of freight. To learn more, visit thefreightway.com.