



TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

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## 9<sup>th</sup> National Light Rail Transit Conference

**EXPERIENCE, ECONOMICS & EVOLUTION—  
FROM STARTER LINES TO GROWING SYSTEMS**

**November 16-18, 2003**

Hilton Portland Hotel  
Portland, Oregon

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD  
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## Experience, Economics, and Evolution *From Starter Lines to Growing Systems*

### 9th National Light Rail Transit Conference

November 16–18, 2003  
Portland, Oregon

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## Foreword

**E**xperience, Economics and Evolution—From Starter Lines to Growing Systems” is this year’s joint national conference on light rail transit (LRT), the ninth such meeting. At the first conference, held in Philadelphia in June 1975, the technical sessions focused on introducing—or reintroducing—the concept of LRT in North America.

Now, 28 years later, 16 new systems have joined the 8 original systems (in operation prior to 1975)—a total of 24 North American LRT systems are now in operation. In addition, there are 36 projects in planning or conceptual design, 15 in final design, and 22 in construction.

The focus and related topics of the previous eight national conferences have paralleled the development and reintroduction of LRT in North America:

- Introduction to LRT—first national conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1975;
- Light Rail Transit: Planning and Technology—second national conference, Boston, Massachusetts, 1978;
- Light Rail Transit: Planning, Design, and Implementation—third national conference, San Diego, California, 1982;
- Light Rail Transit: System Design for Cost-Effectiveness—fourth national conference, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1985;
- Light Rail Transit: New System Successes at Affordable Prices—fifth national conference, San Jose, California, 1988;
- Light Rail Transit: Planning, Design, and Operating Experience—sixth national conference, Calgary, Canada, 1992;
- Building on Success, Learning from Experience—seventh national conference, Baltimore, Maryland, 1995; and
- Light Rail: Investment for the Future—eighth national conference, Dallas, Texas, 2000.

The technical information contained in the proceedings of these conferences (1–8) provides planners, designers, decision makers, and operators with a valuable collection of experiences and ingredients necessary for a successful transit development project.

The ninth national conference focuses on the planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and administration of LRT systems. Thus, the Conference Steering Committee decided that the conference title should be “Experience, Economics and Evolution—From Starter Lines to Growing Systems.” A wealth of technical material is offered at the conference. There are 16 sessions; several technical tours of Portland area transit construction, operations, and related development; and 52 papers presented at the conference and published in this compendium. The papers were peer-reviewed by members of the Light Rail Transit Committee in an anonymous online process.

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) are conference cosponsors. This partnership, started in 1994 in preparation for the 1995 conference, is a formal recognition of the mutual and supportive respect for joint aims and purposes in a cooperative conference venture. TriMet—Tri-County Metropolitan Transit District of Oregon—provided invaluable assistance as the host organization for the ninth joint conference.

The objective of each of these conferences is to add to the growing body of knowledge and real-world experiences with modern LRT applications in order to improve continually new systems being planned, as well as those already in operation.

Success can be fleeting, and we need to learn from past and current experience in order to do the best possible job of providing cost-effective public transportation services. The information, data, and research contained in this proceeding are meant to serve this need.

—John Schumann  
LTK Engineering Services  
Chair, Conference Planning Committee  
Chair, TRB Committee on Light Rail Transit  
Secretary, APTA Light Rail Transit Technical Forum

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