

Ep.3.24 - Steve Dyokas

📅 Mon, Jul 10, 2023 2:00PM ⏱ 26:38

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

apec, detroit, economies, work, michigan, year, country, big, investment, city, region, trade, event, companies, businesses, meeting, digital, helping, peru, world

SPEAKERS

Steven Dyokas, Ed Clemente, Announcer



Announcer 00:01

Welcome to The Michigan Opportunity, an economic development podcast featuring candid conversations with business leaders across Michigan. You'll hear firsthand accounts from Michigan business leaders and innovators about how the state is driving job growth and business investment, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, building vibrant communities and helping to attract and retain one of the most diverse and significant workforces in the nation.



Ed Clemente 00:29

Hello, I'm Ed Clemente. And we're fortunate today to have, I should pronounce it correctly, Steve, even though you're going to correct me again, but Steve Dyokas, did I get it close? [Perfect.] Thank you. And he is the director of the U.S. APEC Host Secretariat. I know that doesn't probably explain a lot of exactly what you do. But can you kind of tell us, first of all, there's two separate parts in there, APEC, and then what you do separately as the Secretariat, too?



Steven Dyokas 00:57

Sure, Ed, happy to. I've been on the team since September of last year. We are a team within a team here at the Department of State. We are the coordinator for U.S. participation in APEC, which is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. It's a forum of 21 countries around the Asia-Pacific region who work together to promote trade and investment and economic opportunities across the region. So each year, one of the 21 countries or in APEC world we call them economies, hosts for the year. So this year 2023, the United States is hosting APEC. So in order to help coordinate all of the different pieces, logistic pieces, policy pieces, of hosting APEC, we've really built up our team. So I sit here with about almost 20 other colleagues who really help us coordinate the 15 federal agencies that work on APEC issues, also coordinate with the White House where we take lead from the President on many of our APEC issues, and then coordinate with embassies here in Washington, around the country and with our embassies and

consulates in the APEC region, to help explain what we do and make sure that the work that we're doing in APEC benefits workers, families and businesses in the U.S. across the region and across the globe.

E Ed Clemente 02:23

And, you know, could you just highlight who the 21 countries are, too, a little bit?

S Steven Dyokas 02:29

Sure, if you were to look at a map of the Pacific Ocean and draw almost a perfect circle all the way around, so the east and west sides of the Pacific. So starting with the U.S., we're looking at, oh, Canada, is a member, Mexico, Peru and Chile, then going southwest New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, South Korea, and Japan are all members. So we have quite a diversity, geographic diversity, in terms of size. And we have the giant economies like the U.S., China and Japan, we have some middle sized economies, the Mexico's and Australia's, the region and some very small economies like Papua New Guinea, apologies, Papa New Guinea I forgot to mention, Brunei, relatively small, Peru, relatively small economies, but all working together each economy or nation at that APEC table has an equal voice. It's a consensus-based body working together to improve lives and livelihoods across the region. So it started in the late 80s, 1989 first got off the ground, has grown in a couple of waves since then. So we're now at the 21 members currently part of APEC.

E Ed Clemente 03:47

All of them had representatives here in Detroit or as many as you can?

S Steven Dyokas 03:53

All of them came to Detroit. We brought the whole APEC project to Detroit May 14 through 26th. That was the second big group of meetings we'd had. Before we joined the team. I knew APEC as sort of the annual summit that happens each November and the leaders used to wear funny shirts, and they would gather together and talk about ways we can work together. And realize coming to the team, it is far more than just that one meeting with the leaders at the end of the year. It's a series of working groups and ministerial meetings and activities, workshops, site visits over the course of the year. So we did our first big grouping of meetings in Palm Springs, California in February, then we came to Detroit in May. We'll go to Seattle in July and August, and then we'll finish the year with the big leaders week summit in San Francisco in the middle of November.

E Ed Clemente 04:46

So sort of like when you do have these meetings, they're like the Oscars but there's movies coming out all year round and there's projects going on all year round. But this is a way to bring everybody together at least one time

everybody together at least one time.

S

Steven Dyokas 04:57

Exactly. And we want to make sure that we're doing these meetings, not just in Washington, where we speak to the regular audience of people who know a lot of these issues that we work on, but to go to places that are significant to the American economy and helping tell their story as part of the broader American story to all of our visitors from the other 20 economies who come and see what's going on here in the U.S., how do we handle a lot of these challenges which are common throughout the region of increasing energy, resiliency, improving supply chains, especially in the wake of COVID? How do we work together on health cooperation and setting standards on trade and investment to improve investment flows and trade flows that bring prosperity to places like Michigan, which has historically been a major exporter and major innovator, and allowing, breaking down the barriers that might limit trade from Michigan to some of its key partners. That's one of the great strengths of APEC, I think is the size mentioned these 21 countries or economies that participate with us, it's about 40% of the global population, so about 3 billion people. But half of global trade is between these countries and about 60% of the global GDP or the global economy is among these 21 economies. So the scale of APEC is significant. Also, about 60% of all U.S. exports are to these 20 other countries, and seven of our top 10 trading partners are also APEC members. So what we do to reduce barriers to trade and investment into the U.S. are designed to really help improve lives and livelihoods here in Michigan and across the country, my home state of Illinois, elsewhere, every corner of the U.S. we really want to see, share with them the benefits of participation in APEC and broader economic engagement in this very dynamic Asia-Pacific region. Why it matters to everyone, whether you're working for General Motors in Michigan, or you're a cattle rancher in Nebraska, you're a software developer in Redmond, Washington, all of us really have a stake in what we're doing in APEC.

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Announcer 07:14

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E

Ed Clemente 07:30

Yeah, and it's interesting that you're a Midwesterner, or Chicago guy, at least suburban Chicago guy, but I'm sure you tell people where you're from you say Chicago, just like I say, I'm from Detroit, because people kind of know cities almost more than they do states a lot of times. And so when you travel, I'm sure there's a lot of people, I'm sure even where you work are from the Midwest, because a lot of people like to work in DC or just, when they get their degrees, they just work somewhere else a lot of times that you probably had a lot of people who had some experience, but you did say something interesting to me in the little bit of the prep call is how many people who had never been here before and what their impression was?

S

Steven Dyokas 08:12

Yeah, it was really amazing. Everybody on both the U.S. team, and from the other economies that came to Detroit were so impressed by what they saw. Many Americans in particular had been near or through or around Detroit, but very few had spent much time in the city, including myself. I had been through Detroit on the way to Canada, many times one over the Ambassador Bridge. But I hadn't really spent much time in the city until we were on the ground. And we were just amazed by what we saw the voices we heard the pride and particularly the passion of Detroiters for the city and what's going on and telling that story. We had a reception where Mayor Duggan was very involved in a lot of the events at APEC, we heard from the deputy mayor came and spoke to us at a welcome reception. And he told the story of how we did an event at the Colony Club in Detroit and he had last been there 28 years ago when he was in training to be a police officer that was part of the police academy, of just how that building symbolizes the changes in the city of Detroit and the really tough situation the administration faced when they came on board in 2014, and just how much they've done to, with the nuts and bolts of getting the city running smoothly and working well. And then inviting investment people to come and take part of this great energy and enthusiasm, the innovation that we had several of our groups go out and visit, see some of these sites in action, but also hear the voices making sure that we incorporated workers, diaspora communities, small business chambers. All of these folks be part of this conversation that we have our our theme for the APEC year is creating a resilient and sustainable future for all. So really touches on three key issues of resiliency, sustainability and inclusion. And Detroit was a great destination, a great place to host because of the story that Detroit and the people of Detroit can really tell about how they are transitioning the city to a really bright and very exciting future. And we heard from many of our colleagues coming from overseas, of you know, they're going back with this question, well, where's our Detroit in South Korea, or Japan, or Indonesia or Australia? And what can we learn from what we saw from the Detroit example that we could incorporate with us whether it's on skills training, whether it's on investment promotion, whether it's on cultural connectivity, whether it's tapping diaspora communities of folks who come from around the world, very rich communities in Detroit, and really using all of the resources, being very thoughtful, very inclusive, in taking the best ideas and the best innovations, and really putting them to work for the city, the state and the country.

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Ed Clemente 11:12

Well, from the view of looking at you guys coming here, I was very excited. And we at the MEDC, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and then I know we are tangentially involved with you on different parts, but I specifically was with you on the U.S. APEC 2023 host. We were the minority-owned business roundtable in Detroit, we did it with Global Ties Detroit, I was here on behalf of the MEDC. And we had Matt Murray, Pamela Phan, and Dilawar Syed, and all three of them spoke and we had a pretty interesting representation at the meeting. I don't know if you were at that one. I can't remember. There was a lot of people there I'd never met before. But it was just really exciting to see. And how, you know, we can be part of it. And I'll tell you one other side story through Global Ties Detroit. We work a lot with U.S. departments, like in IVLP programs. But we had a group in not too long ago, that was from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. And they wanted to see how we handled the border crossing, because we do such a good job with it here. I mean, we're on the bigger border crossings for the United States. Because they were having problems, obviously, with Brexit in the EU. So they wanted to see how we did it. So like at a business level, even, we do a lot of things a little differently here, because we're a border city. And I think that was kind of interesting for some of your guests. And is that one of the reasons you pick Detroit? Or was it just more about just the city itself or any other things?

S

Steven Dyokas 12:47

No, I should have mentioned that. That was another big area. Cross-border trade, that Detroit-Windsor border crossing, I think is not just one of the busiest in the country, but in the world. And the volume of trade and tourism that crosses that border every day is really amazing. And that was one of the stories we wanted to tell there was an event that the Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, who was there for the transportation ministers meeting, the first time the APEC transportation ministers gathered since 2017. did an event with his Canadian counterpart down at the border of Detroit, sort of talking about how we can improve port facilities and make them cleaner and greener, as a significant portion of our international trade goes on ships. And we still need to find a good way that we can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping. It's one of the biggest sources of shipping that we haven't really been able to fit into our international agreements. So finding ways that we can talk, so yeah, that cross border element was a big part of what we do.

E

Ed Clemente 13:47

You know, Mr. Buttigieg lives in Michigan, but he used to be the mayor of your alma mater city, where you went to Notre Dame? Yeah. And so he's another Midwest guy, I think he lives in Traverse City area now.

S

Steven Dyokas 14:00

Yeah, and I think that's one of the things we really, and I personally, have a great interest in is making sure as I said earlier, that people across the country not just on the East and West Coasts are really tracking what we're doing in sort of international engagement and trade and transportation, all these kinds of issues. But everybody wherever you're from, but especially in the Midwest, which is you know, historically been a great crossroads for us, the city of Chicago was really founded because of t's nexus on water, and then rail and then now air and increasingly on digital and cyberspace. Being that sort of avenue for cooperation and finding ways that we can make trade and education and all other kinds of services, more smoothly racial benefiting more people across the region and the country and the entire world and working together with our partners again, the size and scale of APEC. What we do really matters if we can get regulatory systems a little bit smoother. So many of the American technology companies big, medium, or small are the best in the world at what they do. And making sure that they're able to play on a level playing field across the region and some of our biggest trading partners helps promote this economic growth. Resiliency here in the US provides a lot of opportunities for people, whether you're in Detroit, or in the Upper Peninsula or scattered anywhere across the country, that you have that same digital opportunity, access to the technology, and then the networks to do your thing, whether you're running a small business, or you're an entrepreneur, or you're working remotely for a company based somewhere else that you can live, where you choose to and really continue to add significant economic value. That's the kind of issues that we're really working on. One of the big issues we'll focus next month, when we're out in Seattle, is working on, we call it a program of Digital Month, of finding ways that our, again, our 21 countries, part of APEC can work to increase digital cooperation, digital trade, finding better ways to deliver digital health solutions,

promoting innovation and creativity, all the many, many different aspects. The entire economy now is digital. People are saying we should talk about digital companies, the rest of the economy and say, We're all digital companies now. Maybe a couple of degrees of variation, but it's essential what you do whether you're a farmer, or a rancher or a manufacturer, coder, teacher, student, or just a regular citizen who's just curious about learning of the world or traveling around the world, we're all part of that digital economy.

E

Ed Clemente 16:45

Yeah, in fact, we had an organization, two of them, actually, that works, particularly on Industry. 4.0, it's Automation Ally's one, and a new one Cynthia Hutchinson's running with the World Economic Forum now, and I don't know if you had a chance to meet with them, but they'll be a future guest. But another plug I should have mentioned was for Sue Coe, from your staff, she did a great job organizing that event along with Marian Reich, to put that on. And I know that it turned out, you never know, because you don't have like a lot of time because there's so many other moving parts. But it was very fortunate that we're able to work with you guys on that. And so also as APEC, as you said, it's in Seattle coming up. We know that. So is this something that APEC, even though it's, we always think of the Pacific Ocean. But is there like more you're going to be doing in the Midwest or like in the South or other parts of the country, now? Is that kind of more of an initiative?

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Steven Dyokas 17:48

Yeah, we had a little bit of a short runway to host APEC. So we put up our hand in 2021 and were confirmed last year. Usually the APEC hosts are drawn a couple of years in advance, but nobody had put up their hand for 2023. And so we jumped in, and said, we're happy to do it, because it really is an important part of what the United States is doing in terms of engaging economically in this critical region, but also working with partners around the world to help advance initiatives that benefit the U.S., of course, but also help raise levels of prosperity across the region. So we were able to as we were looking, once we have that window, we're going to be hosting, try and disperse the sites as broadly as we could. Had a little bit of a challenge. As I learned the hard way that a lot of major events are planned 5, 6, 7 years out. And so finding space for the scale of what we do just in Detroit, we had 1,300 people coming for a couple of weeks. And so finding just simply meeting space and hotel rooms is a bit of a challenge. So I wish we could have maybe had one more series of meeting somewhere maybe in the in the South or Southwest, worked out the logistics and timing didn't allow us to do it. But we certainly don't want that time that we spent in Detroit to be a one off, we really want to continue to stay engaged with the people of Detroit, hearing their thoughts, their ideas, we talk all the time about this role that we have for the private sector for businesses, big, medium and small, feeding into what we do, is the special sauce of APEC. A lot of times we have government's talking to governments about business and the economy and all these things that we should be doing without really talking to those businesses. So we have many formal and informal ways for the private sector to talk about these issues that we work on. Give us ideas that help us think about, say, what do we want the president in November when he's out in San Francisco to say, here's some initiatives that we've agreed upon this year that were priorities for the U.S. that we want to carry on into the future. So whether they're about the digital economy, whether they're about the just energy transition, whether they're about providing new health solutions, providing economic opportunities for women, helping increase

our resilience after natural disasters strike, all of these things, getting feedback from private sector, people who are on the ground, creating ideas and pulling people, investing, growing their businesses, increasing employment and providing a really rich economic environment, or wherever they are to continue to be part of this conversation. So we encourage people who are new to APEC are continuing their work to continue to write about it, think about it, talk about it, whether it's in the media formally, in their own private conversations or work groups, following us on LinkedIn at our handle @USAPEC, following what we're doing, and finding ways to plug in, we'll continue to do in person and remote events, as many as we can through this year. But our work on APEC doesn't stop when we finish our host here and hand off next year to Peru. But we'll continue to work on these issues, and continue to find ways to get good ideas from people across the country, Michigan, Illinois everywhere that we can help sharpen and refine U.S. policy to make sure that it delivers for U.S. workers, families and businesses.

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Ed Clemente 21:16

Well, you know, I think you probably had a chance to meet our governor, she was probably at one of the events, I'm sure. But she's been very aggressive along with Quenton Messer, the head of the MEDC. To do more foreign direct investment, you know, we have obviously Mary Barra, I think is on an APEC board or something. So we do have a lot of international companies in the state, as well as a lot of international companies period, especially through automotive mobility sectors. But we also have had a lot of traditional companies, which really don't think about like Carhartt, or Pfizer, or you know, other ones that you wouldn't think about that have been here with Kellogg's, you know, food products, a lot of them. So anything I think that we can do, and is there any other sort of future trends you wanted to plug? I think you hit quite a few. But if there's anything else you wanted to mention, or any other stakeholders or partners you wanted to mention before we finish up here.

S

Steven Dyokas 22:13

Yeah, no, thanks for mentioning that piece on investment, Ed. That's a big part of the story that we also want to tell these 21 APEC economies combined \$1.7 trillion of investment in the U.S. employing about 2.3 million American workers. So there is a huge imprint of a lot of these countries. And especially just in the last couple of years, I was reading just from South Korea, one of the our APEC partners, one of the biggest investors in us, just since the start of the Biden- Harris administration, \$100 billion of new investment into the United States, just from South Korea. And these are places all over the country, not just those places that we would always think of investing in California, or Illinois or other places, but in Georgia, and Tennessee, and Michigan and everywhere. So yeah, that investment is a really big piece of what we want to do and my hope, well, we said before the start of the year, my hope is that at the end of this year, when we finish hosting APEC and we pass the torch to Peru, who will take the baton from us, is that we have really increased the understanding of the average American in both what APEC is, but also why engaging economically with this Asia-Pacific region is important to everybody. And that's one of the challenges. I've been at the State Department for about 20 years, most of my career has been overseas, but I've done a fair bit here in the U.S. is we haven't done a really good job connecting the dots, and telling the average American why foreign policy matters to them, and their communities and their livelihoods, and getting out and about through great opportunities like speaking with you. And speaking to other audiences across the country, going back to our own towns and talking about, you know, I was graduate

of this high school. And I never thought about a career in foreign policy or foreign economics when I was 16, or 17. And I've had this incredible opportunity to travel the world to talk about and promote how American companies do what they do best. I've served in Australia and Japan and China, Montenegro and the former Yugoslavia in Europe. All of these great things, telling these American stories to audiences, and helping American companies do what they do best, also helping promote inward investment into the U.S. making sure that companies can take advantage of the enormous skills, the reliability of the legal system, the transparency of what we do, and the dynamic on American economy, that we're able to benefit people so that I think is my hope to continue to carry on this real passion that I have in so many of us around the State Department for telling that story in a better way. Making sure that people across the country really understand what we're doing and how their voices and their input to us can help make that better, that we don't want this to be a one-way conversation, just telling what we do, but also soliciting ideas and opinions. What's working well? What's not working well? What do you want to see more of? What do you want to see less of? That's really, really important to us as we work to carry forward as much as we can to keep growing the American economy and increasing prosperity across the whole country.

E

Ed Clemente 25:28

We're also fortunate too that we have the U.S. Department of State's Diplomat in Residence at the University of Michigan, Lou Finton, who was at that meeting, as well. And he's always trying to recruit more people for the US Department of State to go into, because it's something, I'm like you where if I would have known about this, I probably would have changed my career at some point earlier. But I'm just so glad you guys came here. We appreciate APEC and all the hard work you guys do and for you hosting it here and we're glad Detroit made a good impression on you. We're always "hustle harder" here in Detroit. So we appreciate you guys taking a look at us and opening up some opportunities for us as well. Thanks again. Once again, our guest was Steve Dyokas, he's the director of the U.S. APEC Host Secretariat. Thanks again, Steve for doing the show today.

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Steven Dyokas 26:17

Thanks so much for the invitation. It was a real pleasure.

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Announcer 26:21

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