



## 2021 January NEWSLETTER: **THE CONNECTOR**



### State of the Association: Report from ACEC Illinois Board Chair Orhan Ilgaz Ulger

Dear Friends—

The last nine months have been unlike any other—a global pandemic, national discourse over social justice and an economic downturn. During times like these, communities can either fail, or rise up to the challenge.

Our community, ACEC Illinois, rose to the challenge.

- In March, as other states and cities began their lockdowns and paused or cancelled construction projects, ACEC Illinois immediately communicated with the Governor's Office, Agency Leadership and lawmakers to outline the steps our members were taking to ensure work could continue in a safe manner. As a result, the Governor declared infrastructure an essential industry and our work continued.
- To demonstrate our role in being good partners, we donated thousands of bottles of hand sanitizer to first-responders and hospitals and also worked to solicit PPE donations for front-line workers.
- As State Agencies moved to a tele-work positions, ACEC - IL worked with Agency Leadership and lawmakers to expand the use of electronic signatures for contract execution, invoicing and permitting. We are working to ensure these changes remain permanent.
- To immediately assist our members with the challenges of tele-work, ACEC IL hosted a series of webinars and forums with the leadership from our Human Resources Committee and IT Committee.
- This year, we have had over 3,000 members attend our over 20 virtual updates, training sessions and conferences—an unprecedented level of engagement from our community. Our fall conference was completed without any glitches and it was totally in a virtual environment.
- We remain heavily involved on behalf of our industry on key issues, like PPP loans and its impact to our members. We are currently coordinating our efforts with neighboring ACEC organizations and trying to find a resolution to this major issue.

And while we continue to deal with the challenges of today, we remain forward-thinking.

This June our Board approved a Strategic Plan to strengthen ACEC Illinois and position ourselves as the thought leader in the infrastructure sphere. I am pleased to announce that amidst all the challenges of 2020, we are already making great progress on this plan, including:

**Promoting Innovation:** To reflect our membership and the needs of our clients we created new committees, including Public Engagement, Materials and Innovation. These committees will serve as thought leaders in their respective areas and will be significant resources to Agency Leadership.

**Growing membership:** Since July 1, ACEC Illinois has added 15 new member firms and affiliates as a proof point to the recognized leadership role our association has in the industry.

**Improving the Business Climate:** ACEC Illinois has been working with the Governor's Office and legislative leaders to outline key regulatory and tax reforms that will strengthen the industry.

**Enhancing Educational Opportunities:** ACEC Illinois staff working in conjunction with our Board is researching new, innovative educational opportunities for members. And internally, we have taken steps to optimize our operation and return to our core mission of service to our members. To highlight this, we sold our building this year, removing us from potential risk while also relinquishing all landlord maintenance duties that fell outside our core mission. Proceeds collected from the sale of the building has been put in a reserve account where the goal is to continuously save and strengthen our financial future. As a result, ACEC Illinois is in its strongest position to move forward.

**To put it simply, the state of our association is strong.** We have strong relationships with Agency Leadership, we are trusted sources of research and policy for lawmakers and we provide critical access and educational opportunities for our members.

Overall, the first six-months of my term as Board Chair were not quite what I had expected. But I want to thank all of you for the friendship and teamwork you have shown me, our Board of Directors, President and CEO Kevin Artl and our amazing team of Bethany Rademaker and Amanda Johnson.

It would not be right if I do not mention our President and CEO here! Most of this success throughout my term is because of his vision and fresh ideas. I would like to extend my thanks to Kevin Artl for his hard work and dedication to our industry for throughout the first-half of my term.

Together, we have demonstrated that the engineering industry is resilient and respected.

Thank you again for all your support and I wish you the very best 2021.

Orhan Ilgaz Ulger  
Board Chair  
ACEC Illinois



## LEADERSHIP & POLICY BRIEFING

ACEC Illinois President & CEO – Kevin Artl

---

## **New Year Brings Some Relief to IDOT, Transit**

A few days before Christmas, Congress approved a second round of stimulus funding as part of its final FY2021 appropriations package.

The legislation was the second-largest stimulus in American history, second only to the CARES Act. The measure provides substantial direct assistance to Illinois' transit agencies along with the Department of Transportation. While the legislation was the subject of veto threats and other politicization, it was ultimately signed into law by the President.

Key components of the measure will bring critical funding relief home to Illinois, specifically for IDOT and our transit agencies.

The legislation provides \$14 billion in additional transit funding. This transit funding has broad eligibility but is largely directed to cover operating expenses. Funds are distributed according to current program formulas, but when combined with CARES Act funding is capped at 75% of an agency's operating costs.

*Illinois could receive upwards of \$450 million for transit agencies.*

The legislation also provides \$10 billion in highway funding that will be distributed to states according to the existing apportionment formula. DOTs can use the funds for costs related to preventive maintenance, routine maintenance, operations, personnel, including salaries of employees or contractors, debt service payments, availability payments, and coverage for other revenue losses.

*Based on current formula, IDOT could see in excess of \$350 million in funds from this current bill that would help offset the estimated \$250 million in MFT revenue decline during the COVID period.*

## **Halfway There on PPP**

The recent FY2021 Appropriations package also provided some clarity on PPP in terms of tax-deductibility but did not address the FAR credit issue on PPP loan forgiveness. ACEC is continuing to seek relief from the relevant federal agencies and Congress on that issue, and we are also collaborating with AASHTO and FHWA on implementation guidance on State DOT contracting. In addition, ACEC Illinois is working at a regional-level with other Midwestern states to develop guidance and clarity via MAASTO.

Here are some highlights of the tax changes in the new legislation:

- Clarifies that expenses covered by Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness are tax-deductible business expenses.
- Provides a second PPP forgivable loan for qualifying businesses with 300 or fewer employees.
- Extends and expands the refundable Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) and provides that employers who receive PPP loans may still qualify for the ERTC for wages that are not paid for with forgiven PPP proceeds.
- Makes permanent the Section 179D energy-efficient commercial buildings tax deduction and extends the tax credits for wind, solar, and other renewable resources.
- Extends through 2025 the Employer Participation in Repayment Act (ERPA), which allows employers to provide up to \$5,250 in student loan payments without it being a taxable benefit to the employee.

## **New Illinois Congressional Delegation Members Sworn-In**

Illinois saw two new Members of Congress sworn-in on Sunday. Cong. Marie Newman (IL-5) and Cong. Mary Miller (IL-15). Cong. Newman defeated former Cong. Dan Lipinski in the March primary and was elected in November and Cong. Miller, also elected in November, succeeds former Cong. John Shimkus who announced his retirement.

### **Illinois General Assembly Set to Convene for Lame-Duck Session**

The Illinois House and Senate are planning to convene from January 8th to January 13th for what is considered a "lame-duck" session before the new General Assembly is sworn-in on the afternoon of January 13th. The agenda for this session is unclear right now, but it is anticipated that a policy agenda being drafted by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus will be prioritized for discussion.

The Black Caucus agenda is split among four pillars of policy: criminal justice reform, violence and police accountability; education and workforce development; economic access, equity and opportunity; and health care and human services.

In addition, ACEC Illinois has been working with State Senator Ram Villivalam on language to codify the use of electronic signatures for invoicing, contracts, permitting and other uses and we are hopeful this may be approved during the lame-duck session.

### **Speaker Madigan?**

Speaker Madigan will preside over the lame-duck session, but as the new General Assembly gets sworn in on the afternoon of January 13th, their first order of business will be to elect a new Speaker and who that is remains entirely unclear. Most pundits believe Speaker Madigan remains 5-6 votes short of the 60 required to be elected Speaker, yet only one other candidate has announced an intention to run against him, Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, and she has no announced supporters.

Recently both the Black Caucus and the LatinX endorsed Madigan. The House cannot act on business until a Speaker is elected, for instance In 1975, it took three weeks and 93 votes of the Illinois House before Bill Redmond was elected speaker.

### **Programming Notes**

Please make sure to check your email or check our website for updates because our Director of Events, Bethany Rademaker, has some exciting upcoming events, including:

- **DOT Transition Discussion with former DOT Secretaries Ray LaHood and Sam Skinner**
- **State Policy Update with Illinois' Deputy Governor Christian Mitchell**
- **Tollway Update with Tollway Executive Director Jose' Alvarez**
- **IDOT Region 2 and Region 5 Lookahead and Discussion**

Please make sure to register for all of these exciting events and sponsorships are available for each.

Thanks,  
Kevin Artl  
President and CEO  
American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois

---

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

---



**Steve Donahue, PE**  
President  
Horner & Shifrin, Inc.

**How long have you been in the Engineering industry?**

I have been in the engineering industry since college, so almost 30 years. While in college I was a summer intern at IDOT District 9 for two years and worked for a consultant in my hometown of Marion, IL for an additional two years before starting my career in consulting engineering. I spent the first 3 years of my career at Johnson, Depp, and Quisenberry and the rest has been at my current employer, Horner & Shifrin, Inc.

**When and how did you first get involved with ACEC-IL?**

I began my involvement with ACEC-IL early in my career by attending meetings and conferences. Being focused on transportation engineering, I participated in the IDOT Committee and periodic workshops ACEC-IL would organize with IDOT. These meetings not only helped me technically, but also allowed me to build relationships with my peers and IDOT officials, many of which I still have today.

**What's your favorite ACEC-IL activity?**

I enjoy attending the conferences held by ACEC-IL throughout the year. Not only are they very informative and educational, but they provide me with an opportunity to catch up with my colleagues and meet new ones. I cherish the many relationships that I have developed through my involvement with ACEC-IL. I also enjoy attending the ACEC National Convention and Fall Conference, where ACEC-IL consistently has a very strong showing.

**What position(s) have you held within the ACEC-IL organization?**

I have served on many committees such as EEA, IDOT, IDOT Executive Committee, Governmental Affairs, and Financial Management. I helped to start and was the first committee chair of the IDOT District 8 Committee. At the board level, I have served as a Director, Vice Chair, and now serve as Chair-elect.

**What's the number one reason firms should become an ACEC-IL member?**

There are numerous reasons, but government advocacy is the most beneficial in my opinion. Through advocacy activities with various state and Federal government agency officials and elected officials, the business of our firm (and profession) has been greatly improved.

**What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I serve as the Transportation Team chair for the O'Fallon Township High School Marching Panthers, a nationally ranked marching band. My daughter is currently a junior and my son will join next year as a freshman. My duties consist of managing the transportation and logistics of moving band equipment to the various local and national competitions using our own custom tractor-trailer and support vehicle/trailer. Next year we will be transporting the band to march in the 2022 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA on New Year's Day. Our team is also responsible for designing, constructing, and setting up the elaborate props used by the band in their field performances. Our claim to fame is we are known as "Tarp Town", having covered an entire football field using 4-3,000 pound white

tarps as part of the performance. Under the competition rules, our team had 4 minutes to roll out and completely cover the field and only had 2 minutes after the performance to remove them or be penalized.

When not participating in my kid's activities, I have a cabin and property along the Illinois River near Browning, Illinois where I enjoy duck hunting and fishing. It is a great location for a quick get away from the hustle and bustle of life.

Tell us one fun fact about yourself.

I have been a volunteer firefighter with the O'Fallon Volunteer Fire Department for about 17 years, currently serving at the rank of Captain. We cover a 44 square mile area, including 7 busy miles along Interstate 64 and respond to approximately 1,000 calls for service each year. Along the way I have earned many firefighting, technical rescue, hazardous materials, Incident Command System, and fire officer certifications through the Office of the State Fire Marshal, University of Illinois Fire Service Institute, FEMA, and the National Fire Academy. It has been a very rewarding experience to help people in this way.

---

## save the date

# UPCOMING EVENTS



ADVOCACY



EDUCATIONAL



BUSINESS



---

### Show me the money! How projects get funded and company financials

January 13, 2021

Noon-1:00pm

-1 PDH

-Complimentary to ACEC Illinois members

-Hosted by the ACEC IL, Emerging Professionals Committee

Details & Registration [Here](#)



---

### The DOT Transition: What takes place behind the scenes of a transition and what can we expect from the new administration.

January 14, 2021

2pm

Brief: Join us for a conversation with two former DOT Secretaries from Illinois, Secretaries LaHood and Skinner, along with the most "in-the-know" transportation writer Sam Mintz as we discuss what the goals will be for the upcoming administration and a behind the scenes look at what occurs during DOT change in administration.

Panelists: Former DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, Former DOT

Secretary Sam Skinner and POLITICO Transportation reporter  
Sam Mintz  
Details & Registration [Here](#)

---



**State Policy and Transportation Update with Deputy Governor  
Christian Mitchell**

January 25, 2021

2pm

**Brief:** Join ACEC IL members for a conversation with Deputy Governor Christian Mitchell covering topics like REBUILD Illinois, IDOT and Tollway programs, Spring legislative session and the state's response to COVID.

Details & Registration [Here](#)

---



**IDOT R2 and R5 Update and Lookahead**

February 4, 2021

**Panelists:** Keith Roberts (R5) and Masood Ahmad (R2)

Details & Registration [Here](#)

---



**Webinar: Illinois Tollway Update**

February 9, 2021

11:00am

Please join us for a virtual Illinois Tollway Update with Executive Director José Alvarez. After the update we will have Q & A with Kevin Artl, ACEC Illinois President/CEO moderating.

Details & Registration [HERE](#)

---



**Secrets Management Don't Want you to know**

February 10, 2021

Noon-1:00pm

-1 PDH

-Complimentary to ACEC Illinois members

-Hosted by the ACEC IL, Emerging Professionals Committee

Details & Registration [Here](#)

---



**Life on the other Side, A public Agency Perspective**

March 10, 2020

Noon-1:00pm

-1 PDH

-Complimentary to ACEC Illinois members

-Hosted by the ACEC IL, Emerging Professionals Committee

Details & Registration [Here](#)

---

## UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Click Here: [Committee Meeting Schedule \(acecil.org\)](http://acecil.org)

Please contact Amanda Johnson, Director of Membership, for committee meeting details.

amanda@acecil.org

---

## MEMBER UPDATES:

---

## WELCOME NEW MEMBER:

---



Pinpoint Precision Engineering  
1016 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60607  
312-407-6346  
www.pintpointpe.com

**SMITH LASALLE®**

Smith LaSalle, Inc.  
211 51st Street  
Western Springs, IL 60558  
708-505-4356  
www.smithlasalle.com

---

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW MEDIA PAGE

Follow the link: [Videos | ACEC-IL](#)



## Bicycle Design Training Workshop

Tuesday, January 19  
11AM to 1PM

Join your colleagues for Bike Decatur's Bicycle Design Training Workshop. Learn how to make your

community more bicycle friendly!

The City of Decatur, Mt. Zion, Macon County, and the Decatur Parks District, and the DUATS Metropolitan Planning Organization, in partnership with ACEC Illinois, are pleased to offer this two-hour workshop focusing on innovative bikeway design. As part of the planning process to produce Bike Decatur (link to project website), this course is being offered to introduce design concepts to show stakeholders how to plan and design the most appropriate bicycle infrastructure treatments for your community.

For more information: [Here](#)

## ACEC MEMBER DISCOUNTS ON:

### HEALTH INSURANCE DENTAL, VISION, LIFE, & DISABILITY

WE LEVERAGE THE BUYING POWER OF OUR 1,500+ EMPLOYER GROUPS IN THE ACEC LIFE HEALTH TRUST TO OBTAIN DISCOUNTED INSURANCE RATES FOR OUR MEMBERS.

**TO OBTAIN A QUOTE CONTACT  
CONNOR & GALLAGHER ONESOURCE (CGO), ONE OF  
OUR PREFERRED INSURANCE BROKER PARTNERS.**



Insurance | Benefits | HR & Payroll | 401k



CGO is located in Lisle, Illinois



Dan Daley  
25+ Years of Employee  
Benefits Experience

DDaley@GoCGO.com

630.737.9358

## THANK YOU SPONSORS

THANK YOU SPONSORS

12.1.2020  
City Agency Lookahead

			
			
			
			
			



### SUBMIT UPDATES & ARTICLES:

Please submit firm update & news articles by the 15th of each month to: [bethany@acecil.org](mailto:bethany@acecil.org)

Articles and updates will be included in the membership newsletter, posted on our website, and shared through our social media feeds.

Website: [www.acecil.org](http://www.acecil.org)