

ECHO

***Please note this meeting will be at the FSU Alumni**

Tuesday, August 6th

Lunch Buffet	11:30 AM
Program Begins	12:00 PM
Introductions	12:10 PM
Presentation Begins	12:15 PM
Q&A	12:50 PM
Meeting Adjourned	1:00 PM

Onsite & Virtual Program

FSU Alumni
1030 W Tennessee St
Tallahassee, FL 32304

To RSVP, please email
mail@economic-club.com
or
Call: (850) 224-0711

PLEASE RSVP BY Noon on Friday, August 2nd

Contact Us

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How Autonomous Trucking Will Deliver the Future

Our high-tech theme continues this month as we welcome **Lee White**, a nationally-recognized expert in autonomous trucking and logistics. Among his achievements over four decades in the field is initiating and managing the autonomous trucking project charter and deployment for United Parcel Service (UPS). He'll discuss advancements in Autonomous Vehicle (AV) trucking, how it is expected to impact the cost of goods and services, and key differences between it and other AV driverless platforms, such as the so-called robo-taxis.

"It's not a matter of if AV trucking is going to happen, it's when, where, and who it happens to," Mr. White told Club Officers in a recent conference call. "I can't really talk about autonomous trucking without talking about some of the economic data that's come in, some of the inflationary pressures, and wage rates of drivers. I'll show the Club some of the trends in the industry from a cost standpoint in framing what's taking place." He'll also discuss how Florida is positioned to use AV trucking compared with other states and of course, take members' questions.

Mr. White began his career as a peak-season driver for UPS during college. He progressed through

multiple leadership positions to be the senior engineering leader in multiple operating areas. More recently, as the Vice President of Strategy for TuSimple, he built the autonomous freight network business model, partnerships, operations, and ecosystem, enabling multiple customers to test autonomous trucking for hundreds of thousands of miles with real freight on real lanes. His mandate spanned all aspects of the network, from defining the business model to engaging and onboarding partners, resulting in a \$9 million network with more than 15 customers across 11 states. Today, as the President of LM White Consulting, he works with fleets, equipment manufacturers, and carriers in developing forward-looking strategies, business models, and roadmaps for AV operations.

Mr. White earned a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Georgia. He is an instructor in Autonomous Technology in Long Haul Trucking for SAE International, the global professional association and transportation standards organization. He is also



Lee White
President
LM White Consulting

a guest lecturer for the University of Denver's Transportation and Supply Chain Institute Master's Program. Mr. White will be introduced by Doug Wheeler, Director, George Gibbs Center for Economic Prosperity, The James Madison Institute.

HAS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGED?

Let us know your current contact information. Email the club at mail@economic-club.com with your updated information.

Don't forget to add mail@economic-club.com to your address book to ensure you receive communications from the club.

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Sara Bremer, [Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers](#)

Ashley Guy, [Tallahassee CBD Mushroom THC](#)

Matthew Toplak, [Florida Division of Emergency Management](#)

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Mark Shealy, [Florida Surplus Lines Office](#)

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You can access membership applications on the club's website at www.economic-club.com.

Encourage a friend to become a member today!

Name Badges



We have newly designed name badges. If you have an old name badge and would like one with the new design, the cost is \$15.

If interested, you can purchase a new name badge at the [Club's website](#) or call the office at 850-224-0711.

Development Trajectory of the Internet and AI – Will History Repeat Itself, or Just Rhyme?

The July Club meeting featured **Michael Heekin**, the founding chief operating officer and board member of WebMD, the heart monitoring company that turned into a leading publisher on the Internet for medical information. He took Club members on an interesting trip back in time to the beginnings of the modern Internet and its commercialization in the 1990's and his role with one of the early Internet startups, WebMD. He then compared the development of the Internet to the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

"The commercial Internet probably started in 1993, or 94 and that's where we are, we're probably in the 1998 timeframe on artificial intelligence at this point," he said. While the Internet made information available to all, with AI "data is the key, remember that," Mr. Heekin told Club members. "AI will democratize access to advanced computing like the Internet democratized raw connectivity to information and knowledge."

As with the Internet, he said AI distribution will trump technology and to expect huge venture investment that can actually impede access to capital. He anticipates access to unique data sets to train AI will be a valuable asset of AI ventures. Otherwise, AI will be a commodity product with data being the key differentiator.

He said "regulatory good judgment and restraint" will also be key to helping AI develop and be widely accessible as the Internet was, thanks to the Telecommunications Act of 1996. "President Clinton and Speaker of the House Gingrich had the good sense to keep their mitts off the Internet," said Mr. Heekin. Nevertheless, effective privacy and data security rules will need to be established for AI, along with successful navigation of legal issues, including intellectual property rights and academic research integrity.

He acknowledged that while AI might replace humans in performing some tasks, it's power will be helping humans work more efficiently. "It's not capable of original thought and I don't think it will ever be." (You can read more and listen to the Club's podcast with Saif Ishoof on our [Podcasts and Summaries webpage](#).)



Left to right: Bill Moore, David Mica, Michael Heekin, Katrina Rolle, James Newman and Valerie Wickboldt.

Trustee Event

On July 22, Trustees and their guests gathered for an evening event at Amicus Brewing, where they had the opportunity to meet Michael Heekin. Mr. Heekin shared a preview of his upcoming talk and offered his insights on artificial intelligence and its future implications.



Thank you to the Economic Club Executive Committee for making this event possible.



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TRUSTEES

Upcoming Programs

Onsite/Virtual Programs

September 24, 2024



Jessica Harvey
CEO

Guy Harvey Foundation
Dunlap Champions Club

October 10, 2024



Meredith A Berger

Assistant Secretary of the
Navy (Energy, Installations,
and Environment)

Capital City Country Club

November (TBD)



John Cohlan

Chief Executive Officer

Margaritaville

TBD

Member Spotlight

John Thomas has actually had two successful careers in his life and just recently retired for what he says will be the last time. He started his own software company in Atlanta that he ran for many years before retiring in 2005. Then in 2007, he and a group of investors bought Brandt Information Services in Tallahassee.

They expanded its government IT staffing and consulting to other states and markets across the country, including the federal government. The company's latest foray providing the recreational licensing system and marketing for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has since expanded to similar agencies in 29 other states. He retired this past May as Chairman and CEO, having recently sold controlling interest in the company.

Mr. Thomas is a Club Trustee, a group whose extra financial commitment helps the Club fulfill its mission. "It's a great organization with wonderful speakers and a great opportunity to network and meet people in business, government, and education that I probably would not have had an opportunity to know and to have friendships with."

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, he went on to attend Vanderbilt University, earning double degrees in economics and business administration. He returned to Atlanta where he became a CPA and eventually Chief Financial Officer for a machine works company before starting his software business. He married his high school sweetheart Susan and together they have three adult children and six grandchildren. An avid hunter and fisherman, Mr. Thomas said he plans to travel and enjoy life in full retirement.



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