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News from the International Air Rail Organisation

Air-Rail Growth Opportunities Explored at Bangkok Transport Summit

Over 500 participants attended the recent International Air Rail Transport Summit Conference in Bangkok, organised by PPS OneWorks and co-sponsored by the International Air Rail Organisation. IARO President Simon Earles reports

High-level support from Thailand's Ministry of Transport – together with the backing of the Airports of Thailand (AOT), the State Railway of Thailand (SRT) and the Mass Rapid Transport Authority of Thailand - enabled the 2019 AirRail Summit in Bangkok on Wednesday 20 November to attract over 500 delegates. As a co-sponsoring organisation, the IARO was well-represented throughout the event, with keynote speakers both in the morning plenary session and also the afternoon focus on "Effective Air Rail Links"

Air-Rail visits

On the day before the Conference, a tour of the Bangkok Metro and a visit to Suvarnabhumi Airport had been organised for delegates. We were able to visit the newly opened Siam Museum Station, magnificently designed and decorated in traditional Thai style, on the metro's newly-extended Blue Line, which is providing part of the ongoing significant expansion of Bangkok's public transport system.



The Tour Group visited Suvarnabhumi Airport and visited the Airport Museum

We then travelled on the air-rail link to Suvarnabhumi Airport, where we were welcomed by the Airports of Thailand, who presented a detailed picture of the growth plans for their six airports – and information about the planned use of rail links to connect three of the country's main airports.



During the visit, Airports of Thailand gave a presentation to the Tour Group

The tour concluded with a visit to the Airport's museum, which is located directly opposite the main airport entrance - and is well worth a visit by any passenger with time to spare before departure. The history of airport development in Bangkok and the future expansion are presented in a well-designed and accessible series of photos, maps and visual displays.

Morning keynotes

The International Air Rail Transport Summit on the following day comprised plenary conference sessions in the morning, followed by two parallel groups in the afternoon (Innocon and AirRail)



The Summit opened with a stunning ceremony featuring traditional Thai dancing, after which it was formally opened by Mr. Thaworn Senneam, Thailand's Deputy Minister of Transport, who outlined public transport



developments and policy in Thailand.

Photo: Thaworn Senneam - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation, Thailand



The Event was opened with a traditional Thai ceremony



Thailand’s airport connectivity planning was presented by Latchida Apaphant, Vice President of Strategic Planning at Airports of Thailand.

Photo: Latchida Apaphant, - Vice President , Strategic Planning, Airports of Thailand

IARO Board Member James Cornelius, Public Transport Strategy Lead at London Heathrow Airport explained the airport’s sustainable public transport access strategy and how it is supporting infrastructure expansion.



Photo: James Cornelius – Public Transport Strategy Lead, Heathrow Airport

Also reviewing the international picture, Andrew Acquah-Harrison, Chief Executive Advisor at GMR Group, explained how airports have become the economic engines of growth, by connecting regions to the World.



Smart airport cities are attracting considerable interest in future airport development and air-rail strategy. As a final session before lunch, this topic was discussed by Han Chung Heng, Senior Vice President, Oracle Systems, International and Giulio De Carli, Managing Partner, One Works.

Photo: Han Chung Heng, Senior Vice President, Oracle Systems International (right) and Giulio De Carli, Managing Partner, One Works

Afternoon focus on Efficient Air-Rail Links

In the afternoon, the Summit divided into two parallel session. I was delighted to accept an invitation to moderate the session focusing on “Efficient Air-Rail Links”. Here is a brief summary of the presentations that were given:

Mr. Luca Bernardinetti, Chairman & Managing Partner, Mahanakorn Partners Group

Luca told us that Thailand is opening up to foreign infrastructure investment and putting policy in place to accelerate delivery.

Lucas London, Associate Director - PPS OneWorks

Lucas London highlighted that airports are more than “just an airport” and to create a true sense of “place”, surface connectivity is critical.

Photo: Lucas London – Associate Director, PPS OneWorks



Dr. Kerati Kijmanawat, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Index International Group

Dr Kerati showed us that sometimes government needs to take the lead to deliver the best outcomes for passengers.

Philippe Schulzinger Bid Director, Bombardier Transportation Thailand

Phillipe showed us that through clever delivery of automated people movers you can create great customer service and unlock land for other uses.

Sonesack Nhansana, Former Deputy Director General, LAO Railway

Sunasak stressed the importance of strong partnerships and a detailed delivery plan when implementing rail links across borders

Andrew Sharp, IARO Policy Director

And finally Andrew showed the value of sharing knowledge and best practice.



*Andrew Sharp (left) and
Simon Earles*

Looking ahead

Each of these presentations helped to demonstrate how complex air-rail systems are, which is why we, as professionals in the industry, are so attracted to them.

Our role and remit at the IARO is to bring partners together to replace this complexity with simplicity, with a single-minded focus on the passenger.

At the 2019 AirRail Summit in Bangkok, PPS OneWorks and the IARO created an important platform for such a debate, while building new partnerships to help progress improved air-rail systems.

Simon Earles

President, IARO

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