COVID-19 news & updates - 7/24/20

The health and safety of ACEC/MO's employees and members is at the forefront of our policies and guidelines, and as such, we are continuously addressing the coronavirus outbreak. There is an abundance of COVID-19 information on the ACEC (National) and ACEC/MO (state) websites - see links listed below. If you have any questions, please email Bruce Wylie or Dawn Hill.

COVID-19 RESOURCES:

ACEC Coronavirus Resource Center
ACEC/MO COVID-19 Resource Center
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
Federal Guidance on COVID-19
Missouri Chamber of Commerce & Industry Coronavirus Resources
Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services
COVID-19 Public Awareness Campaign
Small Business Administration: Small Business Guidance & Loan Resources
USDA Rural Development COVID-19

Funding in the New Normal Panel Says Pandemic Uncertainty Will Slow Economic Recovery

In the ACEC Research Institute's Funding in the New Normal roundtable last week, the panel of economic experts said that even after a COVID-19 vaccine is found, engineering markets will take many years to recover from the pandemic's impact. The roundtable was the third, and final, event in the Institute's Future of Engineering series. The first two roundtables addressed the Impact of Technology and the Buildings We Live and Work In.
Panelists included Rosemarie Andolino, former Chairman of MAG USA and CEO of International Development, Manchester Airport Group in the UK; Anirban Basu, chairman and CEO of Sage Policy Group an economic and policy consulting firm; Jeff Davis, senior fellow with the Eno Center for Transportation and is also the editor of the Eno Transportation Weekly; and David Zipper, a visiting fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Taubman Center for State and Local Government. Joseph Bates of the ACEC Research Institute moderated the panel, which had a virtual audience of more than 160 people. The panelists acknowledged that the recent pandemic surge in the U.S. has added greater uncertainty in projecting federal, state, and local finances and future project funding.

Panelists agreed that once a vaccine is discovered, another major infusion of federal stimulus funding will be needed to boost post-pandemic recoveries in various markets. Click here to view Funding in the New Normal roundtable.

### Four Things: How COVID-19 Will Change the Built Environment

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered where and how people work. Within a couple of weeks in March 2020, most U.S. office workers were working from home, and soon afterwards, pundits began predicting a future in which offices were obsolete and remote work was the new normal. In late June, the ACEC Research Institute gathered together four experts on office design and construction to discuss the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on The Buildings We Live and Work In.

The panelists—AKF Managing Partner Dino DeFeo, Thornton Tomasetti Co-CEO Peter DiMaggio, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Associate Director Arathi Gowda, and HR&A Advisors Partner Kate Wittels—concluded that some significant pandemic-induced changes will be permanent, but that offices will remain a core component of American business.

Here are four conclusions from the panel discussion:

**Flexibility.** Many employees enjoy working remotely. Full-time remote work, however, can feel isolating. And employees with children at home face additional challenges. Additionally, employees find they miss previously under-appreciated benefits of office work, such as social interaction and face-to-face meetings. As a result, work location will become more flexible, sometimes at the office, sometimes remotely.

**Office-Size Shakeup.** Companies that move to an all — or mostly — remote workforce could reduce their office needs to little more than a meeting space. Firms giving employees the flexibility for part-time remote work will likely maintain their current space requirements, due to continued social distancing or most of all employees keeping their offices/desks. And companies that return to the “old normal” will actually need more space due to increased health and safety concerns.

**Common Space Changes.** Health and safety concerns will force generational changes on how office buildings are designed. Not only will buildings need HVAC systems that purify air, but airflows will need to be re-engineered to reduce the circulation of pathogens. Elevators will have to be redesigned to carry the same load but with more distancing, bathrooms will need vacuum toilets to reduce contaminated “spray,” and common spaces, such as kitchens, will need pathogen-resistant surfaces.

**Traffic Flow.** Commuting could become better…or worse. If fewer people commute or commute on fewer workdays, traffic congestion may decrease, reducing the need for new transportation infrastructure projects. On the other hand, if commuters stop taking public transportation out of fear of crowded spaces and drive their cars instead, we will need more and better roads.

Click here to view the roundtable discussion.
Infrastructure is the foundation that connects U.S. businesses and enables communities to thrive. Our roads, water systems, energy grid and more help drive the economy, support our quality of life, and ensure public health and safety. Unfortunately, we have been underinvesting in our infrastructure for decades. In 2019, the U.S. spent just 2.5% of our GDP on infrastructure, down from 4.2% in the 1930s. From 2016 to 2025, we’ll underinvest in our infrastructure by $2 trillion, according to the 2017 ASCE Infrastructure Report Card.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a difficult situation worse. A sizable portion of our existing infrastructure systems are supported with user-generated revenue streams. With the onset of the pandemic, commercial water use is down, commuters are staying off the roads and away from transit, and airports are virtually empty. Meanwhile, municipal and state budgets are buckling under unprecedented demands, meaning less support is available for parks, schools, and other publicly-owned infrastructure, precisely at the time we should be investing.

Congress should make infrastructure investment a centerpiece of its immediate response and long-term economic recovery strategy. Now is the time to renew, modernize, and invest in our infrastructure to maintain our international [...].

To read the full article, click here.

To download the COVID-19's Impacts on American Infrastructure report (PDF) prepared by American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), click here.

The Future of Construction Webinar

Like every profession, the construction industry was upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many places, construction halted all together. In others, the practices of temperature monitoring, PPE usage and social distancing were adopted as work continued. New technologies, like virtual reality and video services, found new prominence in the construction process.

So, what does this mean for the future of construction? Should estimates include costs for PPE? Will social distancing decrease labor productivity? And will new technology solutions become a mainstay in the industry?

The Engineering News Record is hosting this free webinar on August 13, 2020 at 1:00 PM. Items you'll learn include:

- How construction estimates can be built to account for changes in labor and equipment due to COVID-19.
- What impacts the use of social distancing could have on construction project timelines.
- Where new technologies are enabling innovation in the construction process to combat productivity loss, improve health and safety practices and increase convenience.
- How technologies may continue to evolve in the future to create a more streamlined construction process.

To register for the free webinar, click here. Can't attend live? Register to view the webinar on-demand!
ACEC Engineering Influence Podcast on the Future of Funding and Mobility as a Service

ACEC welcomed David Zipper onto the Engineering Influence Podcast to discuss the future of infrastructure funding in a post-COVID economy and the future of Mobility as a Service (MOS). David Zipper is a Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School’s Taubman Center for State and Local Government, where he examines the interplay between urban policy and new mobility technologies. His perspective on urban development is rooted in his experience working within city hall as well as being a venture capitalist, policy researcher, and startup advocate. He has consulted with numerous startups and public officials about regulatory strategy.

David’s articles about urban innovation have been published in The Atlantic, WIRED, Slate, and Car and Driver. His 2018 article in Fast Company was the first to apply the "walled garden" framework to urban mobility. He has spoken at events including the Consumer Electronics Show, SXSW, and the FIA Conference. He focuses on topics including Mobility-as-a-Service, the uses of transportation data, the future of micro-mobility, and linkages between public transit, city regulations, and private shared vehicles.

Click here to listen to the full broadcast.

ACEC M&A Outlook for Engineering Firms Webinar

Despite the damaging impacts of the coronavirus to our economy and industry, engineering M&A activity finally appears ready to get off the sidelines. Buyers and sellers are reengaging in talks from earlier this year while others are ready to chart new paths in their organization’s growth or exit strategy plans. But how are the nuances of successful deal-making different from the start of the year?

Join Steve Gido as he reflects on the current M&A environment, highlights trends in first-half activity, assesses the new challenges buyers and sellers are facing, and offers anecdotes to guide expectations for the rest of 2020. ACEC is hosting a webinar on Back to the Table - The 2nd Half M&A Outlook for Engineering Firms to be held on Thursday, July 30, 2020, at 1:30 pm ET. Participants will receive 1.0 PDH for attending.

Webinar Takeaways:
- Explore if the coronavirus will accelerate industry consolidation
- Understand the motivations driving buyers and sellers today
- Examine the implications on valuations and transaction structures
- Discuss how due diligence and integration processes may evolve.

Adjusting to the New Post-Coronavirus Normal

There’s no denying that the coronavirus pandemic has quickly and abruptly changed how we live, work and play. As the threat of the coronavirus shifts, we are navigating the new normal and figuring out how Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for social distancing and mask wearing fits into a daily routine. You may be experiencing a range of emotions. It’s important to know that it’s normal to feel uneasy as you figure out what your post-coronavirus normal looks like. To have a fighting chance, everyone needs to sacrifice and develop a coping mindset. Consider the below coping methods when adjusting to your new post-coronavirus normal:
• Focus on what you can control—Focus on things you have control over, such as washing your hands, wearing a mask, and practicing social distancing. Focusing on the things you can’t control will only fuel frustration and stress.
• Adjust expectations—It’s important to approach your new normal with flexible expectations. Just as coronavirus guidance is ever-evolving, your expectations should shift and match reality as well.
• Be kind—Be accepting and polite to others as everyone may be feeling stressed during the pandemic. Collaboration, compassion, cheering people on and learning from this experience will help you connect with others.
• Find a routine—Setting a routine for yourself can help you stay productive and active as the pandemic continues to be unpredictable. Don’t forget to schedule time for social interaction, physical and emotional health, and stress relief.
• Set boundaries—Not everyone is navigating this the same way and may have different viewpoints on wearing masks and social distancing. Respectfully set your boundaries with family, friends, and co-workers. Focus on what you can control in your life.

Other Considerations
While experiencing anxiety over the health and economic fears brought on by the pandemic is normal, if you don’t take steps to cope with these feelings, you can put yourself at risk for long-term health effects. Some healthy ways to mitigate your anxiety include sticking to a routine, exercising, spending time outside, and meditating.

To get up-to-date information about the pandemic and guidance from local, state and federal resources on ACEC/MO’s COVID-19 Resource Center.

2020-2021 Salary Planning Survey - Post Pandemic Edition

Take part in Gallagher’s research into how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted salary budgets and compensation practices. Topics covered include changes to planned salary increases, promotional salary budgets, and variable pay plans. Get insight into the latest employer strategies for retaining valued employees and driving organizational performance.

Once your survey is submitted, you’ll receive an email with a copy of the questions and your responses. All submissions will be kept strictly confidential, and no response will be attributable to any single participant in publicized findings. Participants will receive a complimentary copy of the complete 2020-2021 Salary Planning Survey Report, which non-participants can purchase for $650. Additional data by state and industry is also available.


What’s Your Take...on the Economy?
by Cushman & Wakefield

Our current economic situation is one that no one had envisioned as we entered this new decade. Markets were strong, unemployment was low, job growth was high, and interest rates and inflation were at very manageable levels. As if the carpet had been pulled from under our feet, we encountered a new reality with a swiftness and breadth never seen before. Like viewing a thunderstorm on the horizon, we watched as the clouds darkened and
moved across the globe. From China to Europe, from Europe to the Americas, knowing what was to come, powerless to respond in a manner that might divert the ever-darker skies elsewhere or to diminish them altogether.

Kevin Thorpe, Cushman & Wakefield’s Global Chief Economist, joined Andrew Phipps, International Partner, London, United Kingdom, to discuss his take on the economy. Learn why economists love the alphabet so much, why this pandemic really is different, and what its outcome will likely be on the commercial real estate industry. Some of the more interesting discussion points that came up during our conversation included:

- The future of the office market and what that looks like in a world that has experienced the ups and downs of remote working.
- Questions related to where business will locate, what becomes of the flagship office, will we see growth in suburbia and, if so, will that have positive implications for ancillary businesses?
- Growth opportunities not only from the logistics, manufacturing, data centers and multi-family living that have voracious appetites for space, but also from repurposing distressed assets and from taking a new look at location strategy and a diversified portfolio or estate.

Watch the video of their conversation by clicking here.

Looking Ahead at Lasting Impacts on the Transportation Industry
by Steve Kellerman, Construction Director, Burns & McDonnell

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected society and will have ripple effects that will be around for years to come. As we tread lightly on returning to normal activities — while keeping safety in mind — the coming months will shed more light on any lasting impacts the pandemic will have on the economy and certain industries.

Transportation projects have kept a steady pace over the course of the pandemic. Many construction workers in the industry were able to remain employed, taking advantage of less traffic on the road and even achieving milestones sooner than planned. If the resources are available, now may be an advantageous time to deliver much-needed infrastructure projects.

The e-commerce evolution is driving the need for better infrastructure. Consumer shopping habits are ever-changing — even more so now, as shoppers look for ways to remain at home and maintain social distancing. As people avoid entering physical retail stores, consumers continue to be conditioned to purchase and receive online orders within hours or a day or two. [.....]

To read the full article from Burns & McDonnell's blog, click here.

Updated Coronavirus Resource Document Available