Pitt’s IRISE consortium hosts first brainstorming session to map out infrastructure research strategies

PITTSBURGH (November X, 2018) … This past October the Impactful Resilient Infrastructure Science and Engineering (IRISE) research consortium kicked off the planning process for its 2019 research program by conducting a brainstorming session at the University of Pittsburgh campus. Over 35 transportation engineering professionals from the public, private and academic sectors joined together to present and discuss highway transportation infrastructure problems, issues and research possibilities.

Founded in summer 2018 by the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Pitt’s Swanson School of Engineering, IRISE utilizes the department’s expertise in transportation infrastructure to address challenges faced by industry and government agencies. Its mission is to engage in public-private collaboration while employing a systems approach toward optimizing infrastructure solutions.

Julie Vandenbossche, associate professor and IRISE director, noted that the brainstorming participants discussed a wide range of problems and issues including those pertaining to compliance with new stormwater requirements, understanding of infrastructure life cycle costs, structural health monitoring, performance of various types of pavement designs and overlays, bridge corrosion, landslide predictability, reducing road closure time and many others.

During the session, Pitt faculty presented their qualifications and contributed additional research ideas. Dr. Vandenbossche explained that the ideas generated during the session will be considered as IRISE works with its Steering Committee members to determine the research priorities over the coming months.

“We particularly appreciated everyone's willingness to share ideas with each other,” she said. “The exchange of information among different agencies and private organizations is exactly what the IRISE concept is trying to promote.”

Allegheny County Manager William D. McKain stated, “I congratulate Pitt on its first IRISE meeting —-people were really engaged and the exchange of ideas and information provided a wonderful starting point for IRISE to build on and have great collaborations and meaningful outcomes.”

The ideas discussed during the inaugural meeting will help in part to produce solutions that lead to more durable, longer lasting transportation infrastructure, Dr. Vandenbossche explained. In particular, solutions will be driven by:

* Providing safe, efficient and affordable transportation.
* Maintaining accessibility to services, such as healthcare, at all times.
* Meeting quality of life needs when planning projects. Improving roadway infrastructure durability should have a minimal cost to environmental health and quality of life.

Additionally, Swanson School faculty will also collaborate with researchers from Pitt’s Graduate School of Public Health and the School of Computing and Information to leverage a cross-disciplinary approach to solutions.

“Infrastructure and transportation have traditionally been very siloed, with government, industry, utilities and engineers focusing on their own issues and problems without necessarily taking a holistic approach that improves day-to-day life for the people who use these systems,” noted James R. Martin II, the U.S. Steel Dean on Engineering. “As a researcher with a long career in civil engineering, projects like the IRISE consortium are a great example of how universities like Pitt are leveraging faculty expertise across many fields to help public and private organizations address transportation issues for the betterment of society.”

For more information, visit engineering.pitt.edu/irise.

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