



For Immediate Release
March 16, 2016

Bob Gough
217-782-5793
bgough@icc.illinois.gov

ICC Hosts Smart Cities Policy Session

CHICAGO – On Wednesday, Wednesday, the Illinois Commerce Commission hosted a policy session on Smart Cities, a concept which has been defined as the ability to integrate multiple technological solutions in a secure fashion to manage a city’s assets.

Led by Chairman Brien Sheahan, the session was designed to highlight the value of smart cities and discuss how stakeholders can utilize information and communication technologies to deliver innovative customer services, realize cost savings, and optimize operational efficiencies.

“Cities are a focal point for some of the most profound economic, environmental, social, and technological issues facing the world today,” said Chairman Sheahan. “A defining characteristic of the smart cities concept is the focus on economic development. Cities must be centers of innovation that can provide jobs for citizens and attract businesses, and in order to create innovative energy policies, regulators must be forward-thinking and aware of the critical issues facing communities as a whole.”

The session featured speakers from across the energy industry, including advocacy, environmental, and government organizations, who participated in panels that explored the role of the energy consumer in smart cities, strategies for accelerating innovation, and the role of utilities in building smart cities.

During the session’s first panel on the role of the energy consumer in smart cities, panelists from community organizations and energy and environmental think tanks agreed that consumers and consumer education should be placed at the forefront of smart city development. Not only are consumers still largely unfamiliar with terms like “smart grid” and “smart meters,” but a “bottom-up” approach, they posited, would empower the energy consumer to become more engaged. Additionally, such an approach would encourage the energy industry to focus on tackling the issues consumers face first, while developing necessary technologies to resolve those issues as a second step.

In the second panel, speakers focused on the role of industry and academia in accelerating innovation for smarter cities. While noting security and privacy concerns, panelists reached consensus on the need to utilize and share key consumer data more freely. Access to data such as energy usage tied to demographic information, they argued, is a key element in enabling utilities and providers to perform more efficiently. From an academic perspective, speakers discussed the importance of introducing the next generation to the energy industry and its potential to change the future. This exposure, along with

the projected job growth in the industry, could serve as a helpful mechanism to grow the field and at the same time, increase innovation.

In the day's final panel on the role of utilities in building smart cities, panelists addressed head-on the importance of ensuring smart city implementation improved the "livability, workability and sustainability" of the communities utilities serve. Achieving such results called for increased public-private partnerships, and even in the planning stages, improved communication between privately-owned utilities and city and county governments. Overall, panelists felt collaboration was key to ensuring the utility of the future meets and responds to the needs of the consumer of today and tomorrow.

Speakers at the session included Michael Abba, Director of Smart Grid Integration and System Improvement, Ameren; Bill Abolt, VP of Energy, AECOM Technology Corporation; Andrew Barbeau, Senior Clean Energy Consultant, Environmental Defense Fund; Brenna Berman, Commissioner and CIO, Department of Innovation and Technology, City of Chicago; Michelle Blaise, SVP of Technical Services, ComEd; Michael Britt, VP of Energy Innovation, Southern Company; Charles Catlett, Senior Computer Scientist, Argonne National Laboratory; Patty Durand, Executive Director, Smart Grid Consumer Collaborative; Anne Evans, CEO, Elevate Energy; Mel Gehrs, Silver Spring Networks; Dave Kolata, Executive Director, Citizens Utility Board; Elizabeth McErlean, ICC Legal and Policy Advisor to Chairman Sheahan; Jennifer Montague, Director of Strategy and Technology, ComEd; Anastasia Palivos, ICC Legal and Policy Advisor to Chairman Sheahan; Russel Ragsdale, Principal Manager of Grid Modernization, Southern California Edison; Susan Satter, Public Utilities Counsel, Office of the Illinois Attorney General; Dr. Mohammad Shadidehpour, Bodine Chair Professor and Director, Illinois Institute of Technology; David South, Senior Principal, Sustainability, West Monroe Partners; Joe Svachula, VP of Engineering and Smart Grid, ComEd; and Michael Zeto, General Manager and Executive Director of Smart Cities, AT&T.

A copy of the Session agenda, which includes a full topic overview of each panel, can be viewed [here](#). Presentations from the Session are available on the Commission's Website by [clicking here](#).

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