ACEC's Steve Hall Provides Update on Federal COVID-19 Assistance, Action Alert for Infrastructure-Based Recovery

The House just passed the supplemental $483 billion COVID-19 assistance package, which will provide an additional $321 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program. The package also includes $60 billion in additional SBA economic disaster loans for small businesses, $75 billion in emergency relief for hospitals, and $25 billion for coronavirus testing. The President is expected to sign the package into law.
ACEC submitted a letter to DHS earlier this week making recommendations for more specific references to professional engineering services in future updates to guidance on essential infrastructure projects and related positions.

Finally, ACEC has launched a grassroots campaign to promote consideration and passage of an infrastructure-based recovery agenda. Yesterday they sent out an Action Alert with a letter that you can personalize and send to your House Member and Senator. The Alert also tees up a Twitter message for those lawmakers. ACEC will be working with Jeff Urbanchuk and his communications team on additional social media efforts. This campaign will complement the virtual visit/lobbying effort they launched earlier in the week.

by Steve Hall, ACEC Senior Vice President Advocacy

ACEC Urges DHS / CISA to Emphasize Professional Engineers in Essential Workforce Guidance

ACEC urged the Department of Homeland Security / Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in a letter on Tuesday to refine its guidance on essential infrastructure workforce to reinforce the role of Professional Engineers. The DHS / CISA Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response Version 2.0 and the recently released Version 3.0 establish a strong connection between the services engineering firms perform and the market sectors and related services deemed essential.

These services include continuous inspections to assess deterioration due to aging, weather, and hazards; completion of ongoing construction; assessing the ability to repurpose for pandemic response; renovating to protect public and worker health and safety; designing needed changes to existing infrastructure and new infrastructure identified; support for ongoing and changing of operations and maintenance of existing infrastructure; and similar activities. To be accomplished properly, these activities require site access and visits.

“We believe the guidance would be improved through more specific references to the services needed to support the critical sectors referenced, with particular emphasis on the necessary licensed professional engineering, architectural, and land surveying, and environmental science and related services,” ACEC stated in the letter. ACEC recommended the following addition to the Guidance:

CROSS INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE ESSENTIAL CRITICAL FUNCTIONS

- Licensed engineering and other design professionals and support personnel performing safety and functional inspections of physical infrastructure, to include buildings, transportation, energy, manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, water, waste, and utilities related facilities.
- Licensed engineering and other design professionals and support personnel performing functions related to the operations, maintenance, expansion, or renovation for reuse of essential critical public or private infrastructure.
- Licensed engineering and other design professionals and support personnel performing functions related to the completion of ongoing construction deemed to be essential and critical to pandemic response, economic recovery, or quality of life.
- Licensed engineering and other design professionals and support personnel performing planning and design of new or repurposing of existing infrastructure deemed to be essential and critical to pandemic response, economic recovery, or quality of life.

Click here to read the letter.
Full Q&A Available Now from USACE Industry Webinar

Last week, we posted an article about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hosting an industry webinar on COVID-19. We posted a link to the video and slide deck (PDF) from the webinar. The Q&A from that webinar is now available. The USACE has provided answers to every question that was submitted in advance and during the session. To see the entire Q&A, click HERE. They will be listed at the bottom of the page.

ACEC Offers FREE-to-Members Webinars on COVID-19

ACEC will host more free-to-members live webinars on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. To register for the webinars, click on the links below. We also have all these webinars linked on the ACEC/MO COVID-19 Resource Center as well as with past on-demand webinars.

- **The Ins and Outs of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan**, April 27, 2020, 3:30-4:30 PM EST; Presenters: Diana Strassmaier, CPA, Aldrich Advisors, and Scott Hursh, CPA, Stambaugh Ness, Inc.
- **Small Firm Roundtable (0-50 employees)**, April 29, 2020, 3:30-4:30 PM EST
- **Medium Firm Roundtable (51-200 employees)**, May 1, 2020, 3:30-4:30 PM EST
- **You are Not Alone: Tools for Transforming Stress**, May 7, 2020, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM EST; Presenter: Geordie Aitken, Aitken Leadership Group
- **Post COVID-19: Economic Outlook**, May 8, 2020, 1:30-2:30 PM EST; Presenter: Greg Powell, Managing Director, Investment Banking FMI Capital Advisors, Inc.
- **Large Firm Roundtable (201-500, 500+ employees)**, May 13, 2020, 3:30-4:30 PM EST
- **Grow Your Way Through the Next Recession**, May 14, 2020, 3:30-4:30 PM EST; Presenter: Kevin McMahon, McMahon|Siegel Group
- **You are Not Alone: Tools for Focus, Presence and Empathy in a Changed World**, May 21, 2020, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM EST
- **You are Not Alone: The Essentials of Effective Energy Management**, June 4, 2020, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM EST

Missouri Chamber of Commerce Hosts Webinar on Navigating Funding Options

Today Congress passed additional funding for the currently maxed-out Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds. With the variety of loan options available, it is important to understand the differences between the programs and which are best suited to their needs. In this free 18-minute webinar, Missouri Chamber experts Kara Corches and Matt Panik give an update on navigating your funding options and what to consider when applying. To see the webinar, click HERE.
ACEC Hosted Roundtables for Small, Medium & Large Firms to Help Deal With COVID-19

On April 15, ACEC hosted two virtual roundtables for small firms (fewer than 50 employees). Bill Lloyd of Great West Engineering and Jon Nishimura of Fukanaga & Associates moderated the first roundtable and Cathy Ritter of Constellation Design Group and Tricia Ruby of Ruby & Associates moderated the second one.

ACEC also hosted two virtual roundtables on the COVID-19 pandemic for medium-sized member firms (51-200 staff) on April 17. The roundtables were moderated by Matt Hirst of CRS Engineers and Corey Matsuoka of SSFM. On April 23, ACEC also hosted two virtual roundtables for large firms (201-500, 500+ employees).

To see the highlights from those roundtables, click on the links below.

- Small Firm COVID-19 Roundtables Focus on PPP, Keeping Up Staff Morale
- PPP, Staff Management Dominate Medium-Sized Firm COVID-19 Roundtables
- Large Firm Roundtable (201-500, 500+ employees)

Preparing for the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought substantial change, and now is the time to collaborate and share our ideas, our plans, and our strategies. We know that organizations are being forced to make significant changes that dramatically impact their workforce. In an effort to meet these challenges head on, EPIC is interested in hearing from the thought leaders in our network to ensure our strategies are meeting your needs.

They've developed a campaign of brief Market Pulse Surveys to allow you to share insight regarding gaps and challenges that you are experiencing, and steps your organization has taken to address these challenges. To access the surveys, click HERE.

Surveys Include:
- Return to Work Survey
- Open Enrollment Survey
- Onboarding & Offboarding Survey
- Additional Benefit Offerings Survey
- Wellness Survey
- Assessing Financial Risk Survey
- Employee Engagement Survey

Learning From Each Other
Please take a few moments to share your thoughts in these surveys that address challenges common to all of us, as we adapt to this new normal. We will follow up with a summary of the survey results so that we can all learn from each other.

Visit epicbrokers.com/coronavirus to catch up on all our coverage.

MoDOT / Industry COVID-19 Weekly Update

The Missouri Department of Transportation held their next COVID-19 Industry Meeting on April
22, 2020 and attendees attended from ACEC, ACPA, AGC, KC Heavy Constructors, MAPA, MLPA, MoDOT and SITE. They discussed the following: 1) Action items from April 15th meeting (Missouri impact letter to the Missouri delegation; AASHTO letter on need for $49.95B Backstop; job special provisions in the safety plan; and website for ordering masks); 2) Continue to support the Backstop; 3) Contractor payments; 4) Work Zone Awareness; 5) Cost Share Projects; 6) Revenue; 7) Increased Traffic; and 8) Additional Cost. To see the complete minutes from the April 22nd meeting or the handout discussed, click on the links below or go to ACEC/MO’s COVID-19 Resource Center. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2020 at 10:30 a.m.

- MoDOT / Industry COVID-19 Meeting Minutes 4-22-20
- Work Zone Awareness Week Talking Points

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ACEC Macro-Economic Update: Week Ending April 18, 2020

Construction, Professional Services Firms are Leading Recipients of PPP Loans
Construction and professional services firms were the leading recipients of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) approvals of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans through noon EST on Thursday, April 16, shortly before the total $350 billion of funding was tapped out. At that time, more than 1.66 million loans had been granted, providing $342.28 billion to small businesses. Construction was the largest industry sector with loans approved by total dollar amount, with 177,905 loans of nearly $44.91 billion (12.13 percent) approved. The industry sector of “professional, scientific, and technical services”—of which architecture and engineering services is the second largest subsector by 2019 annual revenues—represented 12.65 percent of PPP loan dollars allocated, and led in the number of loan approvals, with 208,360 loans of $43.29 billion total.

IMF Adjusts 2020 Outlook, Expects 3% Contraction
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) adjusted its world economic outlook, expecting a 3 percent contraction globally in 2020. Last week IMF held its annual Spring meetings with the World Bank Group (virtually), with a focus on the recession being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. “It is very likely that this year the global economy will experience its worst recession since the Great Depression, surpassing that seen during the global financial crisis a decade ago,” said Gina Gopinath, the IMF’s chief economist, during a press briefing. “The great lockdown, as one might call it, is projected to shrink global growth dramatically.”

NABE Forecaster Panel Expects GDP Drop in Second Quarter, Rebound in Third
The National Association of Business Economics (NABE) conducted an Outlook Flash Survey of 45 economic forecasters April 3-7, with the panelists predicting a continued sharp drop in the second quarter of 2020, followed by a slight rebound in the third quarter. “The consensus is real GDP declined at an annualized rate of 2.4 percent in the first quarter of 2020 and will shrink at an annualized rate of 26.5 percent in the second quarter,” said NABE President Constance Hunter, CBE, chief economist, KPMG. “The panel is optimistic about a return to economic growth in the latter half of 2020, anticipating an annualized real GDP growth rate of 2.0 percent in the third quarter.” She added. “Despite a sharp deterioration in labor market conditions, the median forecast suggests conditions will improve by the end of the year with support from aggressive fiscal and monetary stimulus, as panelists expect the Federal Reserve to hold steady on near-zero interest rates through 2021.”

by Erin McLaughlin, ACEC Vice President Private Market Resources