Impressions of the TRB 2026 Annual Meeting

From January 11th to 15th, 2026, I participated in the Transportation Research Board (TRB) 2026 Annual Meeting, one of the world's largest and most influential conferences in the field of transportation research. The conference is held annually in Washington, D.C., and brings together thousands of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners from around the world.

The conference program is composed of several core elements, most notably poster sessions and lecture-based committee meetings. Poster sessions are held three times daily, each lasting approximately two hours, and provide an interactive platform for presenting and discussing ongoing research. In parallel, lecture sessions cover a broad range of transportation-related topics and are organized within TRB committees according to specific professional and research domains.

During the conference, my main interest focused on sessions addressing the adoption and economic aspects of electric vehicles. These discussions presented international case studies, particularly from Norway and China, where electric vehicles have achieved substantial market penetration through different combinations of policy incentives and market mechanisms. A key conclusion from these sessions was that current projections do not indicate a slowdown in electric vehicle adoption; on the contrary, recent forecasts suggest stronger growth than previously anticipated.

Several sessions emphasized that the perception of electric vehicle pricing varies significantly among consumers, depending on factors such as driving behavior, access to charging infrastructure, and the value of time. A clear distinction was made between the upfront purchase price and the total economic cost over a vehicle's lifetime. Encouragingly, electric vehicle prices are declining, primarily due to reductions in battery costs. This decline is more pronounced in vehicles with smaller batteries, while larger-battery models tend to follow at a later stage. Government policy was shown to play a crucial role in accelerating cost parity between electric vehicles and conventional internal combustion engine vehicles.

Considerable attention was also devoted to the economics of fast-charging infrastructure. Several presentations demonstrated that fast-charging stations often struggle to achieve financial viability without public subsidies, as payback periods based solely on charging revenues can extend up to a decade. From the consumer perspective, fast charging is typically more expensive than home charging, particularly when waiting times and delays are taken into account.

In addition, the sessions highlighted the growing complexity of optimizing charging decisions for electric vehicles compared to conventional fuel vehicles. Unlike gasoline refueling, charging decisions depend on multiple factors, including electricity prices, charging speed, time of day, battery state, and infrastructure availability. These complexities raise important equity concerns, as households with access to home charging often located in suburban areas benefit from lower costs and greater convenience, while those reliant on public charging infrastructure face higher financial and time-related burdens. This disparity underscores broader questions related to fairness, energy policy, and the evolving structure of household transportation and electricity expenditures.

As part of my participation in the conference, I travelled to Washington, D.C. to contribute to the presentation of three poster papers developed within our laboratory and in collaboration with research partners from the European Commission. One of the posters presented the study *"Travel Patterns Approach to Justify Personalized and Automated Transportation,"* co-authored with Francisco Pereira. The two additional posters were joint works with researchers from the European Commission, including Ada Garus, Biagio Ciuffo, and Konstantinos Mattas.

These posters focused on the energy implications of shared and automated mobility systems, with particular emphasis on the role of service design and automation-related energy consumption in shaping urban sustainability outcomes. Presenting this work provided valuable opportunities to engage with an international audience of researchers and practitioners and to exchange ideas on emerging challenges in urban mobility and sustainable transportation.

Beyond the formal sessions, numerous networking receptions and social events were organized throughout Washington, D.C., offering excellent opportunities for professional interaction and collaboration among transportation researchers and industry representatives. I highly recommend attending these events to anyone planning to participate in future TRB conferences.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the **ISRC** for supporting and funding my participation in this exceptional conference.

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