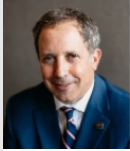




# THE CONNECTOR



KEVIN ARTL  
PRESIDENT & CEO

## LEADERSHIP & POLICY BRIEFING

JUNE 2025

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### ACEC Illinois Welcomes New Board Members



The American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois (ACEC Illinois) has appointed a new board of directors to further the interests of engineering firms across the state.

**Why it matters:** As Illinois modernizes its infrastructure, ACEC Illinois members are pivotal in designing and expediting these advancements.

- The organization represents over 220 member firms with more than 12,000 employees.

Here is a comprehensive list of the new officers and board members for ACEC Illinois:

**Executive Committee:**

- **Board Chair: Jerry Payonk (Clark Dietz)**
- **Chair-Elect: Laura McGovern (Benesch)**
- **Past Board Chair: Lou Gallucci (V3 Companies)**
- **National Director: PJ Fitzpatrick (HR Green)**
- **Secretary/Treasurer: Amar Rajpurkar (Parsons Corporation)**

**Board Members for the 2025-2026 Term:**

- Harvind Kaur Singh (President at Singh & Associates, Inc. in Chicago)
- Stacie Dovalovsky (Transportation Division Lead at Primera Engineers in Chicago)
- John Clark (Executive Vice President and Co-Founder at Peralte-Clark in Arlington Heights)
- Paul Kovacs (Principal at Bowman Consulting in Lisle)
- Brad Riechmann (Vice President and Assistant Business Unit Leader, Transportation - Illinois Region at Horner & Shifrin in O'Fallon)
- Jeff Large (Chief Structural Engineer at Crawford, Murphy & Tilly in Springfield)
- George Ghareeb (Senior Vice President at TERRA Engineering in Peoria)
- Jeff Ball (President at Hanson Professional Services in Springfield)
- Natalia Homedi (President & CEO at Atlas Engineering Group in Deerfield)
- Clinton Ferguson (Vice President at GFT in Chicago)
- William Klingner (Water Resources Engineer at Klingner & Associates in Quincy)
- Michael Zorn (Vice President and Civil Department Manager at H.W. Lochner in Wheaton)

**ACEC PAC Committee Chair:**

- Tom Hein (Vice President and Area Manager for HDR in Rosemont)

# POLITICO

# Illinois Playbook

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## ○ TAKING NAMES

— **Jerry Payonk** is the new board chair of American Council of Engineering Companies of Illinois. In his day job, he's board chair at Clark Dietz and is an engineer specializing in traffic analysis and streetscape. Other officers include: **Laura McGovern, Lou Gallucci, PJ Fitzpatrick** and **Amar Rajpurkar**.

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## ACEC Illinois Hosts Infrastructure Roundtable



ACEC Illinois recently held a roundtable featuring key figures such as **Cong. Nikki Budzinski**, **IDOT Secretary Gia Biagi**, and moderated by ACEC Illinois President **Kevin Artl**.

**Why it matters:** This gathering provided a platform for discussing ongoing projects in the 13th Congressional District and addressing critical issues like workforce recruitment and retention.

□ **Key Participants:**

- Misty Buscher, Mayor of Springfield
- Mark Hanna, Springfield Airport Authority Executive Director
- Brian Davis, Sangamon County Engineer ·Steve Schoeffel, Sangamon Mass Transit Managing Director
- Lou Gallucci, ACEC IL Board Chair,
- Linda Moen, ACEC IL Past Board Chair
- PJ Fitzpatrick, ACEC IL National Director
- Dan Meckes, ACEC Executive Committee

**Discussion Highlights:**

- Updates on federal and state initiatives affecting infrastructure projects.
- Innovations and efficiencies being introduced by engineering firms to enhance project delivery.

□ **Looking Ahead:**

The roundtable emphasized the importance of collaboration between public and private sectors to drive infrastructure advancements and

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## USDOT Releases Outline of FY26 Budget





The USDOT's FY 2026 budget requests \$111.3 billion in new resources, with plans to cancel \$5.7 billion in EV charger grants. The \$111.3 billion request is supplemented by \$35.8 billion from the 2021 infrastructure law, totaling \$147.1 billion for fiscal 2026.

This marks a 1.6% increase from the previous fiscal year, according to a DOT budget summary [released last week](#).

## ☐ **Key Infrastructure & Engineering Highlights**

### **Transit & Rail Buildout:**

- \$21.2 billion for public transit, including \$3.8 billion for Capital Investment Grants.
- \$16.5 billion for rail, with \$6.8 billion for Amtrak and \$7.2 billion for state partnership rail programs.
- \$1.5 billion for the CRISI grant program to modernize freight rail and improve rail crossings.

### **FAA Modernization & Safety:**

- Adds \$360 million for air traffic controller hiring and telecom upgrades.
- Begins a \$4 billion radar system overhaul with a \$450 million down payment.

### **Ports, Shipyards & Supply Chain:**

- \$550 million for port infrastructure grants and \$105 million for small shipyard enhancements.

## ☐ **Engineering Opportunities in Discretionary Grants**

### **INFRA Program:**

- Offers \$770 million for significant freight and highway projects needing advanced engineering designs.

### **Rail Safety & Crossing Elimination Grants:**

- \$500 million available, a 400% increase over FY 2025, for project design and systems modernization.

### **⚠ Cuts & Cancellations to Note**

### **EV Charging Infrastructure:**

- Proposal to cancel \$5.7 billion in IIJA funding for electric vehicle charger grants.

### **Essential Air Service & TSA:**

- Reductions include \$308 million for rural air service and \$247 million for TSA.

## ☐ **Big Picture for Engineers**

The FY 2026 DOT budget reflects a federal commitment to traditional infrastructure like transit, rail, ports, and aviation, focusing on modernization, safety, and resilience. Despite cuts in EV charging grants, significant opportunities exist for engineers in transportation, project delivery, and innovation.

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# Supreme Court's NEPA Ruling: Impact on Infrastructure



In a landmark decision, the [U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld a narrower interpretation of the National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#). This ruling, in the case of *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colorado*, limits federal agencies to assessing only direct environmental impacts of projects.

**Why it matters:** The decision streamlines environmental reviews, reducing litigation risk and potentially speeding up permitting processes for engineers and developers.

## ☐ What the Court Decided:

- NEPA is confirmed as a procedural statute, mandating consideration of environmental impacts without requiring specific outcomes.
- Agencies have broad discretion in determining the scope of environmental reviews, focusing only on direct project impacts.

## ☐ What It Means for Engineers:

- Faster, clearer reviews: NEPA reviews can concentrate on site-specific impacts, simplifying Environmental Impact Statements (EIS).
- Lower litigation risk: Greater deference to agency decisions may reduce delays from lawsuits.
- Streamlined technical focus: Engineers can prioritize localized studies without broader environmental modeling unless voluntary.

## ⚖️ Key Trade-offs:

- Critics argue the ruling narrows the environmental lens, potentially undermining cumulative and climate change considerations.
- Agencies may still find value in voluntarily expanding environmental analysis to build public trust and future-proof designs.

## ☐ Looking Ahead:

- This ruling could transform the review and delivery of major infrastructure projects, offering a more defined regulatory path while emphasizing the need for sustainable, resilient designs.
-

## [ACEC Catch Up](#)

**Blue Ribbon Work:** ACEC Illinois is participating in the **IDOT Blue Ribbon Commission's Project Delivery Working Group**. The Group had their first meeting this week to discuss current state processes and timelines and outline areas where efficiencies can be gained. For more information on work the Blue Ribbon Commission is conducting, [visit here](#).

**Not Acting Anymore:** Congratulations to **IDOT Secretary Gia Biagi**. Secretary Biagi was [officially confirmed](#) by the Senate last week.

**Market Intel Update:** U.S. Construction Growth Slows in April as Sector Shifts Continue. The seasonally adjusted annual rate of \$2.15 trillion for April 2025 represents a monthly decline of -0.4%. This is the third consecutive month of decline for the growth rate; the last time there were 3 consecutive months of decline was Summer 2022. Compared to April 2024, the total represents a -0.5% decline year over year. While Private construction saw a month over month decline of -0.7%, Public construction grew 0.4%. For a deeper dive, click [here](#).



ACEC-IL's podcast "Engineering Works" interviews Holly Bieneman, Director of Planning and Programming for IDOT. Holly offers an inside look at IDOT's Multi-Year Improvement Program (MYP) - a comprehensive, six-year, multimodal plan that spans Illinois' extensive transportation network.



[Listen Here](#)



**HOLLY BIENEMAN,**  
**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING**  
**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (IDOT)**

## **Member Updates:**

### **EMILY CONTI HONORED WITH ISAWWA YOUNG PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD**

Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI), an award-winning firm in civil engineering and land surveying, is proud to announce that Emily Conti, EI, Project Engineer, has been awarded the

Young Professional Excellence Award from the Illinois Section American Water Works Association (ISAWWA).

This award recognizes one outstanding young professional who has made improvements or has had a significant impact on the committee or the water profession. It honors those who show enthusiasm by participating in professional meetings, committees, events, and activities and who serve as a positive influence on the organization and profession through service, good fellowship, leadership, and commitment.



"We are proud of Emily's achievement in receiving this honorable award," said Jeff Freeman, PE, CFM, LEED AP, Chief Executive Officer. "Her involvement and leadership within ISAWWA have been an inspiration to other young professionals in the field."

Emily actively participates in various water organizations, community events, study groups, and water forums, where she speaks to attendees about several water-related issues and projects. Her dedication to outreach and promoting engineering is best exemplified by her leadership in EEI's annual Engineers Week activity at a local elementary school. During this event, she engages students in a STEM-related project, fostering their interest and understanding in the field of engineering.

Emily is a role model who exemplifies EEI's dedication to recognizing and nurturing excellence within the organization. Her achievements underscore our commitment to fostering a culture of service, leadership, and continuous growth.

For more information about EEI and our services, please visit [www.eeiweb.com](http://www.eeiweb.com).

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About Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI)

Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI), founded in 1974, is an award-winning consulting engineering firm providing services to public agencies and private entities throughout northern Illinois. Over 75 experienced firm members including licensed professional civil engineers, land surveyors, and support team members provide a full range of services for planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, funding assistance, and municipal consulting. Our core values guide our staff on every project from initiation through completion keeping us committed to quality, service, and value for our clients. By offering outstanding service to every client, every day, we are able to assist with bettering the communities in which we serve.

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## **BENTON ENGINEERING CELEBRATES 55 YEARS WITH NEW BRAND & WEBSITE**

JACKSONVILLE, IL— Benton Engineering, formerly Benton & Associates, Inc., has announced an all-new brand in conjunction with the company's 55th anniversary. The new

brand consists of a new business name, logo and brand promise that honors Benton Engineering's history while also embracing its bright future. The rebrand also includes the launch of a new, mobile-friendly website: [bentoneng.com](http://bentoneng.com).



"We're forever grateful to our valued clients and the hard work and dedication that went into building Benton into the trusted engineering firm it is today," said Benton Engineering President Jamie L. Headen, PE. "This rebrand allows us to pay homage to those who came before and to look ahead with excitement for what we'll accomplish together. This is an extraordinary time for our entire firm as we enter a new chapter of our



company's history, but with the same promise to our clients: Partnership. Commitment. Results."

Founded in 1970 by Robert H. Benton, Benton Engineering boasts a proud history of exceptional engineering consulting for clients in Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, and Indiana. Bob completed his first project as a self-employed engineer from the basement of his home in Springfield, IL. From this first project designing, permitting, and bidding critical public infrastructure improvements, Benton & Associates, Inc. was born.

Fifty-five years later, Benton remains committed to providing the same service with which it has become synonymous. Benton leverages the vast knowledge and expertise of its engineers, surveyors, technicians, and operators to provide a wide range of services across numerous sectors — including funding assistance, civil/site development, drinking water, electrical, surveying and geomatics, pools and recreation, rural water, structural engineering, subsurface utility engineering, transportation, wastewater, water resources, and facility operations. The company operates offices in Jacksonville, IL, Macomb, IL, Taylorville, IL, Kirksville, MO, and Rolla, MO.

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## ENGINEERING ENTERPRISES, INC. WELCOMES NEW SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER TO THE TEAM



Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI), an award-winning civil engineering and land surveying firm, is pleased to announce the hiring of **Gary Holm, PE**, as a Senior Project Manager to our Municipal Group.

**Gary** brings over 30 years of municipal experience and project management skills to his role. His expertise in water and wastewater resources and municipal engineering will drive EEI's continued growth and maintain our commitment to delivering innovative solutions to our clients.

"We are excited to have Gary join our team," said Brad Sanderson, PE, Chief Operating Officer / President. "Gary has great experience and success in the public and municipal sector, and I'm confident he will be a valued

asset for our clients and EEI staff."

For more information about EEI and our services, please visit: [www.eeiweb.com](http://www.eeiweb.com).

###

About Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI)

Engineering Enterprises, Inc. (EEI), founded in 1974, is an award-winning consulting engineering firm providing services to public agencies and private entities throughout northern Illinois. Over 75 experienced firm members including licensed professional civil engineers, land surveyors, and support team members provide a full range of services for planning, design, and construction of infrastructure projects, funding assistance, and municipal consulting. Our core values guide our staff on every project from initiation through completion keeping us committed to quality, service, and value for our clients. By offering outstanding service to every client, every day, we are able to assist with bettering the communities in which we serve.

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# Build momentum.



**CONSTRUCTION**  
BUILD MOMENTUM

## Healthy Politics Episode 10: How Healthcare is Driving Federal Debt and Shaping the Economy

**LISTEN  
HERE**

Healthy Politics is a series hosted by Holmes Murphy Compliance Director Nick Karls and Senior Advisor Den Bishop, focusing on healthcare-related topics in politics.

## UPCOMING EVENTS...



**6.10.2025** - Webinar: *The Fears and Risks of Tariffs and the Impact on Design* - [Register Here](#)

**6.16.2025** - Webinar: *AI for Engineering Firms - Practical Uses of ChatGPT to Save Time, Improve Workflow & Drive* - [Register Here](#)

**6.17.2025** - Webinar: *ACEC Life/Health Trust Informational Session* - [Register Here](#)

**6.24.2025** - Intro to NEPA Essentials - [Register Here](#)

**11.18.2025 - 11.19.2025** - ACEC IL Fall Conference - Save the Date

### Online Education Opportunities:

- Bystander Training and Manager Harassment Training - [Register here](#)
- Sexual Harassment Training - [Register here](#)
- Retention & Recruitment: A Webinar Series to Enhance the Employee Experience - [Register here](#)

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.



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