

ITS America Conference & Expo and SwRI Launch Future Leaders Program

Empowering Innovation: Essay competitions and hands-on learning experiences inspire next generation of transportation leaders

DETROIT, MI, UNITED STATES, February 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [ITS America Conference & Expo](#) announces its partnership with [Southwest Research Institute \(SwRI\)](#) to launch the 2026 Future Leaders Program. The program inspires young minds from K-12 through college by offering essay competitions, scholarship opportunities, and the chance to present transportation solutions at the ITS America Conference & Expo, organized in partnership by RX Global and ITS America, from June 9-12, 2026, at Huntington Place in Detroit, Michigan.



ITS America Conference & Events inspires K-12 and college students through essay competitions, scholarships, and presentation opportunities at the ITS America Conference & Expo, June 9-12, 2026, at Huntington Place in Detroit.

Students can participate in multiple essay competitions designed to spark creativity and innovation in transportation technology. High school students compete in the Partners for Automated Vehicle Education (PAVE), in partnership with Michigan DOT, Michigan Office Of Future Mobility & Electrification and STEER essay contest exploring automated vehicles with essays due February 28, 2026, with winners receiving scholarships.

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Laura Chace, President and CEO of ITS America

College students and young professionals tackle artificial intelligence's role in transportation systems through the

SwRI-sponsored competition, with submissions due April 1, 2026, and winners presenting their solutions at the Future Leaders Program on June 11.

"The Future Leaders Program represents our commitment to investing in the next generation of transportation technology leaders," said Laura Chace, President and CEO, ITS America. "By empowering innovation through programs like this, we're building the workforce of the future that will transform how people and goods move safely and efficiently across our communities."

The program offers exceptional learning experiences beyond traditional classroom settings. Graduate and undergraduate students engage with industry experts through hands-on workshops, participate in career development sessions, and explore emerging roles in transportation technology. Square One Education Network provides K-12 students with STEM experiences through Innovative Vehicle Design projects, giving young learners exposure to autonomous and electric vehicle technologies. All student participants receive discounted \$50 registration that includes full conference access, meals, and networking opportunities.

"SwRI's partnership creates meaningful opportunities for students to showcase innovative transportation solutions," said Josh Johnson, Executive Director of SwRI's Intelligent Transportation Systems Department. "Through presenting at the ITS America Conference & Expo, students gain real-world experience sharing their research with transportation leaders across North America."

The Future Leaders Program connects students with professionals shaping tomorrow's mobility solutions through mentorship and direct industry access. Career development programming includes interactive sessions where participants discover transportation career pathways, learn professional skills, and build networks that support their educational and career goals. The comprehensive experience prepares students for future careers in engineering, technology, policy, and transportation planning.

Complete program details and registration information are available at <https://www.itsamericaevents.com/expo/en-us/experiences/future-leaders-program.html>.



The Future Leaders Program connects graduate and undergraduate students with industry experts through hands-on workshops, career development sessions, and exploration of emerging transportation technology roles.

SwRI is an independent, nonprofit, applied research and development organization based in San Antonio, Texas, with more than 3,200 employees and an annual research volume of \$966 million. For more information, please visit www.its.swri.org. SwRI has been working in the ITS industry for over 28 years developing advanced transportation management systems, integrated corridor management systems, data exchanges, automated vehicles, and connected vehicle systems.

About ITS America

The Intelligent Transportation Society of America advances the research and deployment of intelligent transportation technologies to save lives, improve mobility, and increase efficiency and productivity. Our vision is a better future transformed by transportation technology and innovation: Safe. Smart. Connected. For more information, please visit www.itsa.org.

About RX

RX is a global leader in events and exhibitions, leveraging industry expertise, data, and technology to build businesses for individuals, communities, and organisations. With a presence in 25 countries across 41 industry sectors, RX hosts approximately 350 events annually. RX is committed to creating an inclusive work environment for all our people. RX empowers businesses to thrive by leveraging data-driven insights and digital solutions. RX is part of RELX, a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers. For more information, visit www.rxglobal.com.

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