



ACEC ILLINOIS THE CONNECTOR

LEADERSHIP & POLICY BRIEFING



KEVIN ARTL
PRESIDENT & CEO

APRIL 2026

ACEC Illinois Rolls Out 2026 Legislative Agenda — Earns Statewide Media Coverage



ACEC Illinois officially unveiled its 2026 Legislative Agenda at a press conference in Springfield—setting the stage for a strong, proactive push on infrastructure investment, workforce development, and economic competitiveness.

Why it matters:

The agenda reinforces a clear message: protecting long-term infrastructure funding and strengthening the engineering workforce are essential to keeping Illinois competitive.

Zoom in:

The 2026 agenda focuses on three core priorities:

- Protecting ReBuild Illinois funding and preserving the integrity of the Road Fund
- Strengthening the engineering workforce pipeline, including new incentives to retain Illinois graduates
- Investing in water infrastructure, including State Revolving Fund programs and lead service line replacement

“Preserving the funds established through ReBuild Illinois remains one of our top priorities,” said ACEC Illinois President & CEO Kevin Artl, noting the program’s role in modernizing infrastructure and supporting economic growth.

Driving solutions:

Key proposals include:

- The Engineering Students of Illinois Scholarship Act to attract and retain talent
- The RISE Tax Credit to incentivize hiring recent engineering graduates
- Enhancements to the State Revolving Fund programs to support local water infrastructure
- Efforts to improve project delivery and procurement processes for IDOT.


Big picture:

With Illinois facing a declining college-age population and increasing competition for talent, ACEC Illinois is doubling down on policies that both build the workforce pipeline and keep projects moving.

Statewide Media Coverage

The announcement generated strong media attention across Illinois, amplifying the industry’s priorities:

- [WAND TV](#) highlighted the importance of protecting ReBuild Illinois funding and addressing workforce shortages
- [Capitol Fax](#) covered the rollout as part of its daily legislative roundup
- [Collinsville Daily News](#) featured the full agenda and policy priorities
- [Capitol City Now](#) reported on engineers’ push for infrastructure investment and workforce solutions
- [Illinois Business Journal](#) — Detailed coverage of legislative agenda and key proposal
- [WTAX Radio](#) — Segment featuring Laura McGovern on workforce needs
- [WTAX Radio](#) — Segment featuring Kevin Artl on Illinois’ current construction efforts

 **ACEC Illinois Members Bring
Industry Voice to Springfield**



ACEC Illinois members were in Springfield for Lobby Day, meeting directly with key legislative leaders and reinforcing the importance of strong infrastructure policy and efficient project delivery.

Who ACEC Illinois met with:

Members engaged with top leaders in the General Assembly, including **Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch**, **House Republican Leader Tony McCombie**, **Assistant Majority Leader Eva-Dina Delgado**, **Deputy Republican Leader Ryan Spain** and **Senators Don DeWitte, Seth Lewis, and Mike Porfirio**—along with many other members of the House and Senate.

Briefed by IDOT:

Members also received a briefing on key legislative issues and the IDOT Blue Ribbon Commission report from **IDOT Chief of Legislative Affairs Aaron Gold-Stein** and **IDOT COO John Donovan**, providing valuable insight into the state's infrastructure priorities and future direction.

Why it matters:

The strong showing of ACEC Illinois members helped reinforce the need to maintain strong infrastructure funding and business-friendly initiatives to help our sector continue to grow.

Driving progress:

ACEC Illinois-supported legislation continues to advance in the General Assembly, including:

- Efforts to expedite land acquisition, helping reduce delays and accelerate project delivery
- Measures to streamline procurement processes, improving efficiency for both agencies and consultants

Bottom line:

ACEC Illinois members showed up, engaged, and are helping move forward solutions that will keep projects on track and strengthen Illinois' infrastructure future.

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White House Budget Proposal Offers First Look at Infrastructure Priorities



The Trump Administration recently released its [proposed FY2027 federal budget](#)—offering an early look at potential shifts in infrastructure investment, program priorities, and funding levels.

The big picture:

The proposal is not binding, but it sets the tone for negotiations in Congress. With narrow margins and ongoing gridlock, significant changes are expected before any final budget is adopted.

🔑 Why it matters

The proposal includes:

- A 44% increase in defense spending
- A 10% reduction in non-defense programs

👉 That dynamic puts pressure on many infrastructure-related accounts critical to the engineering industry.


🚧 Transportation: Mixed signals

- Slight 2% increase in highway and transit programs funded through the Highway Trust Fund
- Elimination of key discretionary programs, including RAISE, MEGA, and Safe Streets grants
- Reductions to:
 - FTA Capital Investment Grants
 - Amtrak funding
- Targeted investments remain for:

- INFRA grants
- Bridge repair programs

Water & Environment: Significant cuts proposed

- 52% reduction to EPA overall funding
- Proposed 90% cut to Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds
- Elimination of several grant and environmental programs

 These reductions mirror past proposals that were ultimately rejected by Congress.

Energy & Infrastructure: Strategic investments

- New funding for:
 - Grid infrastructure and baseload power
 - Artificial intelligence and energy systems
 - Critical minerals and supply chain development
- Cuts to:
 - Hydrogen hubs
 - Early-stage energy research (ARPA-E)
 - DOE Office of Science

Other infrastructure impacts

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: 37% reduction proposed
- FEMA: \$1.3B cut to non-disaster programs
- NOAA: Significant cuts to research and mapping programs
- GSA: Focus on facility consolidation and reduced new construction

Bottom line

While the proposal reflects shifting federal priorities, Congress will ultimately determine funding levels. *Remember, watch the roller coaster-don't ride it.*

What to watch:

- Whether cuts to water infrastructure and discretionary grants gain traction
- The balance between formula funding and competitive programs
- The action congress takes on a stand-alone water infrastructure bill and also surface transportation reauthorization.

ACEC Illinois members will be in DC next week to advocate for Illinois projects and funding.



AI is becoming an infrastructure story



Artificial intelligence is rapidly moving beyond tech—and into the core of infrastructure planning and investment.

Why it matters:

AI requires massive data centers, significant energy capacity, and expanded water systems to operate at scale. That demand is placing engineering firms at the center of a fast-growing infrastructure buildout.

Firms are no longer just delivering these projects—they're helping shape them. From site selection and grid planning to water use and permitting, engineers are increasingly involved at the earliest stages.

The opportunity:

AI is driving new investment across energy, transportation, and water systems—creating demand for multidisciplinary services and elevating the role of engineering firms in long-term planning.

The challenge:

Power constraints, water usage, and permitting pressures are emerging as key hurdles—issues that will require engineering-led solutions and coordination with policymakers.

The Illinois angle:

Illinois is well-positioned to compete, but success will depend on energy capacity, efficient permitting, and a strong workforce pipeline.

Bottom line:

AI isn't just reshaping technology—it's reshaping infrastructure. And engineering firms are helping lead the way.

Zoom In: For a deeper dive, [click here.](#)

2026 IDOT REGIONAL TOUR

IDOT Region 5

Thursday, April 30, 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
1000 Eastport Plaza Dr.
Collinsville, IL 62234



Illinois Department
of Transportation



Carrie Nelsen, P.E.
Region 5 Engineer

Illinois Department of Transportation



[Register Here!](#)

2026 IDOT Regional Tour T-shirt for all attendees!



[Listen Here!](#)



Employer & Exhibitor Registration

CALLING ALL EMPLOYERS: The Citywide Career Fair is seeking employers with active open positions to REGISTER TO EXHIBIT!

The Citywide Career Fair connects career seekers throughout the City of Chicago to employment opportunities in various industries and sectors that offer sustainable wages. Register today so you can meet candidates and inform them of the opportunities you have and how they can apply!

Organizations providing workforce development services and other career resources are welcome to register to exhibit.

REGISTER TO EXHIBIT AT:
bit.ly/EmployersSpring26Citywide
or scan the bar code



Please complete registration
by Tuesday, March 31, 2026



For questions about this event contact workforceinitiatives@transitchicago.com

MEMBER UPDATES:



Sign up for the ACEC Illinois Energy Forum:

Please fill out below to be included on a special energy focused newsletter and briefings coming soon!

[Sign Up Here!](#)



Oates Associates Expands into a New Belleville Office

Collinsville, IL (March 9, 2026) - Oates Associates, Inc. – a 100% employee-owned civil and structural engineering and surveying firm – has expanded its Belleville office into a larger space, reinforcing the firm’s continued growth

and long-term commitment to serving clients and communities throughout the Metro East and surrounding region.

The expanded Belleville location provides room to support future hiring as the firm continues to grow its engineering and surveying services. The move reflects Oates Associates’ investment in the region and its belief that the best engineering solutions come from teams rooted in the communities they serve.

“The City of Belleville has been an important part of our firm for nearly 40 years, and this move continues to position us for the future. Over the past several years, our firm has experienced steady growth, and the Belleville office expansion allows us to attract local talent while supporting the communities we serve throughout St. Clair County and beyond,” said Chief Executive Officer Jeffrey Rensing, PE, SE.

The new office is located at 100 West Main, 2nd Floor – just one block from Belleville Square in Downtown Belleville. The Belleville office works closely with Oates Associates’ other regional locations to provide comprehensive engineering and surveying solutions across Illinois and Missouri.

Oates Associates is a 100% employee-owned multi-disciplined design firm with offices in Collinsville and Belleville, Illinois and St. Louis and St. Charles, Missouri. Oates provides engineering and surveying services for transportation and building projects. Specifically, this includes transportation and traffic engineering, ADA transition planning, stormwater management, site design, building and bridge structural design and inspections, surveying, and drone operations. For more information, visit www.oatesassociates.com or call 618.345.2200.

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Oates Associates Employee Earns Professional Engineer License

St. Charles, MO (March 10, 2026) - At Oates Associates, Inc. – a 100% employee-owned civil and structural engineering and surveying firm – developing professional expertise within our team is essential to advancing our mission of designing infrastructure that serves communities now and into the future. Professional licensure plays a key role in that commitment.

The firm is proud to share that Nick Moore has earned his Professional Engineer (PE) license and has been promoted to an Associate Project Manager. Achieving licensure represents a professional milestone and reflects Nick's dedication to engineering excellence. Nick is supported by a team of over 30 licensed engineers at Oates Associates.

His achievement supports the firm's ongoing efforts to strengthen local communities and infrastructure.

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COMMITTEE CHAIR

Spotlight

SCOTT SUTTON

CBIZ



How long have you been a part of ACEC IL?

8 years

Tell us a little bit about the committee you chair.

Financial Management Committee Chair: The financial management committee brings together finance professionals and firm leaders from companies of all sizes and complexities. It provides members with an opportunity to not only hear from industry experts on a wide variety of finance, accounting, tax and regulatory topics, but also hear directly from their peers on issues that others are facing.

What's the number one reason people should join your committee?

The financial and tax landscape is ever changing. Firms are facing a regulatory environment that is constantly in flux, and the financial management committee helps firms of all sizes to learn about these changes and best plan for the future.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I enjoy traveling with my wife and two young daughters as well as hiking and playing golf.

Tell us one fun fact about yourself.

My dream job is to be a ranger in a National Park.



2026 FUTURE LEADERS

Your Journey Starts Here

ACEC ILLINOIS

Who Should Attend?

Early-career professionals who are looking to build a strong foundation in leadership. This program is also an ideal preparatory experience for those considering future participation in the ACEC Illinois Leadership Institute.

What Is This Program?

This one-day leadership development experience features interactive sessions and peer engagement designed to help participants better understand their leadership potential. Attendees will gain practical insights into leadership fundamentals, industry dynamics, and professional growth pathways—equipping them to take meaningful first steps toward long-term success and influence within their firms and the broader engineering community.

Where Will It Take Place?

Harry Caray's Ballroom at the Westin in Lombard, Illinois

When Should I Arrive?

Registration opens at 8:00 AM, with introductions and the opening session beginning promptly at 8:30 AM.

Why Attend?

Participants will leave with fresh perspectives, valuable connections, and actionable ideas to help guide the next stage of their professional journey.

[Details & Registration HERE](#)



Welcome New Members



ACEC ILLINOIS



MEMBER FIRM:
Premier Project Management
Naperville, IL

Premier Project Management (PPM) is a trusted transportation firm based in Illinois, specializing in program management, construction oversight, and safety & security certification for mass transit and multimodal infrastructure projects.

With over 50 years of experience working with agencies like the Chicago Transit Authority, Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Federal Transit Administration, PPM ensures complex capital programs are delivered on time, within budget, and in full regulatory compliance. Our core competencies include transit program management, regulatory compliance, and multimodal transportation planning, supported by industry-leading certifications such as PMP, TSSP, and OSHA30.

PPM stands out with its multimodal expertise, innovative partnerships, and deep public sector acumen, making us the ideal partner for delivering large-scale infrastructure projects that improve mobility, access, and safety for all users.

CKL Engineers, LLC specializes in construction-phase program delivery for transportation and public infrastructure agencies. Founded in 2009, CKL leads Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services, providing resident engineering, program controls, documentation management, quality assurance, and cost and schedule oversight across highways, tollways, bridges, aviation, rail, and municipal capital programs.

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MEMBER FIRM:
CKL Engineers Inc.
Chicago, IL
www.ckleng.com

sVector is an AI-enabled owner's representative and development manager helping commercial real estate platforms, institutional investors, and mission-critical facility operators plan, deliver, and operate complex assets with greater certainty, faster time-to-market, and stronger uptime.

sVector replaces manual, siloed controls with Engineering Intelligence. We provide AI-driven project orchestration for data centers, hospitals, and utilities to eliminate cost overruns and ensure uptime across the full asset lifecycle.

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MEMBER FIRM:
sVector, Inc.
Lincolnwood, IL
www.sVector.com

Kiewit is one of North America's largest and most respected construction and engineering organizations. Our people help make some of the industry's most complex, challenging and rewarding projects a reality — whether we're boring tunnels through mountains, turning rivers into energy or building bridges that connect communities. Our diverse teams of experts have been turning complex challenges into groundbreaking solutions for over 140 years.



MEMBER FIRM:
Kiewit Infrastructure Co.
 Itasca, IL
www.kiewit.com



MEMBER FIRM:
Baumann Consulting
 Chicago, IL
www.baumann-us.com

Baumann Consulting (Baumann) provides sustainability and engineering consulting services for the entire lifecycle of buildings. Baumann has expertise in the commercial, multi-family, institutional, educational, and industrial building sectors. Our services range from energy audits, feasibility studies, and development and evaluation of design concepts to commissioning, measurement & verifications (M&V), and monitoring of building performance and systems. Baumann was founded in 2006 in the District of Columbia. In 2012, we expanded our presence to the Midwest and opened an office in Chicago, IL. In 2013, Baumann became a transatlantic organization when we opened our office in Frankfurt, Germany. We are spread across three offices, but we operate as one firm.

Our Mission is to add value to our customers, improve the lives of our employees, and enhance the communities we live in. Our Vision is to deliver solutions for a carbon-neutral real estate industry.

ADS is proud to call the Midwest home. We are home to the largest and most advanced stormwater Engineering and Technology Center in the world. Offering a full package of stormwater products designed to manage the entire Lifecycle of a Raindrop™.

Whether its protecting water, sustainability or creating innovative infrastructure, our partnerships, collaborations and involvement all drive impact in different ways.



AFFILIATE MEMBER FIRM:
Advanced Drainage Systems, Inc.
 Hilliard, OH
www.adspipe.com

UPCOMING EVENTS...

ACEC ILLINOIS



[CHECK OUT THE CALENDAR
HERE!](#)

Questions - please reach out!

SUBMIT UPDATES & ARTICLES:

Please submit firm update & news articles by the 20th of each month to: bethany@acecil.org
Articles and updates will be included in the membership newsletter, posted on our website,
and shared through our social media feeds.



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