

Press

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Messe Frankfurt Middle East GmbH

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Inaugural Smart Traffic Middle East 2015 conference gets underway in Abu Dhabi

Two-day summit supported by Dubai Roads & Transport Authority (RTA) attracts world class line-up of speakers

Abu Dhabi, UAE: The inaugural Smart Traffic Middle East conference has begun in Abu Dhabi today (Monday 18 May), as a power-packed line-up of regional and international traffic experts gathered to address the growing challenges of Middle East traffic congestion.

With more than 100 traffic industry professionals in attendance, the two-day summit takes place until 19 May 2015 at the Beach Rotana Abu Dhabi, and features a series of international case studies on various smart traffic and transport management initiatives around the world, including Amsterdam, Singapore, Tokyo, Glasgow and London.

Organised by Messe Frankfurt Middle East, and officially supported by the Dubai Roads & Transport Authority (RTA), Smart Traffic Middle East comes as the RTA revealed earlier this year that traffic congestion cost the Dubai's economy US\$789 million in terms of loss in working hours, time and fuel in 2013.

That, however, was far less than the potential US\$4.5 billion in economic productivity the Emirate could have lost had the RTA not invested US\$16.4 billion in developing Dubai's multi-modal public transport infrastructure over the last nine years.

Hamid Iravani, Transportation Planning Director at engineering firm Parsons, and a speaker at Smart Traffic Middle East, said that such public multi-modal transport systems are crucial to encourage

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residents to rely less on cars for transportation, while also reducing the need for more roads.

“Many cities have experienced that the difference between a six-lane road and a two-lane road is that, in a two-lane road, you get two lanes of traffic congestion, whereas in a six-lane road you get six lanes of traffic congestion,” said Iravani, who spoke today about implementing green multi-modal transportation systems.

“Over the last two decades, they’ve realised that curing traffic congestion by just widening roads and building extensive highway systems is like curing obesity by loosening your belt.

“So now concepts like New Urbanism, Smart City, Neo-Traditional Planning, and Transit Oriented Development (TOD), which all advocate more sustainable multi-modal transportation systems are now included as part of regional municipalities in creating human scale places which are built for people as opposed to just for automobiles.”

Iravani said that traffic congestion can never be eliminated entirely, however giving options via robust public transit services and offering non-motorised transportation systems allows commuters to choose between congestion and a more environmentally friendly commute.

“Building a new road that moves people further away from their place of work will cause more congestion, or the commuter that used to use the public transport system could be tempted to use the new road, which also causes more congestion,” added Iravani.

“So a green multi-transportation system defines what that optimum level of required roads is, and it’s about pulling people out of their cars and pushing them onto public transport and a non-motorised transportation system.”

Meanwhile, Khoong Chan Meng, Director and CEO for the Institute of Systems Science at the National University of Singapore, shared insights at Smart Traffic Middle East on how Singapore overcame traffic congestion to evolve into a smart city and a global economic powerhouse.

“Singapore has been able to reduce traffic congestion and improve travel time despite licensing more vehicles over the years,” said Khoong

“The expansion and optimisation of the public bus and mass rapid transit networks has also increased commuter choice, comfort, and convenience. These developments have a direct positive impact on national productivity, ease of doing business, and access to essential education, healthcare and other economic and social needs of residents and visitors.”

Khoong said that planning, simulation, and design for future transportation networks are critical components of Singapore’s smart traffic systems, while adding that similar systems can be applied effectively to Middle East cities.

“Many Middle East cities are experiencing rapid growth and it is critical for them to plan ahead for future sustainability,” added Khoong. “The smart logic in such systems has universal applicability.”

Drawing in experts and delegates from both the region and across the world, Smart Traffic Middle East facilitates the exchange of stimulating ideas and forging high-value connections. The conference also features an exhibition along the sidelines showcasing the latest innovations in smart traffic and transport solutions.

High profile speakers at Smart Traffic Middle East 2015 include Hamad Adel Al Afeefi, Acting Director of Traffic Management and Technology at the Abu Dhabi Department of Transport; Dr. Saeed Al Dhareri, Former Advisor to H.H. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information Technology – UAE; and Dr. Atef Garib, Traffic Safety Expert at the Abu Dhabi Police.

Captions:

1. Smart Traffic Middle East 2015 got underway in Abu Dhabi, featuring more than 100 high-profile traffic industry experts addressing the challenges of Middle East traffic congestion.

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About Messe Frankfurt Middle East GmbH:

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** Preliminary figures (2014)*