

Moving Forward 2023

MTI MSTM Alumni Association Newsletter



Contacting the MSTM Alumni Association Visit our website:
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HIGHLIGHTS

MTI Executive Director Dr. Karen Philbrick, MTI Welcome.....	1
Norman Y. Mineta.....	2
MTI Executive Director Dr. Karen Philbrick	3-4
Rod Diridon	5
Toks Omishakin, Director, CalSTA —Guest Speaker.....	6-7
Graduating Students’ Capstones	8-10
Timothy Lesniak, Graduate Student of the Year.....	10
Rashidi Barnes, Alum of the Year.....	11
Roger Bazeley, MSTM Japan Rail Connectivity Experience.....	12-15
Class Congrats.....	16

The 31st Annual MTI Banquet/Convocation Celebration on Saturday, June 24, 2023

Message from Dr. Karen Philbrick about the 2023 Convocation

To ensure the efficient movement of people and products, we must prepare a new cohort of transportation professionals ready to lead a diverse, inclusive, and equitable transportation industry. To that end, MTI is proud to announce its 31st Annual Banquet and Convocation Celebration at San José State University on June 24, 2023.

We welcome our esteemed trustees, generous sponsors, local leaders, graduates, alumni, friends, and family to gather and commemorate the advancements made in our industry.

Join our distinguished Board of Trustees as we celebrate our 2023 MSTM program graduates, alumni of the year, graduate of the year, and Garrett Morgan Sustainable Transportation Competition winners.

When: Saturday, June 24th, 5:30 to 9:30 PM, PST

Reception: Networking Reception, 5:30-6:45 PM, PST

Where: San Jose State University, Student Union Ballroom, San Jose, California 95192

Link: <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/events/31st-Annual-Awards-Banquet-and-Convocation-Celebration>

With immense honor, on behalf of the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) Trustees, faculty, and staff, I congratulate all 2023 Master of Science in Transportation Management (MSTM) program graduates. We are so thrilled to celebrate your success! To all our students who have worked so hard to reach this milestone is all about you, your dedication, and your accomplishments. Everyone coming through the MSTM program works tirelessly to distinguish themselves as outstanding transportation professionals. We are proud to know each graduate and alumni, while recognizing their influence on their communities; as they learn, grow, advance their careers, and become mobility leaders.



Finally, we want to once again congratulate you on your graduation, and welcome you as you join our group of esteemed alumni.

Karen E. Philbrick, Ph.D. Executive Director



Founder, Mineta Transportation Institute

November 12, 1931 San Jose – May 3, 2022 Edgewater, MD

Norman Y. was the President and CEO of Mineta and Associates, LLC and former U.S. Secretary of Commerce and U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He was well known for his work in all areas of transportation—including aviation, surface transportation infrastructure and impacts on national security.

Mineta was recognized additionally for his accomplishments in economic development, science and technology policy, foreign and domestic trade, budgetary issues and civil rights. Mineta's career in public service was both distinguished and unique.

For almost 30 years, Mineta represented San Jose, California, first on the City Council, then as mayor, and then as a member of the U.S. Congress. Throughout that time, Mineta advocated the burgeoning technology industry. He worked to encourage new industries, spur job growth, and support the development of the infrastructure needed to accommodate the technology industry and its tremendous growth.

Mineta served as chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Public Works and Transportation from 1992 to 1994 and chaired the subcommittees on Aviation and Surface Transportation. He was the primary author of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton appointed Mineta Secretary of Commerce, where he was known for his work on technology issues, achieving international cooperation and intergovernmental coordination on complex fisheries issues, and streamlining the patent and trademark process.

President George W. Bush appointed Mineta Secretary of Transportation, where he served until 2006. Following the horrific terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, Mineta grounded all aviation flights and then guided the creation of the Transportation Security Administration—an agency with more than 65,000 employees—marking the largest mobilization of a new federal agency since World War II. Mineta was also a vice president of Lockheed Martin, overseeing the first successful implementation of the EZ-Pass system in New York State.

Recognized for his leadership, Mineta has received numerous awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian honor in the United States—and the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy, awarded for significant public service of enduring value to aviation in the United States. In February 2016, he was named a Chubb Fellow at Yale University. While in Congress, he co-founded the Congressional Asian-Pacific American Caucus and chaired the National Civil Aviation Review Commission in 1997.

We will remember in our hearts a leader of the highest quality, a humanitarian, and a friend. May we forever be inspired by such limitless integrity in national governance and dedication to improving transportation and our communities.



MTI Executive Director Karen Philbrick

At MTI, we continue to honor the life and legacy of our namesake and founder, Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. He was a political trailblazer, a consensus builder—who inspired generations as a national role model and a beloved community figure. Secretary Mineta urged us to expand the MSTM program to break down enrollment barriers and to ensure a level playing field for all—educating people from the frontlines to the C-suite, and we honor him and his legacy in all that we do. His words of wisdom remain omnipotent as he urged our graduates to “take everything you have learned here, and go forth, as nation builders, as MSTM graduates, to speak out for what is right—in our industry and your everyday lives—and earn your good fortune.”



On May 9th, 2023, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the [celebration](#) of MTI’s namesake, former Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, by naming the USDOT headquarters building after him. The **William T. Coleman, Jr. and Norman Y. Mineta Federal Building** honors Secretary Mineta and former Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman for their exceptional contributions and revolutionary efforts toward our nation’s transportation system. Every day at the Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI), we strive to follow Secretary Mineta’s lead by making big changes to improve transportation and by inspiring and empowering others to do the same.

MTI’s efforts to make transportation safer, more efficient, and more equitable are invaluable in California and across the nation—and it’s impossible not to take notice. Last year, four U.S. Representatives sent a letter to U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg calling for funding for a new MTI-led transportation consortium: the Mineta Consortium for Equitable, Efficient, and Sustainable Transportation (MCEEST).

Of 230 applicants for the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) University Transportation Center (UTC) Program, 34 grantees were selected. MCEEST, led by MTI, was [awarded \\$10 million](#) in federal funding for transportation research, education, workforce development, and technology transfer activities.

In a joint statement, U.S. Representatives Zoe Lofgren, Anna Eshoo, Ro Khanna, and Jimmy Panetta said, “Funding the Mineta Consortium is a smart investment for our country’s future. As the Consortium brings together some of the best research, education, workforce development, and technological programs from around the country, we look forward to seeing what real-world solutions they find for some of the nation’s transportation challenges.”

On top of the federal contributions, matching funds from California partners, including Caltrans, bring the five-year total to an outstanding \$15 million. This funding will lead to advancements and innovations for our nation’s roads, bridges, rail, and transit systems and will support advanced air mobility research.

In addition to SJSU, MCEEST unites diverse partners, including Howard University, Navajo Technical University, and the University of South Florida, to focus on improving the mobility of people and goods to ensure our nation’s transportation system is safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient for all. Check out the interactive map depicting all the UTCs [here](#). As part of this consortium, MTI will broaden participation in our nation’s transportation workforce, especially in traditionally underserved communities.



Dr. Karen Philbrick continued:

At the same time the MTI leadership team was establishing this new consortium, they continued to lead the California State University Transportation Consortium (CSUTC), which unites the 23 California State University campuses. Over six years, we have funded a whopping 198 projects and published 135 projects.

Since 2016, CSUTC has generated \$29 million in investments for transportation research. Our research impacts are broad in topic and wide-reaching, making behind-the-scenes and sometimes quite apparent impacts on our state’s transportation systems. This research impact includes the recent passing of [Senate Bill 1161](#), which empowers MTI to develop a survey to promote consistency in data collection to improve rider safety and reduce street harassment on public transit. State legislators also introduced Senate Bill 381, which would enable MTI to conduct a study on electric bicycles to improve the safety of users. In more numbers, MTI-led consortia activities that were highlighted in over 1,300 articles, media interviews, and podcast episodes, and we engaged 6,860 individuals through events and workforce development programs.

Our broad K-12 workforce development programs include [lesson plans](#) for elementary school students, the [Garrett Morgan Sustainable Transportation Competition](#) for middle school students, and the [Summer Transportation Institute](#) for high school students. At the pinnacle of our education efforts, MTI supports the Master of Science in Transportation Management program through the [Lucas College of Business](#) at San José State University. Alumni recognize the significance of this fully-accredited graduate program in shaping their own lives but also the lives of community members. The MSTM program breaks down barriers between the transportation industry and our community—and, in doing so, moves everyone toward a safer, more efficient, and more equitable future.

We are building the transportation talent pipeline of the future!





ROD DIRIDON:

TRANSPORTATION LEADER – EDUCATOR by MTI Staff

Rod Diridon, Sr. served as founding executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute until 2014, when he moved to Emeritus status. Mr. Diridon has chaired more than 100 international, national, state, and local programs, most related to transit and the environment. He provides legislative testimony on sustainable transportation issues and is regarded by many as the “father” of modern transit service in Silicon Valley.

Governors Davis and Schwarzenegger appointed him to the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board, of which he is chair emeritus. He helped found and is chair emeritus of the High-Speed and Intercity Rail Committee and the National High-Speed Rail Corridors Coalition of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). He also was president of the National Council of University Transportation Centers.

In 1996, he founded and chaired the Transportation Research Board’s study panel, “Combating Global Warming through Sustainable Transportation Policy.” He advised the Federal Transit Administration and, in 1995, chaired the Transit Oversight and Project Selection Committee for the National Research Council’s Transportation Research Board. He has provided keynotes in more than 50 U.S. cities and for a dozen international conferences and published numerous related articles.

For over two decades, he served the Bay Area in a variety of elected roles, from City Council member to chair of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and the Transit Board. He also chaired the San Francisco Bay Area’s three regional governments: the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and the Association of Bay Area Governments, as well as nine successful rail-system-development project boards. Upon his retirement from public office, Santa Clara County renamed its main train station “San José Diridon Station.”

Mr. Diridon received a BS in accounting and an MSBA in statistics from San José State University and served as a U.S. naval officer. In 1968, he founded the Decision Research Institute, which he sold in 1977. He has two children, Rod Jr. and Mary Margaret, and four grandchildren. He is married to Dr. Gloria Duffy, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and now president and CEO of the Commonwealth Club of California.



Secretary California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA)

Toks Omishakin

Toks Omishakin was appointed the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) by Governor Gavin Newsom and sworn in February 2022. He previously served as Director of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) since 2019, where he managed a \$15 billion budget and nearly 22,000 employees who oversee 50,000 lane miles of highway, maintained approximately 20,000 bridges, provided permitting of more than 400 public-use airports, fund three of Amtrak’s busiest intercity rail services and provide transit support to more than 200 local and regional transit agencies.

Toks Omishakin’s transportation vision for California features a safe, equitable, sustainable, and multimodal transportation system that builds on strong local partnerships. As Caltrans Director, he and the leadership team established the 5 Priorities for the Department in 2019 and 2020 and finalized a new Strategic Plan focusing on Caltrans’ foundational principles of Equity, Climate Action and Safety. He also encouraged a Caltrans culture of innovation and intelligent risk-taking, as transformative innovation will be needed to achieve zero traffic-related deaths and reduce GHGs by 40% by 2030.

Having been immersed in the transportation industry for almost two decades, Secretary Omishakin came to CalSTA and Caltrans following eight years with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). There, he successfully established environmental, multimodal-planning policies to make TDOT one of the best state DOTs in the country. As Deputy Commissioner for Environment and Planning, he was responsible for an administrative and project budget of more than \$300 million annually. He also led the activities of the divisions of Environmental Services, Long-Range Planning, Multimodal Transportation Resources, and the Freight and Logistics Division.

Before that role, he served as Director of Healthy Living Initiatives in the Nashville Mayor’s Office. In that capacity, he led the development of Nashville’s Complete Streets Policy and helped establish a more balanced approach to transportation planning and design. This role included spearheading the creation of two bicycle sharing-programs.



In December 2019, Omishakin became Chair of the Council on Active Transportation for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). This position came after serving two years as committee vice chair and serving as the inaugural chair of AASHTO's Multimodal Task Force. He is on the Board of America Walks, Veloz, Mineta Transportation Institute, ITS World Congress, and has advised the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis through its Transportation Council Board.

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, Omishakin and his wife have two children. He is completing a Ph.D. in Engineering Management from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; has a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Jackson State University; and a Bachelor of Arts in Engineering Technology from Mississippi Valley State University.



About Our Alumni

We are grateful to remain connected with our exceptional alumni group. Thank you for supporting our new graduates, and for your continued hard work to build and support our communities.

MSTM and certificate alumni belong to three different alumni organizations, each offering graduates networking opportunities and a range of formal and informal supports.

[MTIConnect](#) is the alumni group for graduates of the transportation management masters and certificate programs. The association provides helpful resources for current and past students through its newsletter, website, capstone coach program, and networking events.

Transportation Management graduates are also members of the [Lucas Graduate School of Business Alumni Network](#) for the school's 50,000+ alumni.

And graduates are, of course, also part of the university-wide [SJSU Alumni Network](#).

LinkedIn group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1859350/>



Olga Nancy Arroyo Alvarez

Community Relations Manager, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

Capstone: The East Los Angeles Freeway Interchange: Opinions of Boyle Heights Stakeholders



Roberto Ayala

Chief Administrative Analyst, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

Capstone: Next Stop: Fresh Food | A Survey of Public Transportation Programs to Improve Food Access



Alexander Bailey

Transportation Planning Intern, Parks and Public Works Department, Los Gatos

Capstone: Evaluating the Accessible Route Between Transit and Retail Storefronts in Redwood City



Marissa Brown

Senior Transportation Planner, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Capstone: An Evaluation of First-Mile Last-Mile Infrastructure at Bay Area Rapid Transit Stations



Joseph Cervantez

Train Operator, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

Capstone: Blackfeet Transit Case Study: Paving the Way for Tribal Transit Services



Salvador A. Cruz

Supervisor, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

Capstone: Sacramento Regional Transit Consolidation: Evaluating the Benefits and Challenges of merging the City of Elk Grove's transit system, E-Tran, with the Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT)



Matthew Nicholas Fluhmann

Transit Service Development Specialist, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

Capstone: The Waiting Game: An Analysis of Bus Stop Accessibility in Santa Cruz County



Phillip James Lynnell Halley

Project Manager, AC Transit

Capstone: The Pedestrian Mall: the Past or the Future?



Paige Malott

Principal, PM Consulting

Capstone: Integrating High Speed Rail Stations at Airports



Christopher McGee

Rail Fleet Services Maintenance Manager, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

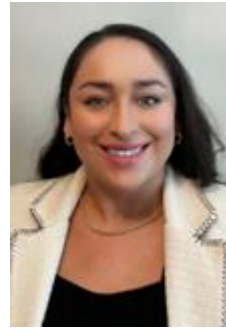
Capstone: Forecasting Maintenance Staffing Levels for Rail Vehicles During Expected Useful Life Cycle and System Expansion



Helena Mekonnen

Transportation Engineer, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Capstone: Bridging the Gap: Reconnecting Communities of City Heights that Were Divided by Transportation Infrastructure



Alessandra Sofia O'Brien

Principal Performance Analyst, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

Capstone: Procurement Cards: Evaluation of BART's GO Card Program



Emily Panning

Senior Right of Way Agent, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Capstone: Analysis of the Replace Your Ride Program run by South Coast Air Quality Management District



Kameryn Ray

Transportation Administration Specialist, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)

Capstone: Barriers to Mobility: An Evaluation of ADA Accessibility at BART Stations in Oakland, CA



Ana Rivas

Director, Bus Operations, SamTrans

Capstone: Bus Operator Shortages "Best Practices to Attract and Retain Bus Operators in The SF Bay Area



Noah Sanchez

Research Data Analyst II, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Capstone: California's Open Data Policy and Caltrans



Martha Patricia Soto

Director, Community Relations, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

Capstone: Los Angeles Metro Faith Leader Program: Understanding its Effectiveness to Building Stronger Faith Leader Partnerships within LA County's Transportation System



Monica Tanner

Civil Engineer, Kimley-Horn

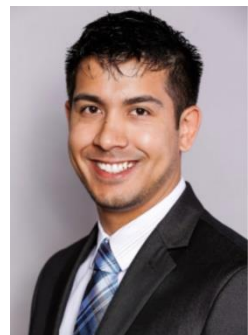
Capstone: Safety in Bus Only Lanes: Perspectives from Transit Agencies



Josue Vaglienty

Senior Project Manager, Capital Programs Division, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA)

Capstone: Resiliency on the LOSSAN Rail Corridor: How Are Emergency Closures Affecting Stakeholder Agencies' Ability to Address Statewide Goals on Infrastructure and Climate?



Kyle Wagner

Senior Manager, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)

Capstone: Business Interruption Fund: LA Metro's Efforts to Sustain Businesses Through Construction of the K Line



Eileen Hsu
 Principal Transportation Planner - LA Metro
 Capstone: *Slow Streets Initiative in Pasadena: Interviews as a Public Engagement Jumpstarter*



Matthew Walker
 Associate Environmental Planner (Architectural History), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
 Capstone: An Evaluation of How California Cities in the Sacramento Region Incorporate Historic Preservation and Historic Transportation Resources Into their General Plans



Farhad (Fred) Yazdani
 Senior Transportation Electrical Engineer, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
 Capstone: Assessment of Wire Theft in Caltrans District 7 Electrical Systems



Pierson Yray
 GIS Specialist, Denver Regional Transportation District
 Capstone: Analyzing Municipal Response to Navigation App-Induced Traffic

*MSTM
 Graduate of
 the Year:
 Timothy
 Lesniak*



Timothy has worked in the transportation industry for most of his adult life, driving box trucks and shuttle buses, then transitioning to the railroad. He spent the first nine years of his railroad career in the engineering department, working from a Track Laborer in New England to overseeing the Engineering Department at the freight railroad in New York City. Three years ago, Lesniak took a role in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Safety Department in Boston, MA. He is currently the Commuter Rail and Ferry Safety Director.

Timothy has a bachelor’s degree in General Studies with a concentration in Technical Theatre from Charter Oak State College and a Public Transportation Safety Certification Training Program (PTSCTP) certificate in Rail. In February 2020, Railway Age magazine named Tim a Fast Tracker – 10 under 40. He lives with his wife, Christine, and son, Theodore, in a town of 3,000 people in rural Connecticut. Pursuing his degree resulted in many late nights over the past two years, attending class until after midnight, and taking two classes at a time to complete the MSTM program. Tim’s passion is railroad safety, so he chose to study railroad roadway worker fatalities attributable to improper track protection as his final capstone project.

https://issuu.com/railwayage/docs/railway_age_february_2020

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tplesniak/>



MTI 2022 Alumn of The Year

RASHIDI BARNES, CEO



Rashidi Barnes was appointed the CEO of Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority, known as Tri Delta Transit, in September 2022, replacing longtime CEO Jeanne Krieg, who retired after 32 years at the agency.

Mr. Barnes started his transit career twenty years ago as the Western Sales Manager for Transit Marketing Group, a leader in marketing and sales for transit product manufacturers. From there, he became the Director of Procurement for Foothill Transit, responsible for ensuring contract compliance, procurement of materials/supplies and professional, architectural and engineering services. Rashida also served as Foothill Transit's Disadvantaged Enterprise Liaison Officer. His next five and a half years were spent with Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (County Connection), where he served as Senior Manager of Transportation, Senior Manager of Innovation and Shared Mobility, and then Director of Innovation and Shared Mobility. Projects he helped deliver included the initial Clipper System implementation for CCCTA, introducing on-demand transportation service, shepherding bus-on-shoulder legislation and congestion mitigation options, and working with the region's local utility provider to help launch the agency's first electric bus fleet. During his other roles at CCCTA, Mr. Barnes oversaw the daily operations of 160+ bus operators, 12 supervisors, and one transit manager. As an operations team, they focused on providing daily efficient service accomplished through a dedication to strong customer service, innovative approaches in planning, traffic mitigation, and performance management of employees.

Recently, Mr. Barnes has been working for First Transit as the Director of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), a National position, where he worked with various transit agencies, TNC's payment solution companies, and micro-mobility providers to deliver innovative mobility solutions. Through the introduction of MaaS mobile applications, data analytics, and focus on improving the customer's journeys, Mr. Barnes believes that transit agencies resolidify their place in the daily transportation decisions people make.

Mr. Barnes brings various experiences in Tri Delta Transit's service. In addition, he brings proven leadership, innovative thought, decision-making skills, contract administration, and in-depth industry knowledge. In 2015, Mr. Barnes was listed by Mass Transit Magazine as one of the Top 40 Under 40 to watch and follow. Mr. Barnes completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. He acquired his Master's in Transportation Management at the San Jose State Mineta Transportation Institute and has completed both the ENO Executive Program and APTA Leadership.

Spotlight: Roger Bazeley, Riding the HSR Japanese Shinkansen and Japan’s Unique Designed Passenger Rail Lines for the 2023 Cherry Blossom Season

By Roger Bazeley, MSTM 2007, HSR CERT 2012

High-Speed Rail Association (USHSR) along with supporters and riders of passenger trains, say that High-Speed Rail can outperform “both flying and driving combined in every measure - capacity, mobility, convenience, speed, safety, efficiency, energy consumption, cost, profitability, national security, carbon footprint, physical footprint, economic development, smart growth, and more. A network of high-speed-trains can carry more passengers than cars and airplanes combined —using a fraction of the energy, and without delays”.

From my recent and past travels using High-Speed-Rail in Japan, Spain, Italy, and Germany, the experience of riding the Japanese “Shinkansen” high-speed rail system is downright incredible and exciting. It’s the way to travel!

I traveled on the original “Bullet” style Shinkansen series 2- in 1987, and more recently, the E4, E5 and E7 series to Kanazawa and Hokkaido. We traveled on the NOZIMI white and blue to Hiroshima. Riding on Japanese Shinkansen system the past 30 years, has not only been a convenient and affordable time saver, but a thrill in gaining countrywide access to the culture. Japanese local and regional foods at every station and major rail stations. Onboard—there were a variety of local Bento Boxes and food supplied by Japan Railway employees, who pushed food carts through the train that whisked by the countryside at speeds of 160 to 220 MPH.

After completing the MSTM degree in 2007, I believed in high-speed rail for California and the USA. I returned in 2012 to complete the new certificate program in High-Speed Rail Management. I was hooked after attending courses taught by Stan Feinsod and hearing from other high-speed rail experts augmenting the class instruction.

To be honest, I have been hooked on trains since I was a child in building some quite large model railroad systems in the basement of our Chicago house, using Lionel O Gauge and then moving to the smaller HO Gauge.

Also, my grandfather Arthur James Bazeley from Bristol, England, worked for the Great Northern Railway before he came to the United States in 1906 and became a mechanical engineer and patent holder of over 90 U.S. automatic railway coupler systems. He also consulted for the British Rail system and planned, built, designed railways worldwide, including in India. So, I guess there was a bit of railway transportation in my DNA from the start.



Last September, before making the 2023 Japan trip, my wife Noriko and I got the opportunity to sail on the Cunard's Queen Elizabeth, our first incredible cruise ship experience. We departed from Barcelona, Spain, and visited five Mediterranean ports before returning to Barcelona and taking Spain's High Speed-rail to Madrid and sightseeing for a couple of days before flying home to SFO. The trip to Spain is a result of meeting Antonio Arribas Torres of EURIF, a guest speaker in the MTI High-Speed-Rail certificate course, and a University of Madrid professor.



In April 2023, after the global COVID-19 pandemic which shut access to Japan for several years my wife Noriko and I were able to get back to riding the rails. We visited her 90-year-old-mother, family, and friends in various areas of Japan during the height of the incredible Cherry Blossom bloom. What better way than by rail for our twenty-day Japan stay, photographing the Yamanashi Prefecture, surrounded by mountains, visiting scenic rural villages, and temples surrounded by blooming cherry and peach trees!



After seven days, we moved on to a family Tokyo apartment to travel extensively by the rail system daily to different cultural sites, including one of the best railway museums, of Japan's rail history and equipment. We took over 60 rail trips, sometimes changing rail lines and regularly going through the huge Shinjuku, Kable Kura, and Tokyo Stations.



The April-May 2023 Journey Log:

DAY 1: The "Eagle has landed in Japan" after 22 hours of travel non-stop to Narita and two trains later to Yamanashi Prefecture, Tatomi Machi (Japan Residence). Embracing, with cameras in hand, the amazing Japanese culture of traditional foods, amazingly presented crafts, and historic sites versus integration of the highest level of high-speed-rail technology and urban transportation planning.

DAY 2: at the 750-year-old mountain top Minobusan Kuonji Temple, with historic buildings surrounded by cherry blossoms in full bloom.



DAY 4: Port of Shimizu, Shizuoka Prefecture—Japan Coast Guard and Port Customs. Japan's amazing culture of food, railway systems, and historic sites in beautifully landscaped settings with Cherry trees in full bloom. We drove on an incredibly engineered highway through the mountains from Kofu, Yamanashi, with 15-20 tunnels and viaducts to Shimizu. We ate fresh sashimi and viewed the bay on a ferry, with passengers feeding seagulls to celebrate *Jonathan Livingston Seagull Day*. This was the birthplace of MTI's Norman Y. Mineta's parents, before they immigrated to California is Shimizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan.

DAY 5: We left Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture, and Koshu, Japan, on a rainy overcast day with low clouds and mists rolling off the surrounding mountains, resting just above the valley floor; a drive to the Koshu Valley COOP distribution hilltop winery chateau 'Buda na Oka' complex for wine tasting and lunch. Captured on camera orchards of blossoming cherry and peach trees covering the valley floor and hillsides with winery grape vines.



Spotlight: Roger Bazeley, Riding the HSR Japanese Shinkansen and Japan's Unique Designed Passenger Rail Lines for the 2023 Cherry Blossom Season

DAY 7: On the road driving to Tokyo after stopping at the Cofu to Tokyo 'MagLev' Ultra-Speed (246 km) passenger train's 40-mile finished operating section to view surrounding cherry blossoms after bidding farewell to Noriko's mother, who just turned 90. Staying in a family Tokyo B&B studio apartment near the rail system, ideal for connecting by train to Yokohama and its port.

DAY 8 TOKYO — Lunch with young family friends and their 2 year old son at the Garden House Restaurant in the Takakashimaya Department store, across from the Shinjuku Rail Station. Late afternoon and night, we walked several miles of a river-walk to see amazing old cherry trees in full bloom along our neighborhood residence. It was the first time in 32 years catching the cherry blossoms at the height of the short blooming season, which last two to three weeks. We discovered an old temple shrine and its community supporters with various Japanese food booths in a beautiful park and playground. We sampled many tasty foods for a happy hour break with a glass of hot Japanese sake.

DAY 9 TOKYO—National Botanical Gardens with thousands of Cherry Blossom viewers photographing and picnicking on the lawns. We rode the train back and forth twice to Shinjuku Station, then returned to have dinner with friends at an authentic Spanish Restaurant, 'El Castellanos', for tapas, papaya, and Spanish wine. One observation was that all the young people were out on-the-town on a Wednesday evening, wearing stylish attire and crowding the underground 5 pm to 10 pm. We walked miles to and from the local train stop, riding the line four times to and from Shinjuku Station.

DAY 10 TOKYO—The National Railway Museum is in Saitama, Japan, which opened on October 14, 2007. It was built and is operated by the East Japan Railway Culture Foundation, a non-profit affiliate of the East Japan Railway Company. The Rolling Stock Station has the largest exhibition area of any station in The Railway Museum. Thirty-six different railway examples of rolling stock are on display, from Locomotive No. 1, the first locomotive to run when Japan opened its first railway in 1872, to the Shinkansen, which boasted the world's fastest cutting-edge technology. Here you can experience the tremendous size and power of rolling stock and feel first-hand the dynamism of these trains when in operation through historic exhibits and multimedia.

DAY 11 YOKOHAMA—Visited Japan Coast Guard's District 10 HQ and museum, dedicated to the history of the Japanese Coast Guard and maritime security. Its centerpiece is the wreck of the armed North Korean spy vessel, sunk by the Coast Guard in December 2001. A major re-development of Yokohama's port waterfront area for the Tokyo Olympics. Tourism has made it a very interesting place to visit and it attracts many international students for academics, and high-tech, as the commute to Tokyo is one hour by express train.

DAY 12 TOKYO—Ueno Park is a large public park next to Ueno Station in central Tokyo. The park grounds were originally part of Kaneiji Temple. Many large national and Tokyo Museums are located in the park area and Ueno Zoo.



DAY 13 TOKYO—Meiji Shrine is a Shinto shrine in Shibuya, Tokyo, dedicated to the deified spirits of Emperor Meiji and his wife, Empress Shōken. The emperor's grave is located at Fushimi-momoyama, south of Kyoto. Meiji Jingu is one of the Shinto shrines in Japan, with the vast land of forest located in the middle of the megacity, Tokyo.



DAY 14 TOKYO—Imperial Palace (Otemachi). The Tokyo Imperial Palace is the main residence of the Emperor of Japan. It is a large park-like area located in the Chiyoda district of the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo and contains many buildings surrounded by a massive fortified water mote. We lunched at the Palace Hotel across from the Imperial Palace complex. We did multiple rail line transfers daily through huge stations with long underground walkways.

DAY 15 TOKYO to Nagatoro by Rail—The limited express train, known as LaView, was reinstated for regular use on the Seibu Railways Ikebukuro Line in 2019, and it quickly became popular among train otaku for its futuristic design, which looks almost like a spaceship. The unique train with its huge glass windows has a very stylish interior design with yellow velvet seats. Excited when we managed to book last minute reservations.



Nagatoro is a town in Saitama Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, Japan. It's known for the Nagatoro River, with its white-water rapids. In the south, the Saitama Museum of Natural History has dinosaur bones found in the region. At the foot of nearby Mt. Hodosan is the ornate Hodosan Shrine. At the mountain's summit is the Nagatoro Hodosan Wintersweet Garden, with its sprawling grove of plum trees and seasonal flowers. Nagatoro, situated approximately two hours from the center of Tokyo, is a tourist spot for river rafting and is surrounded by beautiful forests, rolling hills, mountains with valleys, and small towns and villages.



There are many spa hotels in the surrounding area. The hotel *Japanese kaiseki dinner* is a traditional multi-course Japanese dinner that is analogous to Western haute cuisine. Kaiseki, is a traditional style of Japanese cuisine, with lots of seafood and shellfish, plenty of vegetables, and the all-important rice, usually served with miso soup and tsukemono (Japanese pickles) at the end of the meal. Kaiseki is a highly ritual Japanese meal characterized by small portions, subtle flavors, artful presentation, and an emphasis on fresh seasonal ingredients.

DAY 17 Tokyo to Narita — Farewell to 17 days of photographing scenery, landscapes, railway transportation system, cultural festivals, and Cherry blossom events and parks—and best of all, interacting with the culture, and enjoying time with friends and family over exotic, beautifully presented meals with a cup of hot sake or a cold draft beer.



High-speed rail has become an integral part of the positive impacts on the economy in many countries worldwide. My belief in the importance of high-speed rail has been strengthened through my Japanese and European HSR systems travel experiences and the courses I studied at the Mineta Transportation Institute. I always return to the USA knowing that our future hope in building and delivering a high-speed rail network that links our cities and mega-regions of growth, jobs, and TOD housing, rests in the hands of our newest class of MSTM graduates and Alumni.



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 Matthew Nicholas Fluhmann
 Phillip James Lynnell Halley
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June 2023 Newsletter

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Alumni, we would love to hear from you! Tell us what you have been up to since you graduated. Tell us about job promotions and career advancements so we can feature you in the ClassmateUpdates section. Send your update to: mticonnect@gmail.com.

