IS IT TIME FOR A WATER COALITION? ACEC INDIANA INITIATES VIABILITY

After the success of securing long-term funding for highways and roads, ACEC Indiana’s Board of Directors evaluated the keys to accomplish such a “big lift” and how to apply those lessons to the next significant issue: Water-Related Infrastructure Funding.

The Indiana Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (IACIR) reported in 2017 that the funding needs for Wastewater and Drinking Water Infrastructure was at least $15.6B to $17.5B over the next 20 years. IACIR also identified that the funding gap is $8.5B over the next 20 years compared to current capabilities.

One of the “take-away” findings was the importance of working in coalition with a strong, dedicated group of allies, like the Build Indiana Council (BIC) which was formed more than 30 years ago by seven associations, including ACEC Indiana. It provided a consistent message of the funding need, and a single “voice” to work with the state’s policy makers.

Recognizing that the reported funding gap is nearly as sizable as the road funding was, the Board realized that ACEC Indiana should seek committed allies to find solutions to this significant issue, and it may be a long term initiative. As a result, ACEC hired a proven consulting firm, APPIAN (Dennis Faulkenberg and Laurie Maudlin) to assist in the effort to build a coalition that will work on Water-Related Infrastructure Funding solutions.

Over the next six months, the main task is to identify and meet with potential coalition partners, as well as to continue to help “educate” key policy makers throughout the state of funding need. By spring of 2018, ACEC Indiana’s Board will be in position to make an informed decision of the interest, and if positive, begin the steps of forming a Water Coalition.

One of the highest priorities in the new Strategic Plan was to increase ACEC Indiana’s “purposeful, external legislative advocacy,” so this effort is part of a deliberate and thoughtful course to advance water-related infrastructure funding. Look for continued updates!
ENVIRONMENTAL BUSINESS & FUNDING SOURCES CONFERENCE ANOTHER SUCCESS!

ACEC hosted its Environmental Business & Funding Sources Conference in September, with a two-track format filled with on-trend topics and insightful speakers. Overall, about 30 percent of evaluators rated the combined conference as “excellent” with the majority of other respondents indicating the conference was “good.”

Indiana Sen. Ed Charbonneau kicked off the morning with an update on his efforts to ensure the waters of Indiana are safe, clean and protected for all. Sen. Charbonneau noted that water is an invaluable, limited resource that Indiana must focus on the process of creating a comprehensive water plan for Indiana.

Dr. Larry Nies, professor at the School of Civil Engineering at Purdue University, heightened the audience’s attention with his perspective that the capability to collect, curate and organize water data for real-time watershed scale analysis exists.

Dr. Nies stressed that interagency collaboration and cooperation is needed in order to achieve these studies.

Additional speakers and topics included: the clean up effort of East Chicago Lead Contamination with Sen. Lonnie Randolph and Rep. Earl Harris; Bond Market Update and Capital Financial Planning with Doug Baldessari from Umbaugh; IFA Lead Sampling in Schools with Indiana Finance Authority’s Sarah Hudson; and many more!

If you are interested in the full conference presentations, please view materials on ACEC Indiana’s website [www.aceciniana.org]. The conference planning committee comprised of members from the Environmental Business Committee and Funding Sources Committee are already making plans for 2018, please share any additional suggestions for speakers or topics by contacting staff@aceciniana.org.

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