

Rail Symposium 2026

Enhancing Economic Impact, Innovation and the Customer Experience through Major Projects and Events
(3/26/2026)



In both the United States and Japan, railways are a vital foundation supporting economic activity. In the U.S., major projects such as modernization along the Northeast Corridor are underway, and investment in rail-centered public transportation is accelerating ahead of mega events including the FIFA World Cup 2026. Meanwhile in Japan, alongside ongoing advancements in rail development and station-centered urban development in major metropolitan areas such as Tokyo and Osaka, network enhancements and customer-experience initiatives linked to international events have been advancing. Investment by Japanese rolling stock manufacturers in the U.S. has also contributed to local communities. Against this backdrop, the railway sector has become a key area for sharing expertise and strengthening bilateral relations.

This symposium brought together government officials and railway operators from both countries to discuss the economic impact of railway investment and leveraging mega events to enhance the customer experience. The discussion covered, among other points, the following:

- Railway investment extends beyond tracks, stations, and rolling stock to supply chains. It also encompasses manufacturing, station-area redevelopment, higher property values, and increased tax revenues, thereby strengthening employment and industrial bases across wider regions.
- Integrating railways with urban development improves mobility and urban functions, contributing to the creation of resilient and attractive cities. Railways should be viewed not merely as a means of transport, but as a foundation supporting urban infrastructure and economic activity.
- While safety remains the top priority, investment in AI, digital technologies, automation, and advanced information and payment systems is important to advance railway systems. Such innovation can improve safety, efficiency, the customer experience, and system stability.
- Mega-events such as the Olympics and World Expositions are not only short-term transportation challenges, but also catalysts for improving safety, accessibility, passenger information services, and operations through continued investment, training, simulation exercises, and inter-agency coordination.
- Successful transportation for mega-events requires not only individual transport services, but a seamless customer experience, including passenger information services, payment systems, and connections with other modes of transportation.
- Sharing Japan's experience and expertise in developing railways alongside mega-events is highly valuable in light of the challenges facing the United States. Mutual learning on railway will help further deepen Japan-U.S. cooperation.

