UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, meets North American Members and partners in Colorado Springs on the occasion of the 4th North American Regional Assembly

The 2019-2020 work plan includes the update of the Railway Vision for North America, some complementarities to find with Future Railway Mobile Communication System FRMCS and the development of a multimodal approach

(Paris/Colorado, 25 March 2019) The UIC North American Regional Assembly (NARA) was held on 25 March in Colorado Springs, at the same time and place as the 24th Annual AAR (Association of American Railroads) Research Review meeting.

This 4th edition was chaired by Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, President and CEO, VIA Rail Canada, Chairman of the UIC North American Region, and was attended by around 20 people, representing UIC North American members as well as partner organisations such as the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) with which UIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding last December.

The UIC North American region currently has seven Members, namely the Association of American Railroads (AAR), the national rail operator for intercity passenger service Amtrak, the Mexican Agency for the Regulation of Rail Transport (ARTF), the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Canadian national passenger rail service VIA Rail Canada and the Railway Association of Canada (RAC).

AAR was represented by Mike Rush, Senior Vice President, Safety and Operations. Timothy Tenne, Senior Director, Compliance, Certification and Quality Assurance represented Amtrak. FRA was represented by Barbara Klein Barr, Director, International Programs at the FRA, and by Karl Alexy, Deputy Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety. RAC was represented by Marc Bразеau, President & Chief Executive Officer. In addition to Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, VIA Rail Canada was represented by Pierre Le Fevre, Senior Advisor to the President & CEO of VIA Rail Canada. Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General together with François Davenne, Deputy Director General, represented UIC. This meeting gave the possibility to Members to present their
Jean-Pierre Loubinoux addressed the challenges in creating a coherent community of cooperation amongst the major North American players and highlighted actions that will sustain the North American community in the coming years. He particularly insisted on the importance of having a vision. On this occasion, the strategic document, “Railway Vision for North America – A smart choice for the future; safe, efficient, reliable”, drafted in 2018, will be updated in the coming weeks, with the contribution of the newly welcomed Mexican Member ARTF, the contribution of RAC as well as the work plan decided during this 4th Regional meeting. A new part, open to partners, will be included, with the contribution of APTA and possibly of UITP (International Union of Public Transport).

Jean-Pierre Loubinoux also presented François Davenne, UIC Deputy Director General to American Members, in a spirit of transmission, stability and continuity and informed them that François Davenne would become Director General of UIC during the General Assembly to be held in Budapest on 25 June. In terms of governance, and speaking about stability, the proposal to renew the mandate of VIA Rail to chair the North American Regional Assembly was accepted by the Assembly, for two more years.

Mr Davenne insisted on the fact that “We are traversing a critical moment in North America, with the need to harmonise standards in which UIC can bring constructive elements in different fields”. He followed by saying “We really need to work together to have a more global approach”. And then, calling for a more unified vision: “We have to avoid duplications, and work on the same network. UIC will be particularly committed to how we can have common developments, from a technical as well as a commercial point of view”. He concluded the meeting by mentioning the main priorities which will finally compose the NARA work plan 2019-2020: the management of interfaces between rail and public transport (and the importance of FRMCS as a way to break the wall between them) and the development of a multimodal approach (and the importance of railway stations) through the organisation of a practicum in six major cities in North and Latin America (Toronto, New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Dallas and Mexico City) in cooperation with APTA.

On the occasion of the 4th NARA meeting, a Vision for innovation panel session was organised the morning before to discuss and exchange best practices on the Rail Research & Development issue. Jean-Michel Evanghelou, UIC Head of Telecom & Signalling presented the main telecom challenges (Future Railway Mobile Communication System FRMCS). Francis Bédel, UIC Chief Digital Officer highlighted Digital developments of the UIC Digital Platform. He also presented DIGIM (Digital impacts on railway business) programme, the clear station project, and promoted the first UIC Digital Intelligent Rail Conference which will take place from 3 – 5 June in Brussels in partnership with Infrabel (Belgian Infrastructure manager). He then gave the floor to Sean Schofield, Senior Advisor Innovation, VIA Rail who presented the Clear Station proof of concept. Martin Brennan, European Rail Research Advisory Council (ERRAC) gave an overview of UIC research projects. From the US side, Maryam Allahyar, Director, Research & Development at the Federal Railroad Administration insisted on FRA’s current priorities. Discussions focused on PTC (Positive Train Control), security and safety, sustainability, the passenger experience.
issues and Kari Gonzales, CFO, Transportation Technology Center, presented TTCI’s priorities in terms of research and innovation.

CONTACTS

Marie Plaud-Lombard, UIC Coordinator for North America: plaud-lombard@uic.org