



Brett Roubinek

EDITORS' NOTE Brett Roubinek came to TRC in March 2016, bringing more than 25 years of experience in growing businesses and fostering innovation across the automotive ecosystem, including on-track proficiency as a professional racecar driver and instructor. Initially responsible for overseeing TRC research efforts and day-to-day operations, he was named President and CEO in July 2017. Prior to joining TRC, Roubinek served as Senior Director of Strategy and Consultancy for a global motorsports marketing agency; Vice President of Sales and Marketing for the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course; Vice President of Marketing and Chief Operating Officer of iRacing.com; and Managing Director of the Skip Barber Racing School, among other industry roles.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF Transportation Research Center Inc. (trcpg.com) in East Liberty, Ohio, is North America's most comprehensive independent automotive test center and proving ground, providing a full range of research opportunities for the world's innovators in automotive and mobility technologies. TRC features hardworking industry experts, a well-developed infrastructure with an extensive variety of road surfaces, on-site development of leading-edge and emerging technologies, 30-plus years of engineering expertise and industry knowledge, a long-time partnership with a major research university, strong global connections and an eye constantly focused on the client's needs. Its secure location operates 24/7 and has approximately 4,500 acres of road courses, wooded trails, a 7.5-mile high-speed oval test track, a 50-acre vehicle dynamics area, and the right mix of testing areas and facilities to make the Transportation Research Center the best place to test and validate nearly any vehicle imaginable, any time of year.

What excited you about joining TRC?

Back in the spring of 2016, before I joined TRC, I was already following the great work they were doing there. What excited me then is the same thing that excites me now and gets me out of bed in the morning, which is that TRC is a dynamic space that affects people's lives now and that is going to affect them even more in the future, and that will create

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An Interview with Brett Roubinek,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Transportation Research Center, Inc. (TRC)

opportunities for greater safety for everyone. That's the key driver for me – safety.

An ancillary benefit that may be a close second to safety is our impact on the way we transport ourselves and our goods, and the opportunity that is being created for those who don't have mobility options.

Will you discuss your priorities for TRC?

My initial goal was to bring home initiatives that had been put into play, the biggest of which we named the SMARTCenter, our connected and automated vehicle campus. We broke ground there in July 2018, with the ribbon cutting in July of this year. We are now actively testing in that facility and this is coupled with the comprehensive services that we offer through our advanced mobility group, research that is going to drive TRC into the future and advance our objectives.



SMARTCenter intersection is a 6 lane, 1.2 mile signalized intersection that is part of the new 540-acre SMARTCenter.

A second priority was providing for growth opportunities across the business. We have four business pillars, the first of which is road performance evaluation which incorporates dynamic and durability testing. The second is lab performance evaluation which is focused on the areas of safety related to impact labs as well as emissions testing and related technologies as we move into the electrified future. A third is our people division where we contract our folks out to groups like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the vehicle research test center. Advanced mobility is the fourth business pillar.

Part of that growth strategy is looking at advanced mobility and what gets coupled and built around those technologies in the area of applied research. This is where we start to touch on human/machine interface and biomechanics, because the vehicles of tomorrow are looking at varied cabin configurations and seating positions. All of this requires research.

Will you highlight the new 540-acre SMARTCenter complex to test automated driving systems?

The SMARTCenter was originally conceived at TRC in a working relationship between TRC and NHTSA around what sort of a campus would be needed to test the technologies that were coming down the road. A white paper was issued in 2013 that was co-authored by one of our TRC employees and we spent five years prior to my arrival and after I arrived working with our stakeholders to make sure that the facility offered the flexibility as well as the technologies to create all of the scenarios that were going to need to be studied and tested as we move towards advanced mobility. Phase one of the project is what we opened in July, and there's a high-speed intersection which has a proprietary signalization system. It has DSRC, short range communication systems. It has 5G coverage across the campus. That high-speed intersection is configurable to create the opportunity for study of everything that the manufacturers and the tech companies are running into while they're doing their "real-world" testing on public roads.

The urban network of roadways that we put in place also provides the opportunity to study a more congested area like a cityscape. For studies that can't be conducted in those two more restrictive areas, we have a vehicle dynamics area which is 22 acres of pavement that we can set up as an example of the five-way intersections that we've run into in Ohio's rural environments.

What are the advantages of TRC being headquartered in Ohio?

The collaborative environment here in Ohio is key to driving all of these efforts toward success and I haven't seen another collaborative ecosystem like we have here in Ohio. Sitting outside of Columbus and on the US Route 33 Smart Mobility Corridor, we see all of the efforts that have gone on in Columbus over the last couple of years related to smart cities. The 33 Smart Mobility Corridor that is being opened up leads to our doorstep, as do the efforts being made on the Ohio Turnpike to study connected environments and how they can benefit vehicles and their occupants. State initiatives like DriveOhio that was originally set up by Governor Kasich and has recently been reinforced by Governor DeWine, are all fantastic for advancing what the nation and the world needs.

The support we receive on the private side from all of our stakeholders and others involved in advancing these efforts is also rare. It is unusual to find so many involved in working together on efforts like this. ●