# BPAC Memo drafted by Committee Member Young re: 25-1265 (and 25-1471)

The Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee serves as an advisory body to the Common Council in implementing the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (updated 2024), as well as the city's "2040 Comprehensive Plan" adopted in 2023 (primarily the Transportation Element), and similar documents (La Crosse Safe Routes to Schools, Climate Action Plan, etc.)

At its October 2025 meeting, the BPAC unanimously recommended that Council approve Alternative One from the US 54-14-61 downtown alternatives presented by WISDOT. That recommendation was attached to item 25-1265.

Recognizing that in the November 13, 2025 meeting the Common Council referred item 25-1265 for 90 days until February 2026, and has requested more information related to bike lanes in downtown and plans for downtown car parking, the committee has drafted this memo. This memo is in response to questions that were raised in discussion in the November common council meeting. There are four areas of discussion: disconnected networks, public demand, accessible parking, and the inclusion of 3rd/4th street in a bike/ped network.

First, to address a concern raised in that meeting, the reason bike lanes seem disconnected, or "go nowhere" is because as a city, we only consider adding mobility infrastructure when roadways come up for reconstruction. That's why La Crosse St bike lanes stop at 7th, and why King St Greenway stops at 6th. Extensions and connections are planned for, but not implemented until a road's time has come. The ultimate goal as laid out in many plans is a connected network, suitable for all ages and abilities. But the only way to create a connected network is by building it in pieces, as individual projects come up. The city's "Green Complete Streets" ordinance (Sec 40-14) directs the city to add connections as each individual project is planned for construction.

Second, while some city councilmembers stated that the public demands roads and parking, in actuality, the demand is for mobility. The public's demand for mobility can be satisfied in many ways. Satisfying it by constructing roads and providing free parking for cars is often not a good thing, because it creates only one way to get around. Designing a more flexible city, that allows for different ways to get someplace, is both cheaper and more responsive to public demand. The amount of investment required to realize all the supposed latent demand for driving is exorbitant and better spent on modes with lower negative externalities.

Third, regarding accessible parking. While councilmembers expressed concerns at the possible removal of accessible parking in the project area, there is little record of demand for accessible parking in the last ten years for that area. Residents and businesses have the ability to submit a request for ADA parking to the city. (https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/departments/engineering/permits-services/findi

ng-and-order-traffic-and-parking-signage-application) A search of BPW agenda from the last 10+ years found these requests for the downtown area, none of which are in the project area:

- 500 block of King St (2015)
- 300 block of Vine St (2020) - Only 1 of the 2 requested still exists
- 300 block of 3rd St N & Pine (2022) - West side of street, not impacted by proposal
- 400 block of Jay between 5th & 4th (2023) - midblock, on alley

A search along Google Streetview found three ADA spaces in the project area that would be removed: on 3rd at top of Pearl, 4th in front of the old Tribune building, and on 4th in front of La Crosse Bierhaus. If these three spaces are eliminated in the WISDOT plan, new ADA spaces can be added at each of the three cross-streets, resulting in no net loss.

Finally, several council members asked how 3rd and 4th Streets become candidates for inclusion in the bicycle/mobility network? The answer is that north-south active transportation connections were prioritized by WISDOT as a replacement for the long-planned "marsh road." In 2015, as part of the Coulee Region Transportation Study, Planning and Environment Linkages WisDOT held PIM #4 on November 10th and 12th. A stated goal was to "improve reliability and safety for all modes." The City of La Crosse committed to Option H, the "no build" option that would not add a new highway through the La Crosse River Marsh, and would instead "significantly increase biking, walking, carpooling" to achieve the goals of reducing automobile traffic demand by 4%. In 2016, on January 27 and 28th, WisDOT presented at another PIM, and proposed Option H along with other roadway improvements. This evolved into the "Corridor Study" in 2023 which was separated into various N/S corridors.
https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/sw/533516-lacrosse/us53us1461.aspx

## US 53 and US 14/61 Corridor Study

Public Involvement results from the 53/14/16 portion can be found here.
The study recognizes and points out "There are no bicycle facilities on US 53 or US 14/61 and no continuous alternative north/south routes adjacent to US 53 or US 14/61."
It also points out numerous intersection challenges for people on sidewalks and people riding bikes.
At this point, the DOT sought input on proposed alternatives, they didn't prescribe anything, or "try to shove bike lanes down our throats," they proposed various alternatives for the community and ultimately the council to select.
Bike lanes weren't suggested as an afterthought, nor as a mandatory inclusion. Rather they were considered an option based on community feedback and immense historical support from city plans and guiding documents.


## The cost of including parking on 3rd/4th reconstruction

WisDOT will pay for travel lanes construction. Cities are responsible for the installation of parking spaces. The bill comes after construction. There's an estimate shared and approved ahead of time.

**Sidewalk Level Bike Lanes** – Cost share can vary case by case, but a summary of the policy is below:

- WisDOT will pay for 100% of on-street marked or non-marked bicycle accommodations in locations as recommended by the state's Facilities Development Manual (FDM).
- Where an off-street design…acceptable to WisDOT is installed and on-street accommodations are not provided, a local cost share will be negotiated. The WisDOT share for construction will not exceed the costs to provide on-street accommodations. The municipality will be responsible for real estate costs and utility costs included in off-street design if real estate is not required for the roadway project.

**Parking Lanes** – 100% local cost for construction. This is per WI State Statute 86.32(4)

Full details from a WisDOT email are included at the end of this document (Appendix A)

**Alternative 1** (remove left-side parking, add sidewalk-level bike lanes)

- Bike lane cost: $90,000
- Parking cost: $460,000

**Alternative 2** (maintain parking, widen sidewalks)

- Parking cost: $710,000

### Community Sensitive Design (CSD)

Federally-funded projects are eligible for Community Sensitive Design (CSD) treatment funding. CSD treatments are selected by the local municipality with community input and typically include aesthetic treatments and/or roadway enhancements. CSD treatments receive federal funds to cover 80% of the cost, while the local municipality is responsible for the remaining 20%. The

total cost for CSD treatments can be up to 1.5% of the total project construction cost. The City has identified desired CSD treatments to include with this project. CSD treatments will be considered and finalized in the next phase of the design process. The desired treatments fall into the following categories:

| Category | Examples |
|---|---|
| Signals and Lighting | • Decorative Light Poles<br>• Pedestrian Scale Lighting |
| Aesthetic Treatments | • Benches<br>• Public Art/Gateway Monuments<br>• Street Trees<br>• Planters<br>• Landscaping |
| Bicycle/Pedestrian Treatments | • Bicycle Parking<br>• Wayfinding<br>• Enhanced Pedestrian Crossings |

**The BPAC submitted a resolution of support for Alternative 1 because we viewed the options through the lens of the last decade of planning and research on city streets, transportation needs, and visions for our downtown. Summarized and highlighted below are most of those data points.**

# City Plans & Studies

## City of La Crosse Transportation Vision: *PDF Link*

*2015 [15-0386]*

Summary of important findings:

> Toole Design Group hosted a four-day charrette...included ...about 115 members of the public, eight stakeholder interviews, open office hours, and a final vision statement and set of conceptual designs presented to the public. The end result is supposed to be a 100yr transportation vision, a guiding litmus test for every project.
>
> The visioning process supported goals of safety, walkability, bike friendliness, access, slower driving speeds, fewer vehicle miles traveled, complete streets, and beauty.
>
> It specifically mentions 3rd and 4th as candidates for bike lanes.
>
> The city is encouraged to think of streets as both a path and a place. ~60 surplus parking spaces (on 2 streets and from La Crosse to King) exchanged for over 1 mile of protected sidewalk-grade bike lane in the core of our city is a worthwhile investment. Are we building an environment for humans or an environment for cars?

## Transportation Demand Management Plan: PDF of Study & City Homepage

*2018*

Summary of important findings.

> “Provide dedicated facilities for bikes and pedestrians both on and/or off corridors/ Evaluate gaps in infrastructure and amenities for bikes and pedestrians and prioritize these areas for investment”
> “Charge for on-street parking using kiosk system. Reduce Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) commuting, idling and parking search driving”

## 2040 Comprehensive Plan: PDF Link

*2023*

Summary of important findings:

> Action 2-1: Grow the City’s “All Ages and Abilities” pedestrian and bicycle network through strategic investment in additional routes and infrastructure, especially facilities such as protected bike lanes that provide increased separation between users of non-motorized transportation and cars

## Safe Routes to School Plan: PDF Link

*2020*

Summary of important findings:

> Separated bike lanes are typically used on arterials with speeds over 25 miles per hour and traffic volumes over 6,000 vehicles per day. (3rd and 4th have 9-12,000 AADT) (Implementation of the SRTS Plan is recommended in Climate Action Plan)

## Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan: PDF Link

*2021*

> "support a network designed for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and the mobility impaired. Ample opportunity exists to build out the network and make connections to the regional trail systems. This network should encourage travelers to take transit or bike into downtown and become pedestrians once arriving in the core of downtown to create interactive, local streets leading to destinations."
>
> Illustrates a Mobility Framework and even includes 3rd/4th bike lane scenarios on page 84

## Downtown Parking Study Update and Analysis of Expanded Areas: PDF Link

*2020*

Summary of important findings:

Over 9100 total parking spots downtown, 4700+ under city control.

at peak time (12:00 noon – 2:00 pm) that 45 percent of the on-street parking supply was occupied. Off-street/ramp use was between 40 and 45% occupied during peak day hours.

Privately managed parking peaked around 50% occupation.

When the price is free, the demand becomes something like infinite.

## City of La Crosse Climate Action Plan: PDF Link

*2022/2023*

Summary of important findings.

TM 1: Decrease commuter and community-wide VMT by 5% by 2030

TM 5: Improve the comfort and safety of walking and biking within La Crosse.

According to the La Crosse Climate Action Survey, over 65% of respondents indicated they would walk or bike more frequently if they felt safer.

TM 5- 13 Improve City's 'Bicycle Friendly Community' rating by implementing 'Key Steps to Gold' recommendations on report card. [Continue to improve and expand the low-stress bike network for all ages and abilities, and ensure that your community follows a bicycle facility selection criteria that increases separation and protection of bicyclists based on levels of motor vehicle speed and volume]

## Downtown La Crosse Retail Market Analysis: PDF Link

*2017*

Summary of important findings:

The …extension of trail and bike path networks and expansion of wayfinding signage would also facilitate increased evening and weekend consumer activity.

Providing these ‘urban pathways’ which connect to the broader trail network that La Crosse is recognized for will also help decrease automobile use in center city neighborhoods.

Those who do not patronize downtown businesses report a lack of stores offering products they need (or a lack of awareness of store offerings), combined with parking (and conveying goods to vehicles) as the primary reasons.

**File # 19-0471** La Crosse Common Council passed a resolution in 2019 setting a goal of reaching carbon neutrality community-wide, in both energy and transportation by 2050. Continuing to enable driving in ever-greater quantities adds pollution and road noise to neighborhoods, and congests infrastructure shared with transit, making greener modes less effective and appealing.

# County Plans

## Beyond Coulee Vision 2040: LAPC Plan

*2020*

Summary of important findings:

- "ingrain equity by prioritizing multimodal and transit projects.Incorporate bicycle, pedestrian, and transit considerations in all roadway projects"
- Estimates the cost of the most recent downtown ramp at $317 per spot per month. The newest ramp was purchased by the City at a cost of $17.2 million, plus there is about $13.8 million in outstanding debt on the other 4 structures.
- City's annual cost for parking facilities is about $2.2 M, while revenues are about $1.7Million.
- The document doesn't get down to 3rd and 4th streets specifically, but does highlight that "roadway projects often move forward regardless of federal or state support but bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects tend to have to wait until federal and state support is obtained." This is important to present context, because bicycle facility inclusion is part of the DOTs budget, they are simply included in construction at no additional cost to the city.
- Calls out the failures of "Sharrows" as infrastructure.
- Parking pricing strategies will lead some users – those who prioritize the lowest cost – to choose transportation alternatives that don't require parking. A shift in parking pricing and usage practices will enable future downtown business growth with a lesser growth of parking spaces and vehicle traffic. This only works if transportation alternatives are available and supported.

## County of La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan: PDF Link

*2021*

Summary of important findings:

Highlights a need of "first-last mile connections", ie, taking the bus downtown, and being able to walk/bike the last distance to a person's destination.

**Table 4-6: Recommended Bicycle Accommodations by Roadway Segment for South La Crosse**

| Segment | Treatment |
|---|---|
| *Major North-South Connections between North and South La Crosse* | |
| **USH 53** (3rd St and 4th St) between La Crosse St and Cass St<br><br>NOTE: 3rd and 4th Sts are one-way streets. Accommodations will be installed on the right side of the road in the direction of travel. | Install curbside sharrows on 3rd and 4th Sts between La Crosse St and Badger St.<br><br>Install southbound sharrows with parking on 3rd St between Badger St and Pearl St.<br><br>Install bike lane on 3rd St between Pearl St and Cass St and on 4th St between Badger St and Vine St.<br><br>Install northbound sharrows with parking on 4th St between Vine St and Cass St.<br><br>Install Share the Road signage. |
| **USH 14/61** (3rd and 4th Sts south of Cass St) between Cass St and Hood St<br><br>NOTE: 3rd and 4th Sts are one-way streets. Accommodations will be installed on the right side of the road in the direction of travel. | Install southbound on 3rd St a bike lane between Cass St and Market St, sharrows with parking between Market St and Jackson St, and a bike lane between Jackson St and Hood St.<br><br>Install northbound on 4th St curbside sharrows between Hood St and Adams St and sharrows with parking between Adams St and Cass St.<br><br>Install Share the Road signage. |

## Economic Impact of Bicycling in La Crosse: PDF Link

*2018*

Summary of important findings:

Highlights existing and future financial and health benefits of expanding cycling infrastructure

In 2018 there were less than 8 miles of on street bike lanes.

“for every one-mile motor vehicle trip that’s prevented, a municipality saves $0.15” in roadway maintenance costs.

# Additional Facts, Information, Results from Similar Cities

**The Wagon Wheel Trail** will officially come down the Cameron Ave Bridge and empties into 3rd St. It should connect to something.

***Bike Lanes are Good for Business*** - *Business Insider*

The author covers over 30 different studies about the benefits of bike lanes to businesses.

***What is the impact of bike lanes on local commerce?***
***Summary of Research on the Commercial Impact of Road Space Reallocation to Multi Mode Transportation*** - *Web Link*
*2025*

The authors explore and summarize 15 different studies and articles about various retail locations following the installation of bike lanes. They (literally) highlight the findings, making it quite easy to skim and digest.

***The cars are going to be alright: Examining micromobility infrastructure space allocation and potential improvement scenarios in Montréal*** *Study Link*

Persistent Car Dominance: Even large-scale improvements to micromobility lanes have only a minor effect on the total space cars occupy.
Extremely succinct findings: cars have 97.68% of the roadway, and micromobility only 2.32%. Presently 95.08% of trips use the car and 4.92% use micromobility, demonstrating a 212% discrepancy.

***Local Business Perception vs. Mobility Behavior of Shoppers: A Survey from Berlin (2021)*** *https://doi.org/10.32866/001c.24497*

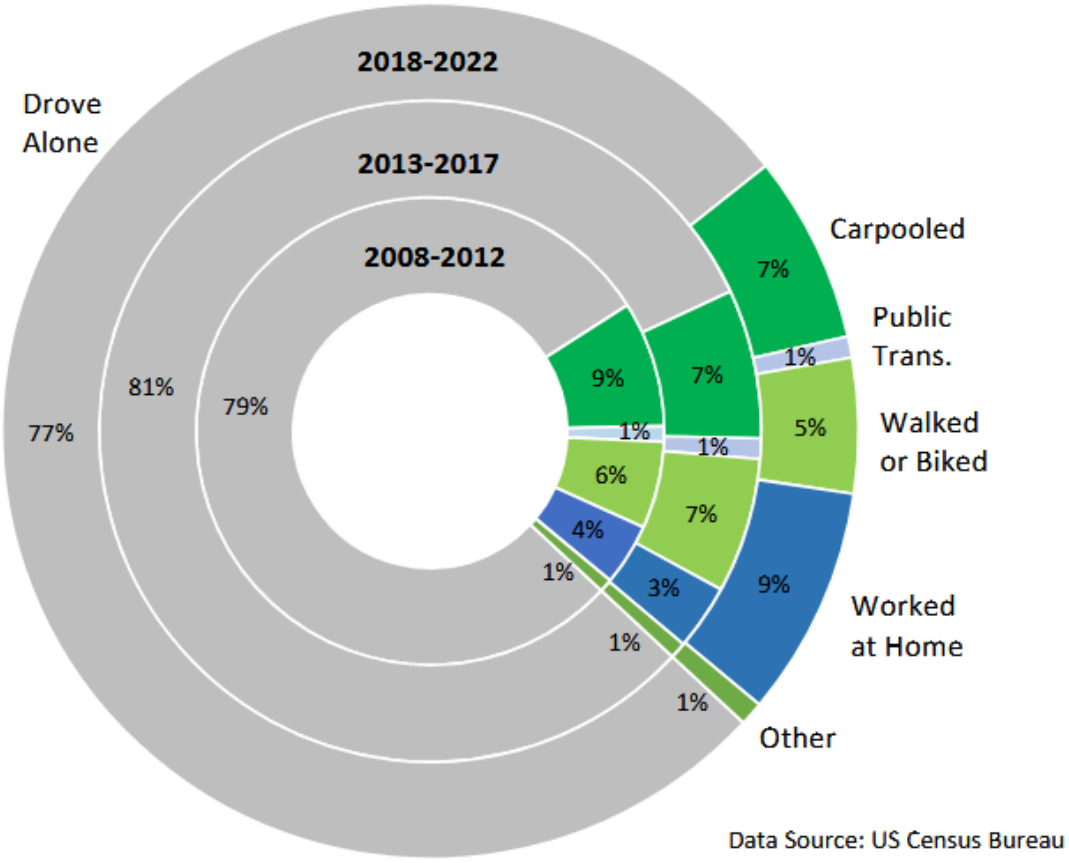
"While only 6.6% of shoppers traveled to the streets by car, on average traders [shopkeepers] estimated 21.6% of their customers use this mode; a discrepancy of 15%… Further they underestimate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle travel by 8.1%, 6.2% and 3% respectively."
Summary: Businesses are unaware of how people arrive to their destination.

***Downs-Thomson Paradox***
*Still Stuck in Traffic: Coping with Peak-Hour Traffic Congestion. Downs, Anthony (2005).*

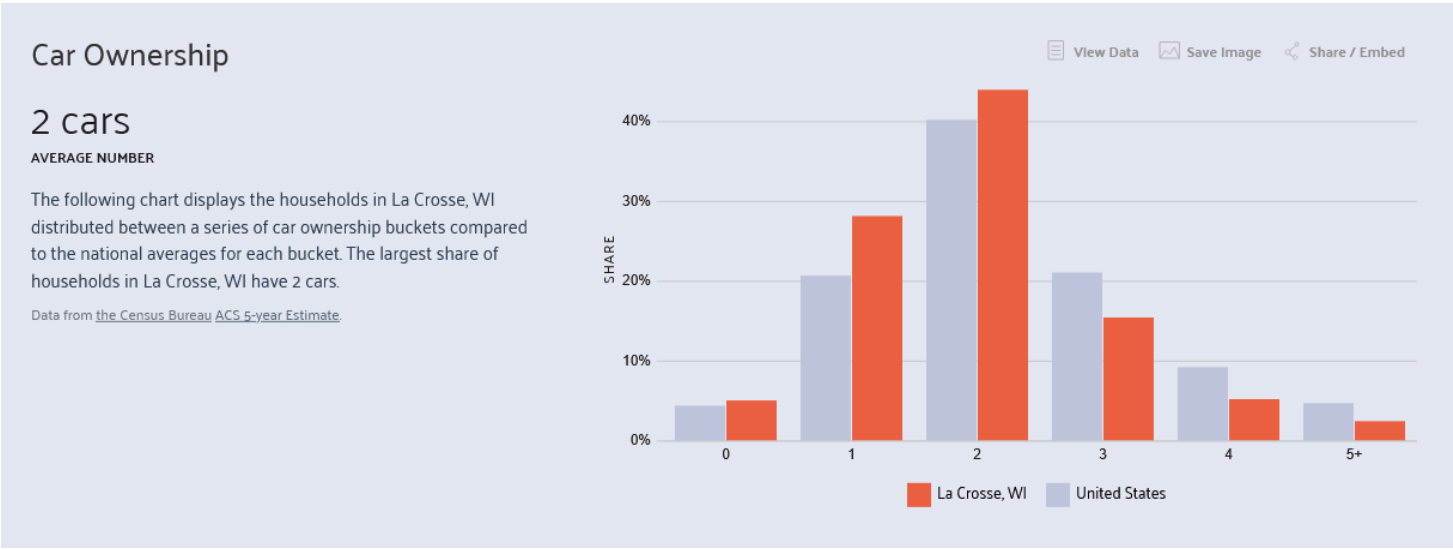
" claims that traffic will increase without limit until the option of public transport (or any other form of transport) becomes faster than the equivalent trip by car. It draws the conclusion that people do not care whether they drive, walk, bike, or take the bus to any location– they just want to get from A to B in the fastest and most convenient way possible."

***Census Data:***

*Figure 10: La Crosse County Resident Commuting Methods*




Data Source: US Census Bureau



# Appendix A

## Lacrosse 3rd and 4th question

**Howe, Michelle - DOT** <michelle.howe@dot.wi.gov> Tue, Dec 23, 2025 at 10:31 A
To: "robbiexor@gmail.com" <robbiexor@gmail.com>
Cc: "Richardson, Michael J - DOT" <michael.richardson@dot.wi.gov>, "Ellias, Michelle - DOT" <Michelle.Ellias@dot.wi.gov>

Hi Robbie,

Thank you for reaching out to Michael with this question. The state has a cost-share policy that describes who is responsible for the cost of specific items when it comes to construction. Specific costs for major projects, like this corridor, are negotiated once a project moves into design with a State Municipal Financial Agreement (SMFA), but we can share what our policy is and an initial estimate on the local cost share. An SMFA is a contractual agreement between WisDOT and the municipality that covers local participation obligations. The SMFA estimates the construction cost, but it is subject to change based on the actual construction let cost when the construction project is awarded to a contractor.

Related to the items you asked about, there is a cost share policy for both bicycle lanes and parking along state highways. Here is a summary of those two items:

- **Sidewalk Level Bike Lanes** – Cost share can vary case by case, but a summary of the policy is below:
  - WisDOT will pay for 100% of on-street marked or non-marked bicycle accommodations in locations as recommended by the state's Facilities Development Manual (FDM).
  - Where an off-street design of the proposed bicycle accommodation acceptable to WisDOT is installed and on-street accommodations are not provided, a local cost share will be negotiated. The WisDOT share for construction will not exceed the costs to provide on-street accommodations. The municipality will be responsible for real estate costs and utility costs included in off-street design if real estate is not required for the roadway project.
- **Parking Lanes** – 100% local cost for construction. This is per WI State Statute 86.32(4)

At the study stage, we have preliminary estimates for parking and bike lane costs but as noted above the percentage of the bike lane cost is yet to be determined. The local cost for sidewalk level bikes will be offset by a calculated cost if street level bike lanes were constructed and minimal local cost is anticipated for the sidewalk level bike lanes. Here are the preliminary estimates we have for the two alternatives:

Alternative 1 (remove left-side parking, add sidewalk-level bike lanes)

- Bike lane cost: $90,000
- Parking cost: $460,000

Alternative 2 (maintain parking, widen sidewalks)

- Parking cost: $710,000

Please note these cost estimates are for the US 53 corridor from King St to Badger St and do not include the full local participation costs for the entire corridor. We excluded the block of US 53 from Badger St to La Crosse St in this estimate as much of what is done on this block is a result of the roundabout proposed at the La Crosse St intersection. As noted above, these numbers are subject to change as design is refined, inflation, and based on the actual let cost.

Please let Michael or I know if you have any further questions.

Thanks

Michelle

**Michelle Howe, P.E.** (she/her)

Major Studies Supervisor

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**From:** Richardson, Michael J - DOT <michael.richardson@dot.wi.gov>
**Sent:** Monday, December 22, 2025 11:02 AM
**To:** Howe, Michelle - DOT <michelle.howe@dot.wi.gov>
**Subject:** FW: Lacrosse 3rd and 4th question

Email from Robbie

**Michael J. Richardson, P.E.**

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