

# We'll Meet YOU In St. Louis To Spark Ideas For The Future

By Kristen McIntosh

**R**egistration is now open at [RTA.org/2021-conference](https://www.rta.org/2021-conference) for the Railway Tie Association's (RTA) 103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Technical Conference & Symposium.

Scheduled for Nov. 1-4 in St. Louis, the conference promises a combination of education and face-to-face networking opportunities wrapped up in a little bit of fun.

St. Louis is known for its pioneering spirit, as it was the last major stop before pioneers journeyed westward to the Pacific Coast. It is also the home of RTA's roots. RTA was originally organized in the city in 1919 as the National Association of Railroad Tie Producers.

RTA's 2021 conference promises to be particularly rewarding—especially considering the video presentation of the 2020 conference. “The RTA Executive Committee and headquarters team members are very much looking forward to bringing everyone back together again following a year in which in-person events were not possible,” said RTA President Rick Gibson, president of Appalachian Timber Services.

“We are also excited about the opportunity to convene in St. Louis, where RTA was originally organized in 1919. As we reflect on the association's original ideals and the growth of the industry since 1919, we will also explore ways to solve



The St. Louis Wheel is near the Union Station complex, site of RTA's conference.

members' toughest challenges and discover new perspectives.”

## The Venue

The St. Louis Union Station Hotel, part of Hilton's Curio Collection, is the site of this year's conference. Once the hub of transportation in the city known as Gateway to America, Union Station enjoys life today as a mixed-use complex featuring retail shops, event spaces, restaurants, and the 500+-room host hotel.

Union Station's Grand Hall showcases the original terrazzo floor, green glazed terracotta bricks, stained glass windows and wooden carpentry detailing.

After a \$100 million renovation, the hotel and its guest rooms are fresh and modern

with artwork and décor depicting railroad themes. Anchoring the Union Station development is the St. Louis Aquarium, which is in the former retail space inside the station. On-site guests will also marvel at the other amenities that surround its lake. The St. Louis Ferris Wheel, a carousel, mini-golf and multiple restaurants surround the property. Nearby attractions include the City and Soldiers Museum and the Gateway Arch grounds.

## The Fun

Nov. 2 will be a day of reconnecting with friends and colleagues.

The annual golf tournament will be held at the Sunset Country Club, which, for more than a century, has been a haven for members who enjoy outstanding golf, dining, and recreational and social activities.

Sunset Country Club is regarded as having one of the best private club courses in the St. Louis metro area.

As part of the golfing experience, players will be treated to many RTA-provided amenities, including, breakfast, lunch, a high-end RTA wearable, and personal coolers stocked with a selection of water and beverages with refills available at the turn.

RTA Advisor Jim Gauntt said, “Never in all of my meeting planning years have we been so warmly received by a private club.



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In fact, having visited recently, I can say that this is likely to be the finest RTA tournament experience we have ever conducted thanks to the Sunset Country Club staff.”

While golfers are at the course, guests may choose to enjoy an optional, nationally acclaimed tour, “St. Louis Through a Storyteller’s Eyes, An Unexpected Tour,” hosted by Amanda Clark of STL Tours.

The day’s official festivities will end with the annual President’s Reception.

## The Education

Conference business meetings will begin at 8 a.m. sharp on Wednesday, Nov. 3, with a presentation from Connor Lokar, a senior forecaster with ITR Economics.

Lokar will be followed by transportation analyst Tony Hatch, known for his lively presentations on the economic factors impacting freight railroads.

American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association President Chuck Baker will join in following Hatch to provide a legislative and regulatory outlook for 2022.

Confirmed as the luncheon speaker is the Hon. Robert Sumwalt, former chairman

of the National Transportation Safety Board. Sumwalt is a fierce advocate for improving safety in all modes of transportation, including rail. His presentation will be an interactive

session designed to reimagine safety in the context of corporate leadership.

Dana Cole of the Hardwood Federation and several sawmill participants will address challenges and opportunities of today’s hardwood sawmills. Engineering projects that railroads are currently undertaking or planning will also be explored.

The Grand Reception that evening will feature comedian Mark Cordes as host and emcee. Cordes specializes in the humor in relationships, offering practical advice through inspirational comedy.

On Thursday, Nov. 4, presentations will focus on research and development initiatives in wood preservatives and major railroads’ tie purchasing plans for 2022 and beyond.

Stay tuned to [RTA.org](http://RTA.org) for agenda updates and register for the conference at

[RTA.org/2021-conference](http://RTA.org/2021-conference). ■

# Do These 5 Things While You’re Here

From museums to breweries and from blues venues to the arch, St. Louis offers an array of fun activities.

## Tap Your Feet To The Blues

Celebrate St. Louis’ musical heritage—and especially Blues music. Start your Blues journey at the National Blues Museum downtown.

Then, visit some of the city’s famous blues clubs such as 2720 Cherokee, the Angry Beaver, Beale on Broadway, Blue Pearl or Broadway Oyster Bar.

## Visit Gateway Arch

Take a tram ride to the top of the Gateway Arch. The tram will lift you 630 feet up to the top of the nation’s tallest monument. The museum at the arch traces the story of the Native Americans, explorers, pioneers and rebels who made America possible.

## Take A Trip To The Museum Of Transportation

The St. Louis Museum of Transportation’s rail and transit collections have grown to encompass more than 190 major exhibits. Its collection is recognized as the largest of transportation vehicles in the world.

## Eat Like A Local

St. Louis is gaining a reputation as a food destination, with a group of innovative chefs reshaping the local culinary scene with creative dining experiences that are attracting the attention of food critics from around the nation.

Taste St. Louis-style barbecue at Pappy’s Smokehouse or Bootleggin’ BBQ. Go to The Hill, aka “Little Italy,” for some authentic Italian food. Or, head downtown for dinner at Tony’s, an eatery that is nationally recognized for its impeccable service, extensive wine selection and elevated Italian cuisine.



Neighborhoods throughout the city offer a wealth of exciting dining and shopping experiences.

## Explore Home Base: St. Louis Union Station

St. Louis Union Station is not only the site of RTA’s 2021 conference, but it is also home to more than 13,000 animals at the St. Louis Aquarium, the 200-foot St. Louis Wheel, a carousel, an 18-hole mini golf course, the mirror maze, a ropes course, the train park, and numerous restaurants. ■

### Conference Registration Costs:

**RTA Member:** \$729 advance registration or \$789 on site

**Member Spouse/Guest:** \$199 advance registration or \$249 on site

**Non-member:** \$999

Register now at [RTA.org/2021-conference](http://RTA.org/2021-conference)