California votes to prioritize infrastructure investment

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2017 Engineering Excellence Awards

ACEC California honors engineering firms with Engineering Excellence Honor and Merit Awards.

DEPARTMENTS

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Jeff Walker

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FEATURES

Road Charge Pilot Program:
I’m enrolled!

California votes to prioritize infrastructure investment.
I first became involved in ACEC California in 1999 (known at that time as the Consulting Engineers and Land Surveyors of California), and now, nearly 20 years later, I find myself President of this outstanding business association. We are an organization that represents more than 21,000 employees working in more than 980 firms across the state. We are powered by the tireless efforts of our staff and membership who are truly dedicated to strengthening California’s engineering and land surveying businesses to build a better California. We accomplish amazing things in an often less-than-friendly legislature by operating efficiently with a small, highly talented and engaged staff and a committed group of volunteers that staff a 55-member board of directors and nearly two dozen committees.

2016 proved to be a difficult year surrounding our efforts to reform the “Duty to Defend” clauses in contracts. For an entire legislative session, ACEC California members pushed Senate Bill 885, which would have made it against the law for both public and private owners (our clients) to require design professionals (engineers, land surveyors, architects) to defend them for claims from a third party at the mere suggestion that the design professional may have culpability. Because of two very poor court decisions, consulting engineers and land surveyors are faced with this uninsured defense obligation, even if it is proven that they have zero negligence. Requiring design professionals to provide first-dollar defense at the outset of a third-party claim regardless of whether there is any fault attributed to the design professional is inherently unfair — but moreover, it is bad public policy to have a design professional serve as an unlicensed insurance company.

While we didn’t see legislative success in 2016 with SB 885, ACEC California is continuing its efforts to pursue meaningful reform in 2017. Our Director of Government Affairs, Kelly Garman; legislative advocate, Gene Erbin; and our Legislative Action Committee Chair, Roger Ball, President of Rick Engineering — along with a team of other ACEC California members and attorneys — continue to work diligently to develop language to be used as the basis for legislation to fix the fundamental problem of fairness with respect to defense obligations. With eyes wide open, ACEC California is sponsoring SB 423 this year and continues to advocate fair treatment for our businesses in the face of the same strong opposition that shut down our efforts in 2016.

On a more positive note, our 2016 Annual Conference in September was a huge success. More than 115 members and guests joined the Executive Committee and staff at The Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. The conference committee, chaired by Mike Cooper of Mark Thomas Company, did a fantastic job of lining up relevant topics for breakout sessions, and members participated in roundtable discussions and a panel discussion regarding Duty to Defend and the associated risks. The conference included an impressive list of keynote speakers, including Hawaii’s Director...
We need to continue to promote the good that our profession does, give back to our communities, and actively work to encourage and train the next generation…
THANKS to the generous contributions of our member firms, ACEC California’s Political Action Committee (PAC) was active in four major ways this past election cycle:

PROPOSITION 51 — PASSED | This measure provides over nine billion dollars in funding for K–12 school construction. I am proud to say that ACEC California joined a vast coalition of business groups, educational organizations, and labor unions to help push this measure across the finish line. With nearly $20 million needing to be raised to see this measure succeed, our PAC contributed handsomely to help the effort.

PROPOSITION 53 — DEFEATED | This measure would have required statewide voter approval before any revenue bonds could be issued or sold by the state for certain projects if the bond amount exceeded $2 billion. Had Prop 53 passed in November, it would have stalled large infrastructure projects up and down the state. We partnered with Governor Brown and a robust coalition of business, labor unions and local government organizations to defeat this measure by making a six-figure contribution (Nearly $20 million dollars had to be raised).

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION MEASURES | ACEC California’s PAC, and our members at large, showed their strong support of local transportation agencies by contributing heavily to several (if not all) of the local transportation sales tax measures. With fifteen local measures on local ballots across the state, eight of them passed with the help of the engineering and land surveying communities. Additionally, ACEC California’s Issues Fund donated $50,000 to the Self Help Counties Coalition’s educational effort to help with general public awareness on the subject of transportation needs. Many of our ACEC California Chapters coordinated fundraisers for their respective county measures, touting our support of infrastructure and raising millions of dollars in aggregate to help.

LASTLY, OUR PAC WAS EXTREMELY ACTIVE IN SEVERAL SENATE AND ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE RACES | Your lobbyists and myself attended count- less fundraising events and on many occasions, ACEC California members contributed themselves and attended events for their local representatives! A few of our chapters even organized their own fundraising events!

Liaison Committees

ACEC California is pleased to have started a Rail Liaison Committee this year, beginning with the High Speed Rail Authority. This committee is modeled after our Caltrans Liaison Committee and Corps of Engineers Liaison Committees. ACEC California members can request to sit on these committees, and they are appointed by the current ACEC California President. The committees meet periodically with the respective public agency chiefs and their staffs, to discuss issues relevant to matters of interest, (e.g., policies, communication, upcoming projects, etc). The first Rail Liaison Committee meeting was held in January.

We have other longstanding liaison committees as well. Our Water Committee has held meetings with the Department of Water Resources, and the State Water Resources Control Board. The Corps of Engineers Liaison Committee meets twice a year with Corps leadership at their offices in San Francisco or Sacramento. The Caltrans Liaison Committee meets with Caltrans management every two months at the Caltrans Headquarters in Sacramento. Finally, our AGC Liaison Committee meets quarterly in conjunction with the AGC California conferences.

Overall as an association of design professionals, ACEC California is healthy and continues to think of innovative ways to build on our efforts in order to build a better California and help our member firms succeed in the process!
Ideas transform communities

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AECOM is honored to have its Golden 1 Center project recognized at the 2017 ACEC California awards. It is a privilege to be included in such an outstanding group of engineers and amazing projects.
By the time you read this, we will be in the middle of our legislative session, ready build on our progress from 2016. For success in 2017, ACEC California will look to efforts from the individuals that make up this great association. ACEC California works tirelessly to put forth legislative goals that improve our industry, create opportunity for businesses of California firms, and recruit to build a strong and fortified association. However, as we look to push past our current standing, I am reminded of a quote by Vince Lombardi, “Individual commitment to a group effort — that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

I am often spoiled by the collective efforts of our membership. I am constantly in contact with those that steer our 27 member-led committees, I regularly hear the passions of our 49 board members and strategize with our Executive Committee; a group that donates so much time to protect and promote the profession. However, the reality is not every member can serve on our board or be on Excom. So, how can you still make an impact in 2017?

CHAPTER INVOLVEMENT | ACEC California’s 22 chapters are an integral part of our overall mission and a vehicle for individuals to engage in our efforts. Chapters organize fundraisers for local transportation measures, like the LA Chapter event for Measure M. Others have hosted local agencies to discuss issues that are important to us and built consistent dialogues with elected officials in the area. Our firms are more than just a business; you are voting constituents in your district, make your voices heard. Chapters provide a local voice that could lead to statewide change. These local efforts also lead to an increase in membership and a stronger, unified front.

LETTER WRITING | As part of our SB 885 strategy, we launched a massive and targeted letter writing campaign aimed at showing legislature that its constituents are also a part of the duty-to-defend battle. The response was one of the largest we have seen from membership, but we can do more. The letters put your name on the effort. They place you and your firm as a supporter of ACEC California and its cause for the industry. You humanize the effort.

LEGISLATIVE VISIT DAY | One of our largest and most important events is our Legislative Visit Day (LVD). An opportunity for you to sit down, face-to-face, with your elected officials and discuss issues important to you. LVD gives you the unique opportunity to plead the case as a professional, a business owner and a voting constituent.

SUBSCRIBE TO ACEC CALIFORNIA COMMUNICATIONS | Simply being aware and up to date on our issues and efforts can make a difference. Knowledge of our initiatives gives you the ability to share information with others, vote with the industry in mind and spread the word to prospective members.

ACEC CALIFORNIA COMMITTEES | Our committees are the lifeblood of ACEC California. They provide an opportunity for members to guide and direct the actions of ACEC California. From Prevailing Wage and QBS to Caltrans Liaison and Rail, our committees offer you the opportunity to take part in issues that you are passionate about.

When meeting with prospective firms, I have long stated that the true benefit of membership is the organizational strength that comes from active participation. ACEC California is stronger when our members take active role. The grim reality in California is that sometimes you can win the policy battle, but lose the political war. Help us turn the tide. Sometimes ACEC California is a shield and sometimes it’s a spear. In 2017, we need to get off our heels and on our toes. We need soldiers for the industry.
Several major policy initiatives are shaping up to be of specific focus: funding transportation maintenance and repair; the cap-and-trade program as a source of revenue; and alleviating the growing home affordability crisis.

Infrastructure funding is going to dominate the conversation this year in the legislature. Several major policy initiatives are shaping up to be of specific focus: funding transportation maintenance and repair; the cap-and-trade program as a source of revenue; and alleviating the growing home affordability crisis. Both issues need attention: California’s funding to address maintenance repairs or safety repairs to roadways, bridges, and streets faces an ongoing multi-billion-dollar deficit; and California’s current median single family home price is two and a half times the national average at $440,000, leaving many Californians unable to find housing or enter the housing market as a buyer.

The policy proposals currently being discussed amongst legislators to address both housing and transportation funding require a 2/3 vote of the legislature. Yet, despite possessing a 2/3 supermajority in both houses, it is unlikely the Democrats will vote for any significant funding measures without some Republican support. In other words, negotiations may be arduous, prolonged, and include reforms and efficiencies that Republicans have identified as priorities. Below are summaries of the issues and proposals that will be discussed throughout the 2017 legislative session.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING | As the chairs of their respective houses’ Transportation policy committees, Senator Beall and Assemblyman Frazier have introduced SB 1 and AB 1, respectively. Both bills propose increases in gas and diesel excise taxes. Both bills raise vehicle registration fees and impose a new surcharge on Zero-Emission Vehicles. Both also establish loan repayment schedules of previous loans to the General Fund, and propose shifting truck weight fees back to transportation funding. The bills will raise approximately $5 – $6 billion annually. In both cases, the vast bulk of the money will be spent on maintenance and rehabilitation.

In his January Budget, the Governor proposed a more modest package that will generate approximately $4.3 billion annually. The funding mechanisms are similar to SB 1 and AB 1, but the Governor resists “returning” truck weight fees to transportation funding. Also notable, the Governor has suggested spending $500 million of cap-and-trade revenue on transportation, largely transit.

CAP-AND-TRADE | The Governor proposed adoption by a 2/3 vote of a greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reduction cap-and-trade program to extend beyond 2020. His January Budget estimates
With California’s economy slowly strengthening … members should welcome these conversations about strengthening infrastructure; and ACEC California is positioned well to be in the middle of these important debates.

revenue of $2.2 billion in FY 2017/18 (assuming he obtains a 2/3 vote). Under the cap-and-trade program, “obligated parties” must turn in allowances periodically for the right to emit GHGs. The cap declines over time. The obligated party may pursue compliance through reduced production, installation of emission reduction equipment, production of low-carbon fuels, offsets, or purchase of allowances at quarterly auctions. The Governor proposes spending approximately $400 million on HSR and $500 million on other transportation infrastructure, including, transit.

Interestingly, the large majority of cap-and-trade revenue is generated by the inclusion of fuels-under-the cap. It is estimated that adding fuels to the AB 32 GHG “cap” has raised the cost of a gallon of gas by 11 cents. It is the perspective of many in the Legislature that it is only fair that some of the proceeds be dedicated to transportation purposes. It is also important to note that both cap-and-trade and SB 1/AB 1 are essentially similar – both rely on fuel taxes to fund road, bridges, transit and highway repairs.

HOUSING | The need to produce affordable housing, and transition shelter for the homeless, including veterans, will compete for infrastructure funding. California’s housing crisis is well known. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on the solution. However, it is likely that moderate Democrats will insist on some CEQA and planning relief to accompany any funding proposal. Most legislators will agree that simply “throwing money” at the problem through a General Obligation bond or authorization of additional credits will be ineffective, if the per unit cost of building market rate housing is not addressed. Predictably, the Governor has expressed reservations about a CO bond and the associated debt service obligation imposed on the General Fund.

With California’s economy slowly strengthening, ACEC California members should welcome these conversations about strengthening infrastructure; and ACEC California is positioned well to be in the middle of these important debates. While the path forward is not clear; we know that there will ultimately be a limited number of proposals that generate the required 2/3 vote. We see it is our job and responsibility to assemble the best package of spending on the most important needs and look forward to working on behalf of ACEC California members to achieve a strategic and advantageous outcome.
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Honor Award - 2017 ACEC California Engineering Excellence, Category C - Structural Systems
Harry Tracy WTP 11-Million Gallon Treated Water Reservoir
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Honor Award - 2017 ACEC California Engineering Excellence, Category A - Studies, Research, Consulting Services
Advanced Water Purification Demonstration Project
Padre Dam Municipal Water District

Honor Award - 2017 ACEC California Engineering Excellence, Category K - Energy
Digester Biogas to Clean Burning Vehicle Fuel
City of San Mateo

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The Gas Tax

As the Director of Government Affairs for ACEC California, it’s something I’ve learned quite a bit about the last three years. Every transportation seminar and conference, every transportation-related bill moving through the legislature, and every time I’ve ever heard Malcolm Dougherty, Will Kempton, Senator Beall or Assembly Member Frazier speak in a public setting, the decline of the gas tax has been front and center.

And understandably so — there are more fuel-efficient cars on the roads these days, contributing to a decline in the gas tax, which is the revenue stream used to fix California’s roads. It’s a big deal. On behalf of ACEC California and as a longtime California resident, I believe this decline translates into a dire need to search for a long-term solution.

The good news? There’s a solution being tested by the California government at this very moment. Back in 2014, ACEC California strongly supported Senate Bill 1077, a bill that created the California Road Charge Pilot Program to study the feasibility of a new funding stream that will ultimately replace the gas tax.

And, as of July 2016, the California Road Charge Pilot Program is underway! You can read more about the details at www.CaliforniaRoadChargePilot.com, but — in short — 5,000 volunteers throughout the state will test various road charging methods in an effort to assess whether or not this is a viable alternative to charging drivers a tax on their gas to pay for roads.

The best news yet? I’m one of the 5,000 volunteers to be accepted into the pilot program! …

Preparation

I’ve had a bit of a frustrating start to my participation in the Road Charge Pilot Program, but I remain hopeful that it will be resolved shortly so I can actually participate in the program. …

June 29 | I received in the mail the Azuga device that will plug into my vehicle and wirelessly report my mileage. I hadn’t requested a device that uses GPS (I had a choice when I enrolled), but I admit that there was a small twinge of anxiety as I opened the box and saw this little green electronic device, just waiting for me to plug it in.

I understand the privacy concerns raised by many regarding the government tracking my miles, but I have also had many conversations with Malcolm Dougherty, Director of Caltrans, and trust that the Road Charge Task Force will, in fact, do all they can to protect my private information, as the government does with other information collected, including addresses, social security numbers, drivers license information, etc… Furthermore, with my smartphone, I use Strava GPS to track my runs, WAZE to tell me how to beat the traffic to work and Uber when I am out of town but need to get around. …

It Works!

It’s official! As your friendly Road Charge Pilot Program participant blogger, I am finally connected and being tracked! …

This is going to be a cool experiment, and I remain thankful to have the opportunity to participate in something bigger than myself.

8.15.2016

Data Points and Changing Behavior

It’s been 20 days since my last post, and in that time, I’ve done a lot of driving. Not only did I take a trip up to Chico (my first long drive since starting the pilot program), but due to kids and soccer and a relatively unsystematic approach to the summer months, there have been multiple extra trips around town.

As I drive, whether short or long distances, I find my mind wandering to the little green Azuga dongle plugged in under my dashboard. Did you know that more than my miles are being recorded? I purposefully chose a device that did not include GPS tracking, but as it turns out, there is still a great deal of data being collected. …

With all of this personal driving data at my fingertips, I find myself being very mindful when I drive. The competitive spirit in me wants to attain a high score (which means I need to idle less and brake and accelerate smoother). I wouldn’t consider myself a bad driver in the least, but seeing how every small action contributes to a data point, I am certainly more aware and focused on my driving. …

10.6.2016

Statements and Social Questions

I continue to be fascinated by the mechanics of this pilot program. I’ve now received two monthly statements, both showing that if this road charge program were fully implemented, I would be saving money. …

The idea of being “billed” to drive is something worth discussing. Currently, I fill up my tank every 10 days or so, not differentiating in the slightest the money I spend to actually pay for the cost of each gallon of gas and the money I spend that is handed over to the state of California to support transportation infrastructure (the taxes I pay at the pump). It isn’t broken out on the pump’s screen, detailing where the $60.00 ends up. My checking account simply says how much I paid, and frankly that is all I have ever paid attention to.

Now that I see how much I would be paying per mile (should this pilot program be fully implemented) and how much each individual trip costs me (something I have never tracked before), I wonder if such information would change travel behavior for the general public. …

The road charge pilot program is a significant societal shift. And the more I talk with others about my participation, the more I understand the importance of addressing early certain concerns that the every day, non-political driver is raising. …
EACH YEAR

ACEC CALIFORNIA honors engineering firms throughout California with Engineering Excellence Honor and Merit Awards. Of those recipients, ACEC California selects one firm to receive the Golden State Award. This year, 21 California firms representing 38 projects were named EEA Award winners. Honor Award winners are eligible to enter the ACEC National Engineering Excellence Awards competition.

Entries are accepted into one of 12 project categories: studies, research and consulting engineering services; building/technology systems; structural systems; surveying and mapping technology; environmental; waste and storm water; water resources; transportation; special projects; small projects; energy; and industrial and manufacturing processes and facilities.

18 Honor Awards were granted to 12 firms and 20 Merit Awards were granted to 11 firms. An awards dinner, which is a fundraiser for the ACEC California Scholarship Foundation 501(c)3, was held in San Francisco, February 2, 2017, and Honor Award winning projects had photographic panels on display at the Capitol, outside of the Governor’s office, in February 2017.

For more information and details about each project, go to www.engineeringca.com

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LA County Metro Transportation Authority Division 13 Bus Operations and Maintenance Facility

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Healdsburg Avenue Bridge over the Russian River

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Harry Tracy Water Treatment Plant

BIGGS CARDOSA ASSOCIATES, INC.
Central Marin Ferry Connection Multi-Use Pathway
KLEINFELDER | SIMON WONG ENGINEERING
Auto Center Drive Grade Separation Project

HOLDREGE & KULL CONSULTING
ENGINEERS AND GEOLOGISTS
Closed Lincoln Landfill Groundwater Corrective Action Project

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
Blue Line Light Rail Transit Renewal Project

ARCADIS U.S., INC.
Port of Long Beach, Middle Harbor Redevelopment Program

ARCADIS U.S., INC.
Claude “Bud” Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant

BIGGS CARDOSA ASSOCIATES, INC.
Tustin Avenue / Rose Drive Railroad Grade Separation
KLEINFELDER
Cross Border Xpress Terminal Building and Pedestrian Skybridge

HILL INTERNATIONAL
Foothill Gold Line from Pasadena to Asuza

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC. AND MOTT MACDONALD
Interstate 80 SMART Corridor Project

KENNEDY/JENKS CONSULTANTS
Digester Biogas to Clean Burning Vehicle Fuel, City of San Mateo

KENNEDY/JENKS CONSULTANTS
TRUSSELL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Padre Dam Municipal Water District's Advanced Water Purification

BURNS & MCDONNELL ENGINEERING CO., INC
Mira Loma-Vincent 500kV Underground Transmission Project
CORNERSTONE STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING GROUP, INC.
Sylvester Greenwood Academy + Leadership Public Schools in Richmond, CA

HDR, INC.
Perris Valley Line from Perris to Riverside, CA

HDR, INC.
San Bernardino Transit Center Omnitrans Bus Transit Center

HUITT-ZOLLARS, INC.
Trancas Creek / Lagoon Feasibility Study in Malibu, CA

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
Monterey Peninsula Airport (CIP and RSA of Runway 10R/28L)

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
A Avenue Green Street Project in National City, CA

KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
VA Loma Linda Ambulatory Care Clinic

MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL
Kaiser Permanente San Diego Central Hospital

MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL
Mission Beach Bulkhead Seawall Replacement

MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL
Point Loma Nazarene University Science Center

MICHAEL BAKER INTERNATIONAL
Springbok Solar 1 & 2 in Kern County, CA

MNS ENGINEERING, INC.
Colorado Esplanade in Santa Monica, CA

MNS ENGINEERING, INC.
Los Osos Valley Road Interchange at US 101 in San Luis Obispo, CA

MOTT MACDONALD
New Irvington Tunnel in Sunol, CA

PROVOST & PRITCHARD CONSULTING GROUP
Packwood Creek Water Conservation Project

PSOMAS
The Santa Anita Oak Woodland Project

RICK ENGINEERING COMPANY
Hanson El Monte Pond Habitat Restoration and Flood Control Groundwater Recharge Project

RICK ENGINEERING COMPANY
Hotel Churchill Renovation in San Diego, CA

WSP | PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF
Bailey Creek Bridge Replacement Project

WSP | PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF
Riverfront Reconnection Project-Phase I in Sacramento, CA
“Engineering and land surveying firms **Excel at Serving California Communities** through extraordinary and **Innovative Design** in order to solve real-world problems. This year’s [EEA] award winners were no exception — from providing critical clean water infrastructure to more efficient transportation improvement projects and world-class facilities — **ACEC Members Are Moving California Forward.**”

— Brad Diede | Executive Director, ACEC California

**Congratulations**

**2017 Winners of the Engineering Excellence Awards**
Before voters passed Proposition 51 in November, the state hadn’t passed a statewide school facilities bond in nearly a decade.
supported the counties in their efforts to pass local sales tax measures. Below are the self-help and aspiring self-help county transportation measures that earned voter support:

Local Sales Tax Measures—Existing Self-Help Counties*
Los Angeles, Measure M
Passed: Yes 69.82%
Santa Clara, Measure B
Passed: Yes 70.93%

Local Sales Tax Measures—Aspiring Self-Help Counties*
Monterey, Measure X
Passed: Yes 67.36%
Merced, Measure V
Passed: Yes 69.15%
Santa Cruz, Measure D
Passed: Yes 67.12%
Stanislaus, Measure L
Passed: Yes 70.58%

*Citation: California Transit Association.

Proposition 53
With multiple significant infrastructure projects in the process of development — High Speed Rail and the California Water Fix — ACEC California recognized how harmful Proposition 53 could be to the state’s efforts to improve both mass transit and water delivery and storage systems. As such, ACEC California members joined a broad and diverse coalition of more than 200 organizations in opposition to Proposition 53 — a misguided measure that would have eroded local control and impeded large infrastructure projects by forcing statewide votes on some local and state projects that require revenue bonds. Proposition 53 would have tacked on unnecessary delays and expense to critically needed public works projects, forcing state and local governments to potentially wait up to two additional years to begin such projects as repairing roadways and bridges, hospitals, or modernizing water supply and delivery systems. ACEC California was pleased to learn that voters agreed and Prop 53 failed passage.

ACEC California was strategic and thoughtful in its approach to evaluating which local and state ballot measures that would better serve its members and the wider public. Investment in public infrastructure not only will better serve the public writ large through projects that create efficiencies or improve existing transportation or water systems, it has significant ancillary benefits that voters support: job creation and indirect economic activity that can pump dollars into local communities where the work is being completed. ACEC California’s support ensured campaigns were well equipped to educate voters about the community benefits of their investment.

As a result, the state should soon see a great deal of construction and development activity over the course of the next decade — putting shovels in the ground, building better roadways and schools, and bringing good paying jobs to communities all over.

In November, six counties successfully passed sales tax measures to direct billions of dollars to mass transit projects and road improvements.
In the last twelve months, I have seen some incredible things occur within our organization, which has translated into positive results externally.

**Legislative Visit Day.** In April 2016, the state legislature witnessed over 100 members of the engineering and land surveying professions descend upon the capital city. Senate Bill 885, our sponsored bill dealing with “Duty To Defend” reform was a hot topic. Additionally, ACEC California members were ready to talk about the need for transportation funding, the importance of STEM education outreach and the innovation realized in the 2016 Engineering Excellence Award winning projects.

To accommodate the growing interest in and attendance at our annual Legislative Visit Day, 2017 will see something new — two one-hour legislative training sessions for first and second time attendees. Led by Walt Platcha, with CEI Engineering Associates, Inc. and myself, our goal is to ensure that our members are confident and comfortable walking into the Capitol Building that day. Many firms join ACEC California because of our strong advocacy agenda, and there is no better way to witness this effort than by joining your colleagues from across the state, speaking as one voice directly to members of the legislature.

**Qualifications Based Selection (QBS).** In September 2016, our Board of Directors was provided an overview of how we address suspected QBS violations and where we are planning to go next. Over the years, ACEC California has developed and implemented a robust pro-QBS campaign, which included an education component, as we’ve sought to train our members on the law and how to articulate the importance of QBS to local agencies. A QBS panel was created, which is dedicated to the review of suspected non-compliant RFPs/RFQs and to the distribution of letters to public agencies in a timely fashion that identified violations.

In 2017, Jon Blanchard, from Yeh & Associates, Inc. and our QBS Committee will be building on last year by improving and expanding our education effort even more. We are working hard to advance a strong program that moves ACEC California’s partnership with local agencies forward.

**Design Professional Coalition.** ACEC California members often ask if I ever interact with other statewide organizations representing design professionals. The answer is yes! As many of you are part of other statewide organizations, I feel it is important that ACEC California remain in communication with like-minded and similarly positioned groups. Open pathways for communication translate into effective coalition building and the improvement of best practices for all industries. For the second year, ACEC California is hosting quarterly meetings in our conference room in Sacramento with my counterparts in groups I know you are familiar with:

- American Institute of Architects, California Council
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- American Society of Landscape Architects, California Council
- Association of Environmental & Engineering Geologists
- California Geotechnical Engineering Association
- California Land Surveyors Association
- California Society of Professional Engineers
- Structural Engineers Association of California

These quarterly meetings provide a space to converse about legislation and regulations that affect all of us. And with this knowledge sharing, ACEC California is better armed to advocate on your behalf.

**2016 Legislator of the Year.** For her strong support of the design professional community, ACEC California named Senator Patricia Bates (R – Laguna Niguel) as its 2016 Legislator of the Year. In addition to her political courage and
If we are to continue our efforts to strengthen and expand the engineering and land surveying professions, we need individuals like you to get involved with ACEC California. There are some easy ways to stay on top of recent regulatory or legislative developments: read ACEC California’s regular electronic Legislative Brief; talk with your chapter’s Grassroots Chair about ways to get involved with our legislative efforts; or attend Legislative Visit Day. Pass this magazine along to others in your firm and continue the conversation on how to communicate the important role engineering firms play in building a better California!
Kjeldsen, Sinnock & Neudeck, Inc. (KSN), is a full service civil engineering, land surveying, and construction management firm with offices in Stockton and West Sacramento. KSN’s long history of successful projects comes from our commitment to providing an excellent service and quality work product to all our clients.

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Introducing ACEC California’s Diversity Leadership Council

Growing up in a small Texas town, which was only known for having the 2nd largest refinery in the US and great gulf seafood, my childhood didn’t include much exposure to people who had travelled much outside of Texan borders. Thanks to Exxon, my parents accepted assignments in Libya and the Philippines, and I had the opportunity to meet tons of people from every country imaginable in the compounds where we lived for three years. In addition to living close and going to school with people from around the world, my parents believed in enriching the lives of my older brothers and me by traveling with us throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe. It was a huge opportunity where my life was enhanced by many different people from all walks of life.

Because of my experience living overseas and traveling, I grew up feeling the world was a shared place for all to enjoy. From everything my parents and large, extended family shared, Exxon hired indiscriminately from every country imaginable, without thought to race, gender, or cultural differences; which wasn’t the case for many companies in the 60s and 70s. So it stands to reason that my first real job was in a refinery, where I knew the sky was the limit for anywhere I wanted to go. As I developed my career, life took me outside of refineries and construction, and I began a career in the consulting side of engineering, construction management, and land surveying. As I grew to be a leader and owner of Towill, Inc., I became more involved with ACEC California. The organization had always held my admiration because it provides shared knowledge for our professions; has fantastic Trust programs for life/health, business insurance, and retirement; and advocates on behalf of the engineering and land surveying professions.

I’ve watched ACEC California grow and change with the times and one of the best changes I’ve seen is the flexibility and positive attitude that both members and staff have. No matter your membership tenure or the size of your firm, your voice is heard and valued. One of the exciting new programs that ACEC California has rolled out is the Diversity Leadership Council. ACEC California promotes an environment that supports organizational diversity and inclusion. This environment works to increase access to all who are passionate about the engineering and land surveying professions. We aspire to work well together because of our differences; not in spite of them. We encourage a comfortable and engaging atmosphere to make every member feel welcomed, inspired, and empowered. We have been brainstorming about opportunities in which to keep the conversation about diversity going. I’m very proud to be a part of that and hope to see you at some of ACEC California’s events this year.
Thank you

ACEC CALIFORNIA SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION thanks the following firms for their generous sponsorship and support of the 2017 Engineering Excellence Awards. Your contribution will help cultivate the best and brightest of the next generation of engineers and land surveyors.

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To advertise in next year’s issue, please contact Holly Cole at:
hcole@acec-ca.org
or 916.441.7991
We are excited to announce CHJ Consultants (CHJ) is now a part of Terracon. With three locations in southern California, this merger brings our area presence to nine offices. For projects large and small, single or multi-site, you can rely on Terracon for consistent results. Give us a call to learn how we can help with your next project.