



Trip Report on ITS China Annual Conference

Guangzhou, China, Nov 11 – 14, 2014

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Executive Summary

My trip to China to attend the Annual ITS China Conference was a successful one. It helped to foster the relationship between ITS Canada and ITS China, and we were able to promote the Montreal ITS World Congress and our next ACGM directly **to the who's who of ITS in China**. The Chinese have now agreed to sign an MOU of Cooperation with ITS Canada, subject of course to approvals by both Boards of Directors.

- There were bonus benefits which arose out of the trip as well. I met with ITS Shenzhen officials who indicated that they would send a team to Montreal. I also met with Professor Yu Zhi who co-founded the OpenITS Forum consisting of some 50 Chinese and international academics. This may be a useful channel for us to reach out to the academia for the Montreal event. During the conference, I became friendly with an ITS Thailand official who agreed to promote the Montreal World Congress in Thailand.

Background

As a result of an invitation from ITS China, I was asked to “represent” ITS Canada (in the capacity as a consultant) at the 9th Annual Conference of ITS China held in Guangzhou in Southern China. The Chinese kindly offered to pick up my local expenses while the travelling costs to and from Guangzhou are subsidized (up to 50% in most cases) by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Development.

The Conference

The Conference took place from November 11 through 14 2014 and was attended by over 600 people from all parts of China. Meetings on the 11th were mostly technical and internal in nature. I did not attend any of them as I arrived late on Tuesday evening.



Plenary Session. The Plenary Session (see picture) was an all-day affair on Wednesday from 830 AM through 730 PM, due to delays and last minute additions. There were no breaks at all. Most of the speakers were quite animated and effective. Lots of statistics were presented and the slides were very busy but I was impressed with the very large display they had. It was based on LED technology and was large enough to show the most minute details (see picture). Although most of the presentations were in Chinese, the plenary was basically bilingual with interpretation from Chinese to English and vice versa.



There were several international speakers, including myself, my Thai friend, a German government official and two Japanese delegates. I had 20 minutes to talk about ITS development in Canada and I concentrated most of my effort on the mission and objectives of ITS Canada at home and abroad, our recent effort in developing a new strategic plan and the upcoming ACGM in the National Capital Region as well as the 2017 ITS World Congress in Montreal. Unfortunately, the promotional video which we painstakingly translated to Chinese **did not get shown due to the fact that “our video technology was too advanced for them”**, despite much effort by many people to make it work. I think it had to do with their LED technology. However, they promised that they would upload our video onto their website for viewing by their members.

Exhibition. Considering the size of China, the exhibition was not big, with perhaps only 50 exhibitors, and a lot of notable companies were not there. Because the plenary went on through the whole first day without breaks, the exhibition was not well visited until the second day. ITS Canada was provided with a full sized booth, albeit at a quiet corner.



The booth was not signed and luckily I brought our signs from Detroit. Giving out promotional brochures and pins at the booth was totally ineffective. In the end, I decided to move quietly from row to row in the plenary and gave out the materials person by person. The Montreal pin was very popular, particularly among woman attendees, and people were generally relieved to see the brochure in Chinese. In the end, I finished all 400 pins and ITS Canada promotional brochures. I strongly suggest that for future promotional efforts, the pin is a must to capture people's interest.

Award Ceremony. We can definitely learn from their award ceremony. They gave out at least ten times the awards we do annually. The award recipients were lined up ten or more at a time and escorted up to the stage by beautifully dressed hostesses. The awards were then presented by five or more VIPs concurrently. It was a sight to see.





Technical Forums. The next day was filled with technical forums, eight concurrent ones throughout the whole day on a variety of ITS topics. All the rooms were packed with people. Although a lot of VIPs were gone, a lot of local students seemed to have shown up to make up for the numbers.

Technical Tours. There were two technical tours on the last day of the conference, namely the Guangdong Provincial Integrated Traffic Management Centre and the Guangzhou BRT Control Centre. Both tours were offered consecutively to the same group of some 80 people and together, they lasted only 3 hours including transportation from and back to the hotel.

Meeting with the Chairman

On Thursday the 13th morning, I met with Chairman Wu, who was accompanied by Vice Secretary General Guan, Ms Yang the Director of Membership and Ms Liang from the International Affairs Department. The meeting was very cordial and we wasted no time to agree that there should be an MOU of Cooperation between the two associations and they will consider coming to our Gatineau ACGM to sign such an agreement. They will invite their members to join us in Montreal. At the same time, they urged ITS Canada and its members to attend the Asia Pacific Conference in Nanjing in April 2015 and promised to do their best to host us. Ms Liang was instructed to find an appropriate sample MOU and send it to us for review.

Conference Organization

It seemed to me that ITS China does not directly organize any conference themselves. For example, the Guangzhou Conference was mostly organized by the Guangdong Provincial Transportation Department and a lot of high school students were recruited as volunteers. For the Asia Pacific Forum in Nanjing next April, the Jiangsu (of which Nanjing is the capital) Provincial Transportation Department will play a key role in the organization of the event.

Nanjing 2015

The 14th ITS Asia-Pacific Forum and Exhibition will be held in Nanjing, China on April 27 through 29 next year and it will be a much wider audience for our promotional efforts on our technologies and conferences. Featuring 3 plenary sessions and 21 sessions on various ITS topics, it will be attended by delegates from all over Asia and other continents. There will be an exhibition area of 10,000 sq. m. and booth rental is relatively inexpensive. Strong consideration should be given to assembling a team of Canadian ITS exhibitors to promote our products over there.



ITS Shenzhen

During the conference, I met several officials of ITS Shenzhen, including Chairman Yang, Secretary General Li and Cathy Lee, Secretary of International Affairs. ITS SZ was formed earlier than ITS China and operates as an independent association but there is a cordial relationship between them. For example, ITS SZ is a sponsor for the Guangzhou Conference.

They urged me to visit their office in Shenzhen, which I did (and it is worth noting that I travelled from Guangzhou South to Shenzhen North on a high speed train for C\$15 over a distance of 120 KM).

We had a good meeting in Shenzhen. Mr. Li committed to send a significant delegation to Montreal in 2017 and they would like to sign an MOU of Cooperation with ITS Canada. As to our next ACGM, Mr. Li expressed difficulty in attending since their Annual ITS Expo will be held just one month after our event. However, they wish to invite us to their Expo and will offer us a free booth and free lodging and meals. They have sent us a letter confirming their invitation since I came back to Canada. The SZ Expo will have an exhibition area of 15,000 sq.m and they expect 300 exhibitors from 16 countries and 30,000 visitors from 20 countries. The Conference Centre is merely a subway stop from the Hong Kong border.

Back in Guangzhou, I had checked with Chairman Wu who indicated that ITS Shenzhen is a good partner of ITS China and they have no concern whatsoever if ITS Canada enters any sort of cooperation arrangement with ITS SZ. Compared to ITS China, ITS SZ seems to be much more private sector based and more focused on trade and business matching. It has as its members over 150 significant ITS companies in the Greater China area, many of whom have already been active overseas and have international partners. I believe ITS SZ is a very good interface with China and I therefore strongly suggest we strike a relationship with them.

OpenITS Platform

I met with Professor Yu Zhi from the Sun Yat Sen University in Guangzhou, who is the co-founder of OpenITS Platform, a group committed to open ITS technologies. I understand that the University of Alberta is also involved in this endeavor. The group has grown to some 50 people, mostly academics but Professor Yu welcomes involvement by ITS Canada and our members. I told him that we may get back to him as to how OpenITS Platform can play a role in the Montreal event. I suggest we should explore this as a channel to reach out to the academia in China, Asia and worldwide.