NITL Emerging Leader Profile: Mark Boksa

Meet Mark Boksa, Senior Credit Officer at CIT Rail, a division of First Citizens Bank, who has built a career rooted in curiosity, adaptability, and a passion for understanding how industries evolve. A graduate of DePaul University with a double major in Finance and Marketing, Mark is also the youngest of three children and a first-generation American whose family immigrated from Poland.

His career began with an impressive distinction: during an economic recession, he was selected from a pool of more than 100 candidates for a position in First Midwest Bank's Credit Analyst Program; an intensive underwriting program focused on commercial lending with a focus on real estate. The experience provided a strong foundation in credit analysis and risk management, particularly in the period directly following the housing market crash.

"Going through the housing crash taught me a tremendous amount about credit and risk, providing a sound foundation for my budding career in credit, and teaching me how to appropriately structure deals and pitfalls to avoid" Mark said. "It also made me realize I wanted to diversify beyond real estate."

That desire led him to the rail industry. While he initially viewed rail as an antiquated business, he quickly discovered a dynamic and highly complex sector that touches nearly every corner of the economy. Through his work, Mark has underwritten customers across industries ranging from construction materials, grain, Oil and Gas, specialty chemicals and plastics, giving him a unique macroeconomic perspective on each industry and how they can be intertwined and play a part in the overall US and global economies.

Over the years, Mark has grown from a junior analyst to Senior Credit Officer, navigating economic cycles, industry disruptions, and unexpected challenges along the way.

"There's always a new challenge," he said. "Whether it's a market downturn, COVID-19, or some other curveball, I'm constantly learning."

One of Mark's proudest professional accomplishments has been spearheading the overhaul of Rail's Problem Lease Management (PLM) Watchlist Report. What began as a simple report tracking customers with financial or operational concerns has evolved into a comprehensive portfolio review tool that incorporates collections, industry developments, asset trends, and portfolio composition data. The report is reviewed by senior leaders and executives, including the President of Rail and the Executive Director of Credit for First Citizens Bank.

In his current role, no two days look exactly alike. Depending on the season and the economic environment, his responsibilities can range from evaluating new customer approvals and capital purchases to overseeing portfolio management and problem lease management initiatives. He also spends significant time analyzing customer financials, monitoring economic trends, and assessing supply-and-demand dynamics within rail markets.

Among the achievements he is most proud of is helping guide the rail portfolio through multiple downturns in the energy and frac sand sectors, as well as the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Working closely with Rail's Chief Risk Officer, Mark helped structure deals that supported customers experiencing cash flow or operational disruptions while protecting the portfolio from excessive risk.

"These efforts allowed us to better position the portfolio through difficult economic periods while maintaining strong, long-term customer relationships," he said.

When asked about the biggest challenge in his role, Mark points to the difficulty of anticipating where markets are headed.

"You have to strike the right balance," he explained. "If you're too aggressive heading into a downturn, you create unnecessary risk. If you're too conservative, you can miss opportunities and lose ground to competitors."

Looking ahead, Mark is particularly interested in the impact of technology on the transportation sector. He believes innovation has the potential to reduce transportation costs, improve efficiency, and create new opportunities for businesses and customers alike.

From a leadership perspective, Mark believes in empowering people to succeed.

"My approach is to provide guardrails and guidance when needed, but otherwise let individuals shine," he said. "Everyone brings different strengths, perspectives, and approaches that can ultimately benefit the team and the organization."

Outside of work, Mark's life revolves around his family. He and his wife are the proud parents of two daughters and are eagerly anticipating the arrival of their third child. Much of his free time is spent enjoying family activities outdoors, cooking and experimenting with new recipes, and, when time permits, watching movies, binge-worthy TV series, or attending a Chicago White Sox game.

Mark joined the Emerging Leaders Program to broaden his perspective beyond credit and risk management and to connect with leaders across the transportation industry.

“The program gives me the opportunity to engage with professionals outside my area of expertise, learn more about other segments of transportation, and gain exposure to the advocacy and policy side of the industry,” he said. “It also provides valuable educational sessions that address some of the most important developments and challenges facing transportation today.”

With a strong foundation in risk management, a collaborative leadership style, and a commitment to continuous learning, Mark exemplifies the qualities of an emerging leader helping shape the future of transportation finance.

Mark Boksa is a current member of the National Industrial Transportation League’s 2026 Emerging Leaders Program.