Advocacy

Testified virtually before a special Senate working group established to give the latest information on industry's efforts to keep the economy going and our continued work on much needed transportation infrastructure improvements. Also addressed concerns raised about procurement practices, project acceleration, and agency preparedness.

Served as a Safe Roads “Lockbox” Amendment watchdog on municipal government compliance with the Safe Roads Amendment and the Transportation Funding Protection Act (TFPA) to ensure that locals have not diverted Motor Fuel Tax funds to their General Revenue coffers.

Supported a business coalition that filed suit against the Workers’ Compensation Commission for a newly-issued emergency rule that would have shifted the burden of proof for COVID cases, which did not go through the proper legislative channels. Also served as signatory on a joint letter in opposition of the action to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). A lawsuit was filed and within a few days a temporary restraining order (TRO) prohibiting enforcement of the rule was issued. The Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission then formally withdrew the emergency rule the following week.

Proactively kept the lines of communication open with **House Republican Leader Jim Durkin**, regularly discussing the state of the industry, legislative updates, revenues, agency issues, existing programs, the COVID-19 crisis, the workers’ compensation emergency rule, the State budget, and legislative session status.

Met via video conference with **U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis** to discuss additional assistance to offset Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) losses, reducing state matching funds, regulatory reform, and **Fast Act Reauthorization**.

Promoted ARTBA’s Dashboard of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) data, which provides state-specific funding information to showcase to local legislators the benefits of federal dollars in the state or specific region. Encouraged members to contact their U.S. reps to urge them to invest in a federal program.
Advocacy (continued)

IRTBA President & CEO Mike Sturino participated in a conference call hosted by United States Senator Dick Durbin and featured agency leaders from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Chicago Department of Aviation, and IDOT. IRTBA reported on key takeaways from the meeting including that the CARES Act legislation has funding for transit and airports and that the Illinois share of federal dollars are internal estimates until all the guidance is out from the key federal agencies.

IRTBA leaders met with Senate President Don Harmon and State Senator Bill Cunningham to discuss transportation design and construction priorities across the state. The group discussed the state of the industry, labor, diversity, the economy, and the state of the state. During the meeting, attendees practiced social distancing and then after the meeting, the group briefly posed for a photo outdoors. IRTBA leaders also met virtually with Senate Republican Leader Bill Brady to address a variety of industry issues.

Issued a call to action to members urging them to contact senators to support the three-part revenue proposal and play a leadership role in the passage of America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA) in the spring, which would authorize $287 billion in highway projects over five years. This included a VMT component for Class 7 & 8 trucks, indexing federal motor fuel user fees, and two options for an increased electric vehicle registration fee. This call to action was particularly important because it was the only legislative transportation funding option being discussed at the beginning of the year.

Supported HB 5244, which would require that IDOT establish and implement a transportation performance program and a risk-based, statewide highway system asset management plan to preserve and improve the conditions of highway and bridge assets and enhance the performance of the system while minimizing life-cycle cost.

Opposed a bill (HB 2838) that would have required prime contractors to assume liability for any debt owed to a wage claimant or third party on the wage claimant’s behalf incurred by a subcontractor at any tier.

Took action to oppose a last-minute BIMP amendment that would have diverted $100 million from the Road Fund for transit (to be used on operations, not for capital projects), which would have been in addition to $1.3 billion in federal funds that transit already received from the original CARES Act. All of this occurring when IDOT had yet to receive any bailout funding.

Monitored and closely followed legislation that would impact the industry, including amending SB 3292, the Architectural, Engineering, and Land Surveying Qualifications Based Selection Act, which featured many concerning issues regarding conflicts of interest related to the selection of architectural, engineering, and land surveying services.
Advocacy (continued)

Opposed HB 4276, which amended the Department of Transportation Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois because it would put a $150 million hole in IDOT’s current Multi-Year Plan (MYP) budget, and is the result of re-routing funds to pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

IRTBA President & CEO Mike Sturino was part of the Keynote Address Speaker Panel for the Minnesota Transportation Conference regarding, “Working Together to Fund Transportation: How Other States Are Increasing Transportation Funding,” which focused on the national trends in transportation funding, as well as specifics and lessons learned on how stakeholders in Illinois were able to come together for the creation of the Rebuild Illinois program, overcome regional divisions, and achieve success in securing a significant, long-term transportation funding package.

Received a virtual briefing in May from House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Member U.S Representative Mike Bost and U.S. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy about federal reauthorization and the potential for more immediate stimulus assistance to make up for lost Motor Fuel Tax revenues.

Business Improvement

Hosted 17 Road Builder University webinars on various topics such as a four-hour, virtual safety training on Excavation Hazards in Construction; Navigating Employment and Labor Issues in the COVID Era; The Secret of Fraud Prevention; Mastering Bid Protests Concerning Contracts with the Illinois Tollway and IDOT; Association Health Plan – Can it Work for Your Company?; Positioning your Business to Thrive in the “New Normal”; MBE/WBE/DBE Certification & Compliance; Revisiting the 2020 Economic & Construction Outlook – A Mid-Pandemic Perspective; Tracking Federal Regulatory Changes; COVID-19: Economic Fallout; Primes & Subs – Navigating Relationships, and Mastering Bid Protests.

Held multiple virtual town halls with distinguished heads of prominent state and local agencies to give members updates on new policies and procedures in the COVID Era – featuring virtual meetings with Senate President Don Harmon, a panel forum with all six collar county engineers, IRTBA members’ introductory update with CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi, an Aviation Update with CDA Commissioner Jamie Rhee, a forum to learn about funding public transit with RTA Executive Director Leanne Redden, as well as a panel about COVID precautions, policies and procedures at IDOT with Secretary Omer Osman, Tim Kell, and Tony Quigley.
Shattered previous attendance records for webinars with our largest webinar to date – a virtual Town Hall Meeting with **Senate President Don Harmon**. The eLearning town hall session had a record-breaking 232 people on and featured insider info on the difficulties the State of Illinois faces in light of the economic downturn associated with COVID-19, an update on a number of bipartisan working groups, the need for a budget before the end of the fiscal year, the transportation lockbox, Fair Tax, Fair Maps, Right to Work, local sales taxes, and many other topics.

Hosted three virtual cooperative committee meetings with the Tollway and IDOT, allowing non-committee members to participate for the first time ever, which allowed significantly higher participation levels – one meeting even garnered 81 attendees!

**State Representative Emanuel Chris Welch** delivered a well-received keynote speech at our 35th Annual Convention in Maui, highlighting significant achievements in Springfield and what to expect in the coming year.

Advocated with agencies to allow expediting schedules on certain construction projects due to lower traffic volumes.

Informed members about a requirement by local public agencies to have trained flaggers and suggested solutions to train flaggers virtually due to the COVID-19 restrictions on gathering.

Held our biennial Chairperson Training virtually for the first time. Followed up the training with a virtual meet-and-greet and networking session via WebEx.

Communicated newly-released e-ticketing policies that IDOT and the Tollway would be allowing with regard to electronically-submitted material delivery tickets as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

 Welcomed **CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi** in her first address to IRTBA members for a captivating forum to discuss the latest CDOT policies and procedures amid the COVID pandemic, as well as an inside look at the commissioner’s vision for the transportation hub of the Midwest -- the City of Chicago's multi-modal network.

Informed members about the Illinois Department of Public Health’s (IDPH) new guidance to assist members of the general public and business owners with any questions related to testing for COVID-19.
Created a Pandemic Preparedness Resources web page, posting and hosting 340+ links relevant to business owners and employees regarding the impacts to state agencies, safety, labor, legal, legislative, insurance, financial, taxes, human resources and staffing, etc. The landing page allowed members to gather resources from member experts, esteemed medical resources, and more.

Reported on the Illinois General Assembly being called back to Springfield via a Special Session Proclamation, and the details and purpose for this emergency Special Session. Provided a summary of the marathon session’s accomplishments – including approval of several omnibus measures – like passing a Capital Bill, as well as some of the difficulties the General Assembly faces in passing the FY 2021 budget.

Informed members about the details of the long-awaited agreement between the Illinois Tollway and Union Pacific and Canadian Pacific Railroads regarding Right of Way for Western Access of the I-490 to O’Hare International Airport.

Advised members on a new Executive Order issued by Governor JB Pritzker that requires masks on jobsites where six-feet of social distancing wasn’t possible, and employs business to provide masks or face coverings.

Educated members on OSHA’s interim guidance on recording COVID-19 illnesses on their 300 logs, except in certain instances. Also enlightened members on two new temporary interim enforcement memos released by OSHA to help with N95 mask shortages.

Informed members about the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA) extension of their relaxation of Hours of Service rules and other regulations – a positive step forward for the transportation design and construction industry.

Reported on Illinois Comptroller data for FY2020 monthly Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) collections and the state’s new Transportation Renewal Fund (TRF) data regarding the overall decline in funding and outlook for future fiscal years due to COVID impact and the lack of vehicles on the road.

Produced and hosted one of the first informative webinars for industry after the COVID-19 pandemic began on “Construction Continuity with IDOT,” which included information on work stoppages, new policies and procedures, changes to Motor Fuel Tax collections, and more.

Reported on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s (T&I) $495 billion INVEST in America Act.

Informed members about the new Paycheck Protection Flexibility Act, noting the removal of some previously-included limitations on how PPP loan funds can be used and forgiven.
Promoted Work Zone Safety Awareness Week virtually this year, with multiple training opportunities and a social media campaign. WBBM Traffic & Weather even promoted our messaging by retweeting one of our posts!

Informed members of interim guidance issued by the CDC on Safety Practices specific to Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 via the Friday Facts eNewsletter.

Informed members about a national plea to the federal government from State DOTs to avoid major disruptions in operations and maintenance of transportation systems during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included statistical data about the various funding shortfalls and the financial impacts of the virus, and noted several policy recommendations to assist with the revenue backstop.

Notified members of certified payroll policy and procedural updates for IDOT and the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL).

Pushed out an IRTBA Insider and multiple reminder pieces in the Friday Facts to communicate COVID safety practices and enforcement recommendations to contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.

Served as a conduit between industry and agencies about site access restrictions and notices from contractors, including providing written notice to IDOT that IDOT personnel will be provided access to all of the contractors’ sites.

Published the Illinois Small Business Administration (Illinois SBA) active lenders list to all members, which included a list of all financial institutions that will be eligible to run loans through the Illinois SBA's COVID-19 loan program. Communicated with IDOT on a problem that presented itself as sensitive in the COVID-era: material delivery tickets. Advised members about various options IDOT would be considering for ticket policy changes for delivery of materials that would still satisfy their requirements to adequately document material delivery with COVID safety considerations.

Informed members about State Senator Ram Villivalam’s (D-Chicago) appointment as the new Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and highlighted his transportation and infrastructure priority plan.

Reported on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA) most-relevant proposed changes to the transportation design and construction industry for the federal Hours of Service (HOS) rules, which would allow increased flexibility while maintaining appropriate safety standards.

Produced a time-sensitive and informative webinar on the new CARES Act legislation and the financial implications and the tax credits associated with the Act, all of which was done on short notice with a very quick turnaround time. Communicated the sense of urgency to apply to members, as the signature was still drying on the law books, and all funding was on a first come, first served basis.
Published a list of the Tollway’s 2020 Capital Improvement Plan and estimated quantity of commodities to help keep industry informed about needed materials and supplies to help deliver these important improvements.

Promoted various virtual info sessions, public hearings, and project opportunities, including I-55 at IL-59 Access Study in Will County, the Jane Byrne Interchange, CREATE Program’s 75th Street CIP, Central Tri-State Tollway (I-294) Project 2020 Construction Forum, the “Seize an Opportunity with the Illinois Tollway” event, CDA’s Construction Managers At Risk (CMAR) COVID Update, and the Tollway’s LCPTTracker System training.

Reported on Governor JB Pritzker’s State of the State Address, where he highlighted the historic Rebuild Illinois capital program that he signed last June, noting that the program would make transportation design and construction jobs more inclusive and diverse by investing in the Illinois Works program to recruit new construction apprentices and set strong goals for our public works projects to include diverse employees.

Assisted labor unions by issuing a call to action to all members regarding needed donations for equipment/machine hours for training purposes.

Provided members with an analysis of President Donald Trump’s 10-year, $810 billion highway and transit program reauthorization proposal and Fiscal Year 2021 budget, which included $190 billion in one-time infrastructure spending.

Promoted an online survey by our national affiliate, ARTBA, to inform the development of new resources and strategies to reduce struck-by hazards and protect workers, which is the leading cause of injury and death in the construction industry.

Published a letter from IRTBA President & CEO Mike Sturino regarding IRTBA’s close communications with IDOT and Tollway officials regarding the commitment to keep work going and keep Illinois moving during the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Informed members about new IDOT protocols and procedures regarding project delays in the event of a COVID-19 case on a worksite, as well as adjusted pre-qualification procedures that extended rating deadlines until the end of July.

Encouraged industry companies to consider donating Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies to the Illinois State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) due to the critical shortage of PPE for front line health care workers, which included N95 masks, Tyvek suits, face shields and more.

Notified members of the Illinois Department of Labor’s (IDOL) delay of implementation of PA 100-1177, which would have required filing certified payrolls online directly to IDOL rather than the agency where the work is performed.

Notified members of the 2019 tax deadline extensions for the state of Illinois, including details about quarterly estimate deadlines not being extended, which would impact select members of industry such as salesmen, independent contractors, partners in firms, etc.
Diversity

Nominated IRTBA Board Member and Treasurer Julie Berger Chamberlin for Crain's Chicago Businesses' 2020 Notable Women in Construction & Design. Also issued congratulations to numerous female executives that are active members of the IRTBA who were also featured on this year's list to celebrate exceptional women in construction and design, including Elizabeth Gallagher, senior vice president and Great Lakes regional manager at Alfred Benesch; Erin Inman, president and CEO of Primera Engineers; Mary Person, vice president at F.H. Paschen; and Paula Pienton, senior vice president at T.Y. Lin International.

Advertised multiple small business bid opportunities from the Illinois Tollway.

Educated small businesses on the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity’s (DCEO) and the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation’s (IDFPR) launch of emergency loan assistance program, including small business relief loans.

Hosted a webinar on the basics of MBE/WBE/DBE certification, common pitfalls in the application process, as well as the ongoing requirements of certification, provided insights on how companies could leverage certification, showcased how to implement a plan for different types of teaming arrangements, and shared tips about meeting contract compliance requirements when performing as an MBE/WBE/DBE.

Promoted National Women in Construction Week in an industry social media campaign.

Advertised the opportunity for small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses to participate in a critical assistance program that was implemented through the Illinois Tollway Technical Assistance Program for companies receive comprehensive, customized business development assistance for increased business stability and growth in the transportation-related construction industry, which included education, guidance, and feedback on general business and construction-specific operations, including strategic planning and assistance with Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) or Capital Development Board (CDB) pre-qualification applications.

Encouraged Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation in the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project via attendance at a virtual networking opportunity.

Environment

Held our 12th Annual Sustainability Council Annual Meeting in January, where attendees learned about innovative ways to work with government on a P3 lock/waterway project, sustainability measures planned for implementation within Capital Bill projects, and E-Ticketing.

Participated in The Clean Fill Coalition, which opposed two bills (SB 2975 and HB 4605) that would mandate groundwater monitoring at CCDD Clean Fill sites, which would have instituted costly testing that would have required these sites to shut down and for all Clean Fill to instead be brought to standard garbage dumps, with less strict environmental requirements, likely leading to higher contamination levels in surrounding ground.