



# ACEA Today

*Official quarterly newsletter of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama*  
First Quarter 2007

## Your Involvement is the Key to a Successful Year

You are now reading the first quarterly newsletter of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama. This newsletter will allow us to stay in touch with each other as well as provide news, updates, and other information helpful during our daily efforts to provide better roads and bridges to the citizens of Alabama.



*Philip Widner*  
*ACEA President*

ACEA exists to give county engineers access to the best tools available to aid in the construction and maintenance of our local transportation systems. Through time our Association has become a powerful group of dedicated individuals who have been a tremendous benefit to everyone involved in county government.

We can be proud of where our predecessors have gotten this organization to and the role ACEA has played in moving our state forward into the 21st century. Looking ahead, I believe our Association will continue to grow and gain strength as our local transportation needs increase at a rate which will be beyond anything we've experienced thus far.

Our effectiveness will continue to depend on the involvement and dedication of each individual member. Over the years, every county has benefited from the "fruits of the labor" of this Association. The "ole timers" have done a tremendous job getting us where we are.

We're now at a point where we need everyone to take proactive roles in this organization if we're going to keep up with the ever increasing transportation demands. From Tennessee to Florida and Mississippi to Georgia, we need 100 percent involvement from every county engineer and assistant in this state. Don't be the one that's eating the fruit without putting forth the labor. If you're not active in ACEA, let me encourage you to be – the benefit will far outweigh the sacrifice.

This past six months as your president has been very enjoyable and intense. We've been dealing with new subdivision laws and flood ordinance requirements, revising our County Design Policy, preparing for training courses and conferences, and getting this newsletter started – in addition to getting ready for the upcoming legislative session.

I want to take a moment to say "thank you" to everyone who has been involved in getting so much

accomplished in so little time. This includes officers, board of directors, committee members, and last, but not least, the Association of County Commissions of Alabama and its staff.

As ACEA moves into the future, one of the foremost things on our agenda should be increased funding for our local roads. Looking ahead, will tax-distribution formulas, as they are now written, provide the necessary funding counties need to keep roads and bridges passable? No. Will our current annual federal allotments provide enough money to replace our deficient bridges and keep our FAS routes paved? Of course not. As paving/fuel costs have more than doubled and transportation demands increased very few of our road budgets have. This trend cannot continue if we are going to keep our county roads in an acceptable condition.

The time is now for 67 county engineers to address these issues and, by working through our Association, come up with new and innovative funding programs to improve our local transportation systems. Get involved, and make a difference.

*Philip Widner*  
*ACEA President and*  
*Dekalb County Engineer*

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## ACCA Changes District Meeting Schedule...

In an effort to make it easier for its members to attend, the Association of County Commissions of Alabama changed its district meeting schedule hoping to foster greater attendance and more interest in the legislative process.

Previously, the district meetings had been divided up by district, and in some cases the members in those districts traveled great distances to attend the meetings, leading to poor attendance. Now, the meetings are in six destinations across the state, and members are encouraged to choose a location that best suits them. The locations are:

**District Meeting #1** – Jan. 22 in Elmore County at the Hotel Talisi in Tallassee.

**District Meeting #2** – Jan. 23 in Bibb County at the Sawmill Restaurant in Brent.

**District Meeting #3** – Feb. 5 in Washington County at the Chatom Community Center in Chatom.

**District Meeting #4** – Feb. 4 in Coffee County at the County Community Room in New Brockton.

**District Meeting #5** – Feb. 12 in Calhoun County at Classic on Noble in Anniston.

**District Meeting #6** – Feb. 13 in Franklin County at A.W. Todd Center at Russellville.

If you haven't already registered for one of these district meetings, please do. If you attended the Legislative Conference in December, or if you read your latest copy of *The County Commissioner*, you no doubt noticed the amount of legislation that will affect county governments in Alabama – specifically county engineering. By attending one of these meetings, you will have a chance to ask questions and better understand the legislative process and these legislative changes on the horizon.

To register, please contact **Jennifer Datcher** by e-mail at [jdatcher@acca-online.org](mailto:jdatcher@acca-online.org).

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## Great Send Off for a Great Friend...

Frank Courson, long-time chief of the county transportation bureau at the Alabama Department of Transportation, capped off a most successful career with an afternoon retirement reception on Jan. 5.

County officials, retired and current county engineers, state employees and officials and other friends showed up to give Frank one last “congratulations” handshake. Courson's three-decade career with the department officially ended on Dec. 31, 2006, but he agreed to return to the office one last time for the reception.

A constant figure at ACEA and ACCA events, Courson has vowed to continue to be an active part of both Association's activities and to “finally” improve his golf swing. The January event comes on the heels of a dinner and reception at ACEA's conference in May. During that event, county engineers from throughout the state – both past and present – honored Courson's contributions with their own brand of wit and gratitude.

The sponsors of the January reception were, the **ACEA; Alabama Concrete Pavement Association; Gallet & Associates, Inc.; Robert Hamill; Hydro-Engineering Solutions, LLC; Kellogg, Brown and Root; Bill McClain; James McGill; Sain Associates, Inc.; Sanford-Bell & Associates, Inc.; and Thompson Engineering.**

Frank has promised to take time out of his busy retirement schedule to visit at a few conferences in the future.

## Getting Ready for the 2007 ACEA Annual Conference...

It's that time of year again! Time to mark your calendars and get ready to pack your bags – and your golf clubs – and make your plans now to attend the 2007 ACEA Annual Conference at Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach, Ala. Registrations for the conference will be mailed to you soon.

There are a lot of things that go on behind the scenes of the conference that you may not be aware of in the planning stages that make the conference tick. This year, we are getting a head start, and we are asking for your help.

### Conference Ideas and Topic Suggestions

So, what's on your mind? Have you had any problems or situations arise in your county that you think may benefit your fellow county engineers? Do you have any questions or topic ideas that you would like to see explored this year? Would you like to volunteer for our Engineers' Roundtable? Then, we want to hear from YOU!

If you have any good topic ideas or suggestions for speakers to address the conference attendees, please e-mail Lori Quiller at [lquiller@acca-online.org](mailto:lquiller@acca-online.org).

### 2007 ACEA Scholarships

Each year, ACEA proudly awards two scholarships to two qualified applicants for the upcoming academic year. One scholarship is intended for an incoming freshman planning to study engineering, while one scholarship is intended for a returning student. Each scholarship is worth \$2,000.

In accordance with a directive approved in 1998 by the ACEA Board of Directors, those students who have previously received the scholarship are not eligible for the scholarship again.

Scholarship applications will be mailed to you this week. **Please note that the deadline for COMPLETED scholarships to be returned to the ACCA office is Friday, March 16, 2007.** Once you give the scholarship application to your student, please make sure the student understands this deadline. Several scholarships are disqualified each year because they are either incomplete or received past the deadline.

Scholarship winners will be announced at the Annual Conference.

### John F. Courson Excellence in County Engineering Award Applications

The John F. Courson Excellence in County Engineering Award recognizes projects, programs, individuals and/or departments that have excelled in the field of county engineering by being unique, innovative, or superb in Alabama's 67 county governments.

Again, applications for The John F. Courson Excellence in County Engineering Award will be mailed to you this week. **The deadline for this award is Feb. 16, 2007.**



*MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND  
MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW  
TO ATTEND THE*

**2007 ACEA Annual Conference**

*May 1-2, 2007*

**PERDIDO BEACH RESORT • ORANGE BEACH, ALA.**

## Got Ideas?

If you've got ideas or concerns related to your county engineering department and ALDOT, we want your input.

ALDOT has established an advisory committee to discuss technical issues related the operation of the 67 county engineering departments and their relationship with ALDOT. The committee has conducted three meetings and anticipates holding meetings on a quarterly basis in 2007.

The county reps on the committee are: **Benjie Sanders, Philip Widner, Richie Beyer, Wayne Sullivan, Randy Cole, Mark Culver, Stanley Batemon and Sonny Brasfield.**

During its first meetings, the committee worked on a distribution formula for the federal safety funds available to each county, discussed safety issues and legislative matters.

County engineers with concerns or suggestions for items to come before

the committee should contact a committee member.

## To Train or Not to Train?

This year's round of educational sessions for supervisors in the county engineering departments represents the fourth year of this unique training program. And, some engineers who did not register their supervisors for the program this year believe it may be time for ACEA to evaluate whether the event should continue on an annual basis.

Held on Jan. 22-23 and Feb. 5-6, this year's session will attract about 150 supervisors from 33 counties. So, the event is still providing valuable instruction and educational information to a segment of our county road departments that otherwise receives only "on-the-job" training.

The schedule this year focused on bridge replacement, safety, liability, and ways to make the most efficient use of the county's personnel and resources. Special

thanks to **Richard Spraggins**, who chaired the training committee this year.

County engineers are encouraged to send their suggestions for the program to ACEA Vice President **Richie Beyer** or the ACCA office.

## Use the Mouse, Send Your Stuff

If you are not using your mouse to reach the resources on "acea-online," then you're missing out on a great deal of information. And, you're probably wasting some time.

The website provides copies of personnel policies, stand plans, bid specifications and dozens of other items that can be downloaded and tailored to your needs. Though the site has this information, its success also depends on county engineers providing copies of their documents to the ACCA office so they can be placed on the website.

If you have questions about the site, contact Donna Key at the ACCA office.



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