

TRB 2026 Conference: Impressions and Recommendations

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Focus: Aviation and Urban Air Mobility (UAM)

The TRB 2026 program included many types of events, which made it easy to learn, meet people, and understand what is happening both in research and in practice. The week included technical sessions, workshops, poster sessions, committee meetings, and a large exhibition area, and each format offered a different kind of value. A strong overall impression was how international the conference felt. There were attendees from many countries and backgrounds, and that diversity showed up in the discussions, especially when people compared how transportation challenges are handled across different regions.

In terms of content, the breadth of topics was one of the main strengths of the conference. Even though my primary interest is aviation, the most useful conversations often touched related areas such as data and information technology, safety and human factors, planning and forecasting, and policy. These areas connect directly to aviation and UAM because they shape how systems are evaluated, regulated, and eventually implemented. I also heard from several attendees that overall attendance this year was lower than in some previous years, possibly due to major changes in how the conference was organized, but the conference still felt active and the networking was effective.

The first day career fair was especially helpful because it provided a clear view of who is hiring and what kinds of work are currently in demand in the transportation sector. The exhibition was also valuable, since it gave a practical view of the tools and technologies that companies are developing to improve transportation systems. Finally, the poster sessions were one of the best spaces for networking, since they made it natural to speak with researchers, learn about ongoing work, and identify potential connections for future collaboration. In the aviation track specifically, there seemed to be fewer events compared to some other areas, but there were still sessions, posters, and lectures that were relevant, and the broader program helped fill in the gaps by providing strong content in adjacent fields.

Recommendations

For future participation, I recommend planning the schedule in a way that includes aviation and UAM events, while also intentionally attending a selection of sessions in adjacent areas such as safety, operations, data driven transportation, and policy. This creates a more complete picture of the field, because aviation outcomes depend on how performance is measured, how risks are communicated, and how infrastructure and regulations evolve. I also recommend treating poster sessions as a main activity, not a secondary one, since they are one of the most efficient ways to both learn about current research and build professional connections. In addition, the career fair and the exhibition are worth attending early and with a clear goal, because they provide direct exposure to industry priorities, emerging tools, and potential employment pathways. future collaboration.

Appendix: Photos

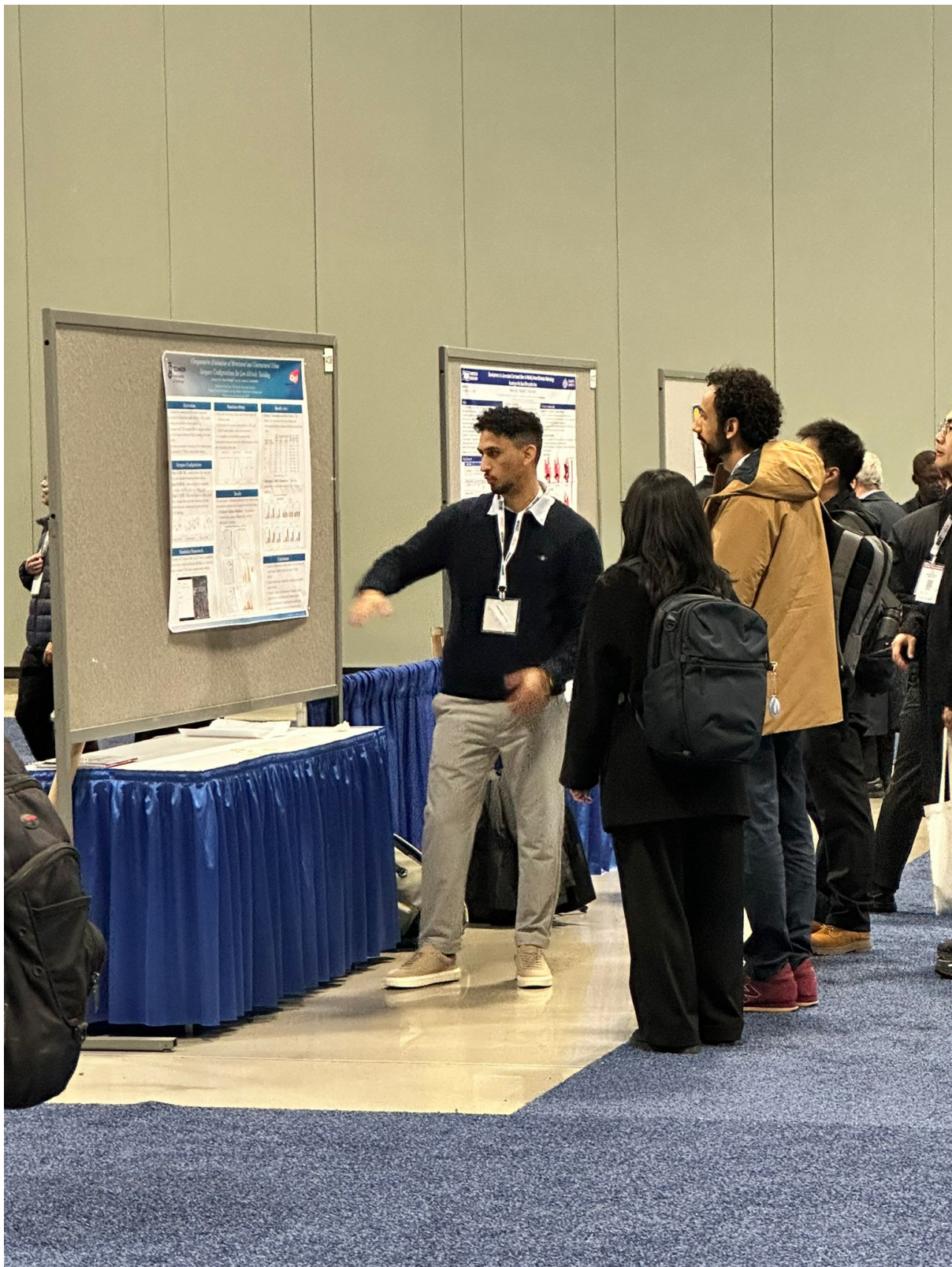


Figure 1: Photo taken during the poster session while presenting the poster



Figure 2: Photo at the TRB venue signage (Washington, DC)