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FreightWeekSTL 2026 Opens with Forward-Looking Conversation on Innovative Supply Chain Companies Garnering Investment

St. Louis Venture Capitalist Spotlights Emerging Technologies and the Region's Competitive Advantage

[ST. LOUIS, MO/June 8, 2026] FreightWeekSTL 2026 kicked off with its first virtual session, “*Funding the Next Generation of Supply Chain Innovation*,” bringing together industry leaders and innovators to examine how venture investment is shaping the future of logistics and supply chain operations. The session featured J.P. Keating, Managing Partner of proChain Ventures, who offered an in-depth look at the technologies, trends and strategic forces driving investment decisions across the sector.

Keating underscored the laser focus behind his St. Louis-based firm’s work. “Our mission is advancing supply chain superiority. That’s all we invest in. That’s all we do—focusing on supply chain, logistics, mobility and industrial operations,” he said. This philosophy framed a conversation centered not only on innovation, but on building resilient, high-functioning systems that support the movement of goods across increasingly complex global networks.

As the discussion progressed, Keating highlighted the progress being made by companies within proChain Ventures’ portfolio, including several with a strong connection to the St. Louis region. Among them is Avol, an autonomous aerial logistics platform designed to support high-value, time-sensitive shipments, particularly in healthcare. He discussed the company’s continued momentum, including field testing, expanding customer partnerships and plans to grow its footprint locally with a new production facility in St. Louis expected by the end of the year. These types of solutions, he emphasized, are critically important to addressing gaps in healthcare logistics across the U.S. and globally.

Innovation in rail is also reshaping traditional freight systems. Keating pointed to St. Louis-based Intramotev’s work in developing autonomous, battery-powered railcars capable of moving freight without the need for a locomotive. By improving precision and increasing throughput, these solutions are redefining how rail networks operate. He noted both companies have a shared goal of eliminating inefficiencies and unlocking new capabilities across supply chain systems.

This emphasis on interconnected systems carried through to the firm’s broader investment strategy, which Keating described as a “systems of systems” approach focused on building integrated capabilities across the full spectrum of supply chain operations. Over the past year, proChain Ventures has expanded its portfolio to invest in six more companies targeting key friction points in freight movement. These include Logic, which is developing a unified warehouse operating system that replaces traditional equipment like forklifts with robotic pallets and autonomous material handling to enable more compact, efficient warehouse footprints.

He also highlighted Logbook, a company focused on improving the accuracy and intelligence of logistics workflows by refining address and location data to provide real precision delivery, helping ensure goods arrive exactly where and when they are needed. Keating also pointed to Arvist, a company out of Chicago deploying AI-powered computer vision that transforms existing camera systems into real-time intelligence platforms capable of monitoring warehouse, yard and dock operations, identifying chokepoints and inefficiencies, and improving both productivity and safety.

In the air cargo space, proChain is investing in companies like MightyFly and Nautilus that are advancing autonomous aircraft platforms designed to improve flexibility and responsiveness in freight movement. Taken together, these

investments illustrate how innovation is moving beyond isolated solutions and toward connected ecosystems that improve performance across every stage of the supply chain. Keating emphasized that the goal is not simply to optimize individual processes, but to create a more cohesive, responsive and resilient system overall.

The increasing role of artificial intelligence, robotics and automation was also discussed. Keating described AI as “the nervous system of modern supply chains,” explaining that its applications extend from real-time operational visibility to predictive analytics and optimization. He explained these technologies are already being widely deployed to anticipate disruptions, improve routing and enhance asset utilization, ultimately allowing companies to build smarter and more responsive logistics networks. At the same time, Keating stressed that AI is not about replacing supply chains or even the people behind them, but about strengthening both. By automating repetitive or lower-value tasks, these technologies enable workers to focus on more strategic, high-impact roles while improving overall system performance. This shift, he explained, represents a fundamental evolution in how supply chains are designed and managed.

“It’s not about AI replacing supply chains—it’s really making them survivable and resilient,” Keating said.

The session also explored how external forces—particularly geopolitical pressures—are reshaping the supply chain landscape and influencing investment decisions. Keating emphasized that supply chains have taken on new strategic importance in recent years, driven by disruptions ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to global conflicts and shifting trade dynamics. These realities have accelerated efforts around reshoring, security and resilience, with companies increasingly focused on building systems that can withstand uncertainty and maintain continuity in the face of disruption. “Supply chains have become geopolitical weapons,” Keating said. “There’s no denying we’ve got to invest substantially in this space.”

That reality is also helping elevate the importance of regions like St. Louis. In that context, Keating highlighted the area as well positioned to play a leading role in the future of supply chain innovation. With a strong concentration of logistics infrastructure, transportation assets and connections to national defense operations, the region offers a compelling environment for companies advancing next-generation supply chain solutions. This positioning continues to attract investment and reinforce St. Louis’ role as a key hub within the global freight and logistics network.

The virtual panel session was moderated by Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway. Building on the conversation, she noted the growing intersection between investment strategy and regional opportunity.

“It’s eye-opening to think about how venture capitalists can be wearing a second hat as a site selection consultant for early-stage companies, and we love that you see such tremendous opportunities for these companies in the St. Louis region,” said Lamie. “We’re also excited to watch the continuing progress of the companies we discussed today that are revolutionizing the movement of freight.”

As FreightWeekSTL 2026 continues, the opening session set the tone for a week focused on collaboration, innovation and forward-thinking strategies. By bringing together leaders from across the industry, the event highlights not only where supply chains are headed, but also the role the St. Louis region plays in shaping that future.

To learn more, register for the remaining virtual panel sessions, or view any of the virtual panel sessions for FreightWeekSTL 2026 as they are released, visit www.FreightWeekSTL.com.

About St. Louis Regional Freightway

Established as the St. Louis region’s authority for coordinating support for industrial businesses and the logistics infrastructure they depend on, the St. Louis Regional Freightway (the Freightway) provides site selection and business assistance to manufacturing, logistics and multimodal transportation companies and their service providers. As an enterprise of Bi-State Development, the Freightway partners with public sector and private industry businesses to advocate for infrastructure development that supports the movement of freight, leads initiatives to grow the region’s talent pool, and plays a critical role in marketing the region as a world-class manufacturing and distribution cluster within the City of St. Louis and seven adjacent counties in Missouri and Illinois. To learn more, visit TheFreightway.com.