



# ACEC ILLINOIS THE CONNECTOR

## LEADERSHIP & POLICY BRIEFING





KEVIN ARTL  
PRESIDENT & CEO


June 2026

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### Illinois Legislative Session Update

 **Situational awareness:** ACEC Illinois secured major advocacy wins in water infrastructure funding, including \$440 million for lead service line replacements and \$100 million in new funding for the State Revolving Fund covering waste and clean water.

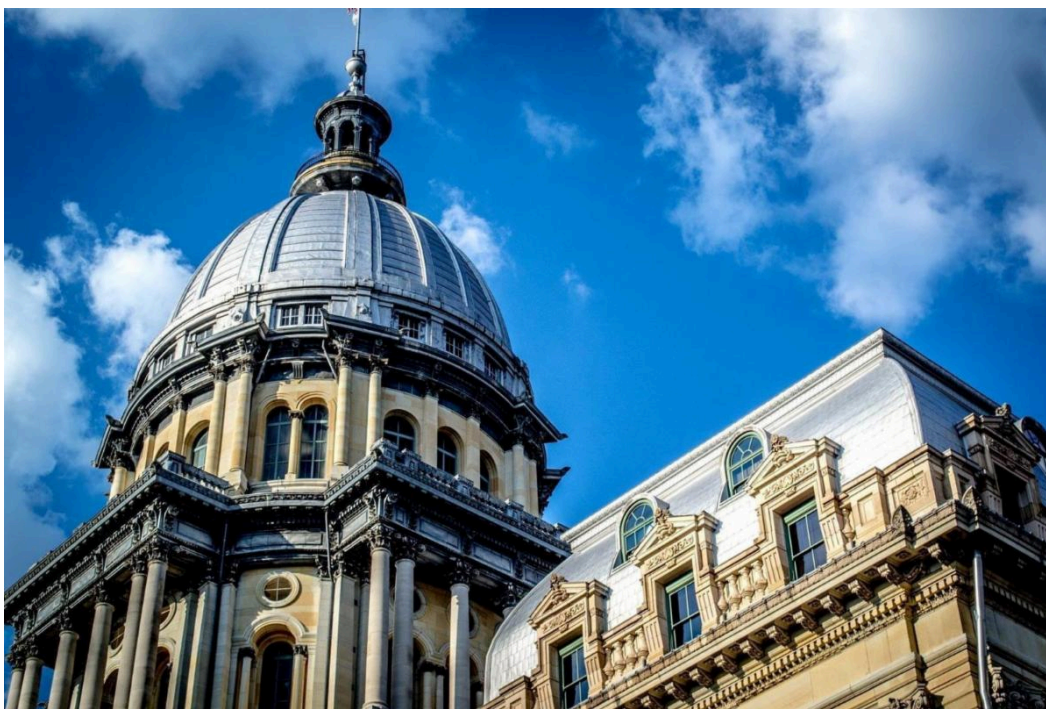
 **What happened:** Lawmakers approved a nearly \$56 billion state budget with new water infrastructure funding, protected transportation revenue, and a one-time \$500 million boost for downstate roads and bridges.

 **Why it matters:** ACEC Illinois' advocacy helped shape key infrastructure outcomes this spring, while setting up continued work on IDOT reforms, aeronautics payment delays, the RISE Tax Credit, and long-term water infrastructure investment.

**Let's get into it.**

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## Legislative Session Update: Infrastructure Wins and Unfinished Business



## **State Budget Approved with New Revenue Measures**

Lawmakers approved a nearly \$56 billion state budget for the new fiscal year, supported by a mix of new taxes, revenue adjustments and fund transfers.

The budget includes new or expanded taxes impacting digital advertising and social media companies, prediction markets, cryptocurrency and digital assets, fantasy sports, tobacco and other areas.

For ACEC Illinois members, the budget debate mattered because many of the final decisions directly affected infrastructure funding, transportation revenue, water infrastructure, aeronautics payments and the broader fiscal environment for capital investment.

## **Water Infrastructure Funding Sees Important Gains**

**ACEC Illinois** was especially engaged this session in advocating for increased water infrastructure funding — and the final budget reflects meaningful progress.

The budget includes approximately \$440 million for lead service line replacement, an increase of roughly \$200 million from last year. It also includes an additional \$100 million for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

**ACEC Illinois** worked closely with **Sen. Villivalam** and State Senate appropriations staff during the final hours of session to ensure these funding components were in the final budget.

These investments represent a significant step forward for water infrastructure funding and reflect ACEC Illinois' continued advocacy with IEPA, the Governor's Office, legislative leaders and other stakeholders.

The additional funding will help support critical water infrastructure projects across Illinois and will remain a major focus for ACEC Illinois moving forward.

### **Downstate Roads and Bridges Receive One-Time Funding Boost**

The final budget also includes a one-time \$500 million bonding boost for downstate roads and bridges.

This funding will support transportation infrastructure outside Cook, DuPage, Lake, Will, Kane and McHenry counties. While some stakeholders pushed for a recurring revenue source, lawmakers ultimately approved a one-time infusion of capital funding.

### **Motor Fuel Tax CPI Freeze Offset by New Revenue**

ACEC Illinois closely monitored late-session discussions around freezing the scheduled Motor Fuel Tax CPI adjustment.

As ACEC Illinois communicated to lawmakers, freezing the CPI adjustment would have reduced Road Fund revenue while providing only minimal relief to consumers.

The final revenue package limited the CPI freeze to six months. Importantly, the estimated revenue loss will be offset by approximately \$20 million directed to the Road Fund from sales tax revenue on motor fuel.

That outcome helped protect transportation funding while allowing lawmakers to provide limited consumer relief.

### **Aeronautics Payment Delays Gain Legislative Attention**

ACEC Illinois also brought significant attention to long-standing payment delays affecting consulting firms working on aeronautics projects.

While proposed language related to the Aeronautics Revolving Fund was not included in the final Budget Implementation bill, the issue is now firmly on the radar of lawmakers in both chambers.

ACEC Illinois had pushed for language requiring consulting firms to be paid on invoices older than 90 days, particularly given the backlog of delayed payments affecting firms in this space.

Lawmakers have committed to working with ACEC Illinois, IDOT and other stakeholders over the next six months to pursue administrative solutions. If those efforts do not resolve the issue, ACEC Illinois is prepared to pursue legislation in January.

### **IDOT Legislative Package Falls Short Despite Strong Support**

One of the biggest disappointments of the session was the failure of the IDOT legislative package to advance through the Senate.

The reforms stemmed in part from recommendations included in the IDOT Blue Ribbon Commission report and were intended to help IDOT move projects more efficiently, modernize outdated procedures and respond to changing federal requirements.

Key components included:

- NEPA Assignment: Allow IDOT to manage federal environmental reviews for major transportation projects.
- Small Business Program: Align Illinois' small business definition with federal standards to support development of a Small Business Enterprise program.
- Procurement Modernization: Consolidate more transportation-related procurement under the IDOT Chief Procurement Officer.
- Federal Grant Procurement: Allow more flexibility when vendor partnerships are needed to secure or implement federal grants.
- Joint Purchasing: Allow IDOT to use contracts competitively procured by agencies in other states.
- Contract Change Approvals: Raise the approval threshold from \$250,000 to \$750,000 for certain highway project changes.
- Waiver Valuations: Allow streamlined valuations for uncomplicated properties valued under \$50,000.
- Conditional Right of Way: Allow projects to begin when only a limited number of parcels remain in acquisition.
- Public Property Condemnation: Clarify IDOT's authority to acquire public property through the same process used for private property.

The package had passed the House with overwhelming support and appeared to have a path forward in the Senate. However, it stalled in the final days of session without clear opposition to the underlying policies.

ACEC Illinois, IDOT and other stakeholders worked aggressively to revive the package, but it ultimately did not move.

This remains unfinished business. ACEC Illinois will continue working with IDOT, legislative leaders and other stakeholders to position these measures for passage in Veto Session, Lame Duck Session or early next year.

### **RISE Tax Credit Positioned for Future Action**

The **Retain Illinois Students in Engineering Tax Credit**, or RISE Tax Credit, did not advance this session as lawmakers chose not to move tax credit bills broadly in a difficult budget year.

However, the proposal made meaningful progress.

**ACEC Illinois** worked with **Rep. Justin Cochran**, the Department of Revenue and House budget leaders to revise the proposal and address administrative concerns. The bill was changed from a percentage-based salary credit to a flat \$5,000 tax credit for hiring either a professional engineer or structural engineer.

While the bill did not pass this spring, ACEC Illinois is well-positioned to advance the concept when lawmakers return to tax credit discussions in a future session.

## **Data Centers Continue Without Tax Credit Pause**

Data center legislation was another major issue in the final weeks of session.

In his February budget address, Gov. JB Pritzker proposed a two-year pause on new data center tax credits, citing concerns about energy demand, grid reliability and long-term affordability.

Lawmakers also sought to advance the POWER Act in the final days of session, which would have created a new regulatory framework for data center development and related energy impacts.

Ultimately, neither the Governor's proposed tax credit pause nor the POWER Act were approved by the General Assembly.

The issue is likely to remain active as lawmakers continue to examine energy demand, grid reliability, tax incentives, water usage and local impacts related to data center development.

For now, the legislature did not approve new restrictions, allowing continued construction and development activity under the existing framework.

## **Bears Stadium Legislation Remains Unresolved**

Legislation related to a potential new Chicago Bears stadium development remains unresolved after a late-session shift in approach.

Earlier in session, the House approved a proposal built around a PILOT program — or payment in lieu of taxes — that would have allowed large development projects to negotiate property tax payments with local taxing bodies.

The Senate rejected that model and, on the final day of session, introduced an entirely new approach allowing certain municipalities to create municipally owned stadium authorities.

The Senate approved the revised measure, but the House did not take it up before adjournment.

There have not yet been formal discussions about a special session.

The issue will likely continue behind the scenes among legislative leaders, the Governor's Office, local officials and the Bears. As with many major development proposals, the path forward may depend on how quickly stakeholders can reach consensus — and how patient the Bears are willing to be.

## **What's Next**

**ACEC Illinois** will continue working over the summer and into the fall on several unresolved priorities, including:

- Passage of the IDOT project delivery package.
- Administrative or legislative solutions to aeronautics payment delays.
- Continued advocacy for the RISE Tax Credit.
- Long-term water infrastructure funding.
- Broader infrastructure investment and project delivery improvements.
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The spring session produced meaningful wins — but the work is not finished. ACEC Illinois will remain engaged with the Governor’s Office, legislative leaders, state agencies and industry partners to advance policies that support efficient project delivery, strengthen the engineering workforce and invest in Illinois’ infrastructure.



Joe dives into the latest data on how engineering firms are feeling about business conditions, workload, hiring, and the overall economic outlook. Whether you’re a firm principal, project manager, or industry observer, this episode delivers the insights you need to understand where the engineering business landscape is headed.

About the ACEC Research Institute: The ACEC Research Institute is the research arm of the American Council of Engineering Companies, dedicated to advancing knowledge and providing data-driven insights for the engineering industry.

[Listen Here!](#)

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ACEC IL Member Updates...





Kaskaskia Engineering Group, LLC is excited to share with our clients, partners, and friends that we have officially earned the Special Services - Surveying prequalification from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

This allows our licensed and qualified Survey Team to deliver full survey services for transportation projects and commercial developments across Illinois. This new prequalification strengthens our ability to serve our clients and teaming partners as a more well-rounded engineering partner on a wide range of projects.



## **MSA Professional Services, Inc. Acquires ME3 Consulting Engineers, LLC, a Leading Florida MEP Firm**

MADISON, Wisc. (May 19, 2026) – MSA Professional Services, Inc. (MSA), a 100% employee-owned multidisciplinary consulting firm, announced today the acquisition of ME3 Consulting

Engineers, LLC, a leading Sarasota-based company specializing in mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) engineering design services.

Founded in 2007, ME3 has built a reputation for delivering top-tier client service, technical excellence, and innovative solutions across southwestern Florida. With nearly two decades of experience, ME3 prides itself in being clients' trusted partner from schematic design through final construction, successfully leading MEP projects across diversified markets including commercial, educational, retail, faith-based, healthcare, and hospitality.

MSA and ME3 share a commitment to project excellence and building long-term client and partner relationships. This acquisition strengthens the firm's MEP expertise throughout Florida and beyond — and complements the organization's addition of Haddad Engineering, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida, in 2025.

“Joining MSA is a natural evolution for ME3,” remarked Sidney Pritchard, LEED AP, one of three founding owners. “For 19 years, our firm has operated on the simple principle of providing the best possible service through the best possible people, which has allowed us to deliver world-class MEP service. In MSA, we found a partner that shares this commitment to fostering deep, honest relationships. This move allows us to continue to build and expand our impact and ensures that the high-standard, client-first engineering legacy we built at ME3 will continue to thrive in the years to come.”

“We are excited to welcome ME3 to MSA,” commented CEO Nick Wagner, PE. “Their focus on the client experience and commitment to collaborative project partnerships align very well with our organization's values. We look forward to

learning from their successful tenure of experience and working together to deliver innovative MEP solutions to clients throughout Florida and the greater Southeast.”

Both firms are committed to a seamless transition for clients and employees.

About MSA Professional Services, Inc.

MSA Professional Services, Inc. (MSA) is a 100% employee-owned, multidisciplinary consulting firm serving clients from 19 offices throughout the United States. For over a century, MSA has delivered smart solutions for complex infrastructure challenges and trusted expertise for sustainable community development. When you work with MSA, it's more than just a project. It's a commitment to building honest, open relationships and working together to solve immediate challenges and achieve long-term goals. For more information, visit [msa-ps.com](http://msa-ps.com).

About ME3 Consulting Engineers, LLC

ME3 is a highly regarded mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) engineering design firm serving southwest Florida since 2007. ME3 prides itself on designing sustainable, professionally engineered MEP systems that are efficient, cost-effective, and easy to operate and maintain. The firm's client-first approach assures quality partnerships and successful project solutions, from schematic design through final construction.



## Greetings from the IDOT Bureau of Planning!

We are excited to announce that the Illinois Department of Transportation's 41st Annual Fall Planning Conference will take place September 2-4, 2026 in Normal, IL! We invite you to join transportation professionals, planners, local governments, MPOs, consultants and advocates from across Illinois for a conference of knowledge sharing, networking, and forward-thinking dialogue.

Details: [2026 Illinois Department of Transportation Fall Planning Conference - Home](#)

Call for Presentations: [2026 IDOT Fall Planning Conference - Call for Presentations](#)

We are accepting proposals for presentations. Topics may include the subjects below as well as other emerging areas of interest. Recent State Planning and Research (SPR) projects are always welcome topics and provides grantees an opportunity to share their research and findings. Please send us your ideas via the linked form below by June 12, 2026. Your voice and expertise are essential to the continued success of this event, and we look forward to your participation.

- Long-range planning and innovation
- Equity and access in transportation
- Climate resilience and sustainability
- Data and technology in infrastructure

- Freight, mobility, active transportation and economic development

If you have any questions regarding registration or topic submissions, please contact us at [DOT.Planning@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.Planning@illinois.gov).



## **Matt Fields Rejoins Oates Associates as Project Manager**

**St. Louis, MO** (June 1, 2026) – Matt Fields, PE has rejoined Oates Associates, Inc. – a 100% employee-owned civil and structural engineering and surveying firm – as a Project Manager in the firm’s St. Louis office.

Fields specializes in transportation engineering, delivering roadway and infrastructure improvements for public agencies and communities throughout the region. His experience includes local roads and highways, safety enhancements, drainage improvements, and pedestrian facilities. He shares the firm’s commitment to improving communities through thoughtful transportation solutions.

Having previously worked for Oates Associates, his return reflects both his familiarity with the firm’s approach and the value of his experience in transportation engineering. Fields will work closely with team members and clients to develop practical solutions that enhance safety, accessibility, and mobility.

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](http://www.oatesassociates.com) or call 618.345.2200.



## **Oates Associates Principal Mike Busch Named One of APWA’s Top Ten Public Works Leaders of the Year**

**St. Louis, MO** (May 28, 2026) – A career defined by leadership, service, and commitment to public infrastructure has earned Mike Busch, PE, PTOE, one of the American Public Works Association’s (APWA) top honors. Busch, a principal at Oates Associates, Inc. – a 100% employee-owned civil and structural engineering and surveying firm – was recognized as one of APWA’s 2026 Top Ten Public Works

Leaders of the Year. The award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, long-term commitment, and meaningful contributions to the public works profession. Busch was honored for a career that reflects technical excellence, mentorship, professional service, and a commitment to improving communities through public infrastructure.

Busch has dedicated his career to serving municipalities, counties, and transportation agencies throughout the St. Louis region and beyond. Since joining Oates Associates in 1998, he has grown from intern to principal, leading complex transportation and public infrastructure projects while helping guide the firm's strategic direction, staff development, and client service efforts. Over the course of his career, he has managed and supported projects throughout the region that improve mobility, accessibility, and safety.

Busch has long supported professional organizations that advance the public works profession, with significant involvement in APWA. Over the years, he has served as President of the APWA Missouri Chapter, President of the APWA St. Louis Branch, and in other board and officer roles. He has also contributed his time to committees, outreach efforts, mentoring, and initiatives aimed at strengthening the profession and encouraging the next generation of public works leaders.

"Mike's leadership has had a lasting impact on our firm, our clients, and the communities we serve," said Chief Executive Officer Jeffrey Rensing, PE, SE. "He is respected not only for his engineering knowledge, but for the way he leads, mentors others, and represents the profession. This recognition is well deserved and reflects the impact he has made through his work, service, and mentorship."

Busch's career has been marked by a strong commitment to mentorship and professional development. At Oates Associates, he has helped guide emerging professionals, support leadership development, and encourage involvement in professional and community service. His influence can be seen not only in the projects he has helped deliver, but also in the growth of the people around him.

The APWA Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year Award honors individuals who exemplify excellence in the field of public works. Busch's recognition reflects more than two decades of meaningful contributions. He was nominated by the APWA Missouri Chapter and recognized alongside nine other professionals from across the nation.

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](http://www.oatesassociates.com) or call 618.345.2200.



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## Oates Associates Welcomes 2026 Summer Interns

**Collinsville, IL** (May 21, 2026) – Oates Associates, Inc. – a 100% employee-owned civil and structural engineering and surveying firm – is hosting nine interns as part of its

2026 internship program. Those gaining hands-on experience through the program include returning interns Katie Saenz and Drew Schonhardt, along with seven new additions: Luke Karlas, Sean Keys, Jack Pecoraro, Katie Stark, Brady Steinkamp, Titus Vering, and Kaylee Wood.

The interns join Oates from universities across the region, including Abilene Christian University, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and the University of Kansas. They are pursuing degrees in civil engineering or architectural engineering and share an interest in building careers in engineering.

Throughout the summer, interns will gain practical, real-world experience in civil and structural engineering, surveying, and construction observation. The firm looks forward to supporting each intern's growth and introducing them to the opportunities available within the engineering industry.

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## MEMBERSHIP DUES HAVE BEEN SENT OUT!

ACEC Illinois dues invoices have been sent out. If you need a new copy or have questions, please contact Emily Martinez at [emily@acecil.org](mailto:emily@acecil.org)

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**Sponsorship Renewal!**

**Reach out to Bethany!**

# ANNUAL LUNCHEON SPONSORSHIP

## Cost:

- \$7,500/ Annually

## What Sponsors Get:

- Recognition at all Regional Luncheons:
  - 8-12 luncheons yearly
- Listed as Platinum Sponsor for every regional luncheon:
  - Company logo on social posts
  - Company logo on promotional signs
  - Company verbally recognized at event
- Complimentary Registrations:
  - 2 complimentary registrations to every regional luncheon
  - These complimentary seats are also at a reserved front row table

# ANNUAL MARKETING SPONSORSHIP

## Cost:

- \$2,000/ Annually

## What Sponsors Get:

- Monthly Social Media Post
  - Advertisement, Article, Announcement, etc.
  - Shared on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn pages.
- Monthly Newsletter
  - Advertisement, Article, Announcement, etc. included in the monthly newsletter: *The Connector*
  - *The Connector* is emailed to all ACEC IL Members and is shared on our website.
- Registration for ACEC Illinois Events
  - Two attendees for the Annual ACEC Illinois Fall Conference
  - Exhibit booth at the Annual ACEC IL Fall Conference

## ACEC Career Center Find Your Next Hiring Match

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Career Center helps you connect with qualified candidates who align with your firm's needs and long-term goals. Showcase your job openings and simplify the hiring process of growing your firm! As an added benefit, you can post internship opportunities at no cost—helping you reach emerging talent early.

Get started [here](#).

# 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](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.



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