

NEWS RELEASE – September 17, 2025

Contact: Nick Letzkus

letzkus@smenet.org

Latest Innovations in Underground Construction to Be Showcased at Cutting Edge 2025

From November 3-5 in Norfolk, VA, the Underground Construction Association (UCA), in partnership with the North American Tunneling Journal, will host the 13th Cutting Edge Conference. This annual event examines the latest advances in tunneling technology, its methodology and how it can be harnessed to assist the nation's major upcoming underground projects.

The keynote session on Monday, November 3 includes presentations by a renowned leader at the forefront of AI and machine learning, followed by two of the executives behind the [Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel \(HRBT\) Expansion](#), the largest transportation infrastructure project in Virginia's history.



Fernando Vara, Global Business Development Director, ACCIONA Construcción

Practical Experiences in the Use of AI & Machine Learning for Reducing Cost & Predicting Geological Risk On-Site



Claudio Cimiotti, Project Executive, Hampton Roads Connector Partners

Through the Tunnel: HRBT Project Progress and the Road Ahead



Ryan Banas, Vice President, HNTB

Through the Tunnel: HRBT Project Progress and the Road Ahead

“At Cutting Edge 2025, we have a fantastic committee who have come up with another world-class program tailored to your development,” said Jenn Sketchley, Cutting Edge Program Chair and Principal Project Manager at Mott MacDonald. “We look forward to seeing you in Norfolk for a groundbreaking event filled with endless opportunities for collaboration and advancement.”

In addition to high-end technical sessions, certain Cutting Edge 2025 attendees will have the opportunity to attend one of two [regional field trips](#) on Wednesday, November 5. Field trip registration is limited and operates on a first come, first served basis.

One of the trips will send a group of registrants to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel (CBBT). CBBT is now installing the first of two parallel tunnels to complete the expansion of the entire facility from two lanes to four. The new [Parallel Thimble Shoal Tunnel](#) (PTST) line was completed with a 43-ft diameter earth pressure balance TBM in January 2025. Visitors will be provided with a tour of the existing CBBT tunnel operations and the construction of the PTST.

Currently sold out, another field trip will take registrants to the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT) Expansion, the largest highway construction project in Virginia’s history. This transformative undertaking will widen the current four-lane segments along nearly ten miles of the I-64 corridor in Norfolk and Hampton, with new twin tunnels across the harbor.

The UCA Young Members are sponsoring 10 students to attend the 2025 Cutting Edge Conference. [Attendance scholarships](#) generously cover registration and travel expenses, with applications due by September 25.

Registration for Cutting Edge 2025 is now open. For more information about the conference, visit ucaofsmecuttingedge.com.

About UCA

The Underground Construction Association, a Division of SME (UCA) brings together tunneling's brightest and most dedicated professionals. Global association members advance their careers with world-class technical resources, educational programs, networking opportunities and professional development tools from UCA. Our members are focused on sharing best practices in safety, environmental stewardship and technological advancements. UCA. *Inspiring tunneling professionals worldwide.*