

Intermodal Conference to Tackle Freight Issues

By Michael Waddell

The Intermodal Freight Transportation Institute at the University of Memphis will host its seventh annual Intermodal Freight Conference at the FedEx Institute of Technology on the University of Memphis campus Tuesday, Sept. 24.

This year's slate of distinguished guest speakers will include U.S. Department of Transportation chief economist [Jack Wells](#), Cushman & Wakefield's Industrial Services lead [John Morris](#), Tennessee Department of Transportation commissioner John Schroer, U.S. Rep. [Steve Cohen](#), state Sen. [Mark Norris](#) and the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization administrator Pragati Srivastava.

"This is very much a freight conference, and attendees should get an update on the current administration's focus on freight and how that plays into the Memphis area, the state of Tennessee, and across the country," said IFTI interim director Dan Pallme.

The free-to-the-public conference will run from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with an afternoon bonus meeting featuring a Mid-South Women in Transportation panel and networking session beginning at 1 p.m.

The women's panel will include TDOT director of long-range planning Tanisha Hall; FedEx manager of global engineering support Gigi Wolfe; Dunavant Logistics director of global operations and compliance Karen Hjerpe; Mallory Group vice president of sales and marketing Donna Lemm; V. Alexander supervisor [Adrienne Johnson](#); CN railroad solutions manager Roquita Coleman; Vaco Logistics partner Cheryl Citrone; and Butler Snow's government, environmental and energy attorney [Julie Ellis](#).

The day's schedule will also offer a glimpse of several IFTI research projects.

"The Intermodal Freight Conference is a great venue for IFTI researchers to present their findings to our target community," said Dr. Martin Lipinski, IFTI director emeritus, in a prepared statement.

Last year's IFTI conference drew approximately 160 attendees, and Pallme expects up to 195 people this year.

"Through MAP-21 (the latest transportation legislation), the government is trying to get more input from businesses, and this is another way that we are trying to be a conduit between the business world and the public sector," said Pallme, who took over as interim director in June 2012.

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), the first long-term highway initiative since 2005, was approved in July of last year. The bill will fund \$105 billion in surface transportation programs for fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

The conference will include free continental breakfast and lunch. Attendees must register online at www.memphis.edu/ifti.

IFTI formed in 2007 and addresses critical issues affecting the planning, design and operation of the nation's intermodal freight transportation systems.

"IFTI is a university transportation center (UTC) that is funded by the government, and part of our charge is to do three things: education, research and outreach," Pallme said. "This free conference for the public is part of the education and the outreach efforts."

He believes the Memphis region makes for an ideal setting for the perfect working laboratory for IFTI to solve problems facing the freight industry and generate educational opportunities to develop tomorrow's leaders.

IFTI heads up the Southern Hub of the National Center for Freight and Infrastructure Research and Education University Transportation Center (CFIRE), a Tier 1 UTC that spans a geographical area that serves the majority of freight traffic in the U.S. CFIRE is composed of 10 universities, with the University of Wisconsin-Madison leading the Northern Hub.



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