

National Rural ITS Conference

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take me there. . . to Traverse City

A successful meeting in Michigan's Cherry Capital!

TRAVERSE CITY, MI, Oct. 18, 2007 – Set against the beautiful autumn colors of Michigan in America's Cherry Capital – Traverse City – Michigan DOT, ITS Michigan, U.S. DOT, and ITS America sponsored the 2007 National Rural ITS (NRITS) Conference October 7-10 at the Grand Traverse Resort. With more than 228 ITS professionals from 38 states and 3 Canadian provinces, 29 vendors, 18 poster displays, one sold out training course, and 28 technical sessions hosting more than 70 presentations on a variety of rural ITS topics, this year's conference was ripe with information, learning, and partnership opportunities.

The 2007 NRITS began Sunday evening with the traditional Exhibitors Reception where more than 100 conference attendees reconnected with colleagues and partners, as well as visited with the 29 vendors with exhibits and booths spotlighting numerous technologies and systems ranging from regional data integration to road weather sensors, from data systems to .

On Monday, October 8, the officially kicked off with an Opening Session moderated by Jim Barbaresso, Vice President of HTNB Corporation. Keynote Speakers included Leon Hank, Chief Administrative Officer of Michigan DOT, who welcomed the conference attendees with thanks and highlights of ITS initiatives underway in Michigan effecting the states rural operations. Next, Steve Vaughn, Commander of the Enforcement Services Division of the California Highway Patrol and the Chairperson of ITS America's Commercial Vehicle and Freight Mobility (CVFM) Forum, thanked attendees for the opportunity to have commercial vehicle operations included as a rural ITS issue and expressed hope in continuing a newly developed partnership in addressing the mutually shared challenges for both the rural and commercial vehicle communities. The Opening Session's final speaker was Kate Hartman, CVO and Freight Coordinator and current Rural ITS Coordinator in the U.S. DOT ITS Joint Program Office, who provided attendees with news and the most recent restructuring of the U.S. DOT, as well as discussed the goals of U.S. DOT's ITS Advisory Board and the rural ITS community's opportunity to voice their issues through their representative Steve Albert, Director of the Western Transportation Institute and ITS America's Rural ITS Stakeholder Interest Group (Rural ITS SIG) Chairperson.

Technical sessions covered a diverse number of rural-related ITS topics, including road weather information, rural communications, rural transit, ITS partnerships and deployment, traveler information and data collection, commercial vehicle operations, border security, U.S. DOT's 511 Coalition and *Clarus* Initiative, and VII for non-urban areas, to name just a few. A full one-day training course on Road Weather Information Systems and two road weather related poster sessions rounded out this year's program. Technical session

speakers ranged from both the public and private sectors, as well as academia, and provided conference attendees with ample opportunity for candid and robust discussion on the ITS technologies, systems, and real-life lessons learned in rural and frontier areas presented in the wide variety of presentations made available at the conference.

New to this year's conference was the inclusion of several ITS commercial vehicle operations sessions. These sessions, coordinated in partnership with ITS America's CVFM Forum, were designed and implemented to raise awareness of the mutually shared challenges and opportunities between the rural ITS community and the commercial vehicle industry, as well as provide a segue into the CVFM Forum's Fall Meeting conducted October 10-11, directly after the official adjournment of the NRITS Conference. Speakers from U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Michigan State Police, Michigan DOT, and the Canadian Border Service Agency, among others, provided unique perspectives of commercial vehicle operations conducted and monitored in rural areas and border crossings.

As at every NRITS, the venue in Michigan allowed for a number of diverse networking activities, including Monday evening's dinner aboard a 1800s replica of a tall ship schooner excursion on Traverse Bay, wine tasting at the Ciccone Vineyard, and an onsite Monday Night Football event (sponsored by Open Roads Consulting). The conference's finale event was held at a local Traverse City favorite, Ranch Rudolph, where attendees had the choice of participating a number of activities, including horseback riding, fly fishing, a hayride, and canoeing, or where they could opt to lounge at the lodge listening to a local band providing musical entertainment – all this while the staff at the lodge put together a pig roast with all of the fixings for all to enjoy.

The conference ended with an onsite Rural ITS SIG meeting, led by Steve Albert, Director of the Western Transportation Institute and ITS America's Rural Rural ITS SIG Chairperson. Highlights of the meeting included opportunity to provide input to questions posed by U.S. DOT's ITS Advisory Board, receive an update on U.S. DOT's *Clarus* Initiative, discuss rural ITS themes presented by Brandi Hamilton of Montana DOT, and receive ITS America Forum Liaison Reports and updates. The Rural ITS SIG closed with a Jack Stickel of Alaska DOT providing a preview of the 2008 NRITS Conference scheduled for September 3-5 in Anchorage, AK; a bid from Lisa Nelson (Telvent Farradyne) and Dean Deeter (Athey Creek Consulting) representing ITS Oregon to host the 2009 NRITS Conference in Seaside, OR, August 23-27; and a bid from Dennis Foderberg (SEH, Inc.) representing ITS Minnesota to host the 2010 NRITS, as well as verbal intent to bid from Juan Barrios of the Nick J. Rahall II Appalachian Transportation Institute in Huntington, WV. Final results of the bids presented confirms ITS Oregon as the host of the 2009 NRITS; the bids to host 2010 NRITS are open until November 2, 2007 – all interested should contact Heather Young, ITS America at hyoung@ista.org or 202-721-4226, to have submission forwarded to the Rural ITS SIG's Future Conference Selection Committee.