



# great lakes REPORTER

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**2025 GREAT LAKES  
EXPO PREVIEW**

—  
**HOUSE PASSES \$3.1 BILLION  
TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL**

—  
**MICHIGAN LEADS NATION IN  
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## In this Issue...

- 4 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- 7 HOUSE PASSES \$3.1 BILLION  
TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL**
- 9 MEET THE YOUNG PROFESSIONAL**
- 10 GRAND RAPIDS HOSTS NORTH AMERICAN  
SNOW CONFERENCE**
- 13 CITY OF WYOMING MODERNIZES METER  
READING INFRASTRUCTURE**
- 15 GOSSIP: THE TIE THAT BINDS**
- 18 2025 GREAT LAKES EXPO**  
Keynote, special events, YP corner, and schedule at a glance
- 24 DE-ESCALATION LEADERSHIP: MANAGING  
PUBLIC ANGER IN PUBLIC WORKS**
- 27 MICHIGAN FLOOD RESPONSE LEADS NOLA  
AND CHICAGO**
- 30 ROAD SCHOLAR RECAP**
- 33 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**
- 34 THANK YOU ADVERTISERS**



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brandy Siedlaczek, City of Southfield

What a year it's been! Looking back, it's incredible how quickly time has flown since I stepped into the role of APWA Michigan Chapter President. It feels like just yesterday I was heading home from the Great Lakes Expo, refreshed and excited for this new role, wondering what the year had in store. Well, a year has flown by, and it's been a whirlwind! As I write this, we are in day two of the North American Snow Conference, followed by the Michigan Public Service Institute, and then we'll round out the year at the Great Lakes Expo.

What I've learned most from this year as President is that I truly love the public works field because of all of you. Your dedication, hard work, and commitment to the services you provide are truly inspiring. You consistently go above and beyond to ensure these essential services are completed, and your sacrifices do not go unnoticed. A prime example is the North American Snow Conference. The Snow Conference committee has worked tirelessly over the past year to make this conference unforgettable. I want to extend a special thank you to all the committee members, and especially to James Hurt and Bart Franklin, our co-chairs. You kept us on track and moving forward. Kudos to everyone involved!

A highlight of my year was the privilege of connecting with so many of you across the state. Witnessing firsthand the incredible work being done in our communities has been truly rewarding. I eagerly anticipate seeing you all again at the Great Lakes Expo.

As I step down, Jennifer Lawson will step up to fill this position, and I know you are in excellent hands. Jen is a remarkable leader and an even more wonderful person, and I'm confident she'll do an amazing job. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to represent the APWA Michigan Chapter this past year. I'm not going anywhere, though! I will continue to be involved in APWA, as I have been for many years. I'm also excited to see the new generation of young professionals ready and willing to take the reins. This is a clear sign that our organization is moving in the right direction. I encourage each of you to find your passion within APWA and step forward to help shape our future.

Thank you for everything you do.

*~Brandy Siedlaczek, President, APWA Michigan Chapter*



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# HOUSE PASSES \$3.1 BILLION TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL

By John LaMacchia, State and Federal Affairs Director, Michigan Municipal League

In March, the House passed nine bills that would utilize \$3.1 billion in existing state resources to improve Michigan's Transportation system.

As introduced, the transportation funding package would provide over \$3 billion annually in transportation funding, removed sales tax currently being charged on motor fuel, and eliminated funding for SOAR (\$500 million), Revitalization and Placemaking grants (\$50 million), and the Housing and Community Development Fund (\$50 million), among other reductions to fund the proposal. By not charging sales tax on motor fuel, the school aid fund would be reduced by approximately \$700 million, and constitutional revenue sharing would be reduced by approximately \$95 million (roughly half goes to cities and villages). Schools were set to be held harmless but local were not.

The \$3.1 billion in this proposal is derived in two ways. First, a 20-cent increase in fuel tax. This generates approximately \$1 billion and results in the price of gas being the same because of the removal of sales tax. Second, \$2.2 billion in revenue from the Corporate Income Tax (CIT) will be dedicated to roads, with corresponding reductions to other areas of the budget. The new fuel tax revenue will flow through Act 51. The CIT revenue would have been distributed in the following manner: 50% to the counties, 40% to cities and villages, and 10% to MDOT. This proposal does not include any new revenue and only reprioritizes existing state revenue.

MML was able to secure the inclusion of the Neighborhood Roads Fund and money for local bridges that are closed or in critical condition. The bridge money will total \$500 million over five years and then be sunset. The Neighborhood Roads Fund will total \$275 million annually and be a permanent distribution. Additionally, in last-minute negotiations MML was also able to protect any loss to constitutional revenue sharing by securing

\$95 million to hold local government harmless from any reduction in constitutional revenue sharing.

The final deal included just over \$3.1 billion in funding for roads and bridges and utilized only existing revenue. It included \$275 million for the Neighborhood Roads proposal, \$100 million for local bridges, dedicates \$95 million in sales tax revenue to backfill the reduction in constitutional revenue sharing, and continues to provide \$50 million annually to the Housing and Community Development fund, which was proposed to be cut in the introduced version.

Overall, this put \$1.1 billion more into local roads and will result in an average funding increase of 150% for each city and village local road agency. There are concerns about where some of the cuts in the budget may come from, but MML is having ongoing and positive conversations with legislators to ensure those cuts don't come from statutory revenue sharing and that they continue to prioritize the passage of the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund.

This is very much a first step in the process, but it is also a very positive one.



*LaMacchia*

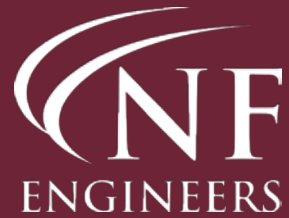


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# MEET THE YP:

## Mike Freckelton, Engineer, City of St. Clair Shores

### What do you do at St. Clair Shores?

I am the City Engineer for the City of St. Clair Shores.

### How long have you been there?

About 1 year and 4 months. Prior to this role, I worked for Spalding DeDecker for about 7.5 years.

### What do you like most about your job?

Asset Management/Capital Improvement Planning. Being able to come up with methods and data driven approaches to prioritize road, water main, and sewer projects is incredibly useful and can help discover important aspects of the city infrastructure that correspond with each other, that might otherwise be missed.

### When you're having a tough day at the office, what cheers you up?

Starting by making sure that I have done whatever I can to find a solution for or plan to address whatever is making that day tough. Then, finding something outside of work to look forward to, whether it be the gym, playing sports, hanging with friends, or going home and being slightly productive/gaming.

### What's one thing you'd like people to know about the work you do?

Working for a municipality, people often have the misconception that things are disorganized, slow, unplanned, etc. It would be great if more of the public knew the actual logistics and planning of municipal operations. A lot of time and effort go into prioritizing projects, addressing concerns in a timely and effective manor, maintenance planning, setting and following ordinances and processes, etc.

### When not at work, what do you enjoy doing?

Primarily I enjoy playing sports, like flag football and basketball, as well as other rec sports. DIY projects around the house in the winter and when the weather is nice; lake days, riding my jet ski, fishing, camping, and trips up north.

### If you were a color, which would it be, and why?

Blue. If I were green I would die.

### Which superhero power would you like to have, and why?

Super-human strength/intelligence. Basically, just taking the things that I use most but be able to limitlessly improve them as you work and grind would be awesome.

### What's one thing about you most people don't know?

I love R&B music, from Motown, to 90s/00s, to modern day. The passion behind the songs and voices of the artists is something that I've always envied and really helps me get into a zone for whatever I'm doing.



*Freckelton*

# GRAND RAPIDS HOSTS NORTH AMERICAN SNOW CONFERENCE

By Kristen McCue, GCSI Association Services

For the second time, the City of Grand Rapids hosted the APWA North American Snow Conference in April.

There were 577 attendees from Michigan.

Each year, the Snow Conference Education Program creates a space where attendees can make meaningful connections and discover and produce game-changing insights and solutions.

APWA knows the challenges and opportunities facing public works are unprecedented. The speed of social and technological change places an enormous responsibility on snowfighters to proactively provide and maintain the infrastructure needed for your community's growth and well-being.

The #Show4Snow experience helps snowfighters gain perspectives, exchange ideas, and participate in important and thought-provoking discussions on the shape of things to come.



*Michigan Chapter President, Brandy Siedlaczek opening remarks*



*Workforce*



*Brewery Tour*



*Michigan Chapter Snow Conference Leadership*



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# THE CITY OF WYOMING MODERNIZES METER READING INFRASTRUCTURE

*Editor's note: This article was adapted from the City of Wyoming's website, with editorial discretion provided by the editor of Great Lakes Reporter.*

The City of Wyoming is modernizing its meter reading infrastructure to “smart metering systems.”

The city is switching to Advanced Metering Infrastructures (AMI), which are wireless communication networks that provide two-way communication between a water meter and a utility supplier. Smart meters are used in the electric, gas and water industries and replace the traditional manual meter reading systems where someone walks door-to-door to read water meters.

The modernization will also improve customer service while helping the city to operate more efficiently. The AMI system will provide several benefits to customers, including data to help resolve usage and billing questions, fewer visits to a consumer's property and near real-time water usage information rather than water meter reads.

In addition, combining the AMI installation with the state-required water service line inspection and water meter changeout creates significant savings, since separate visits can be accomplished at one time in one visit.

Currently, all water meters are read manually via a touchpad located on the outside of each water user's building. The touchpad is wired to the water meter. In the AMI system, a new “smart” endpoint will be installed over the existing touchpad. This endpoint will transmit meter reading information every four to six hours over a licensed FCC frequency, for a fraction of

a second, to an antenna located on water towers in the city. The information is stored in a secure location and made available to both the water user and the city.

Transmitted information includes the water meter reading, meter ID number, endpoint ID number, any usage alarms, and GPS location of the endpoint.



AMI Infrastructure

Locally, the City of Grand Rapids is also undergoing an AMI project with Sensus. Regionally, the cities of Holland, Grand Haven, Battle Creek, Saginaw and Kalamazoo have an AMI system for water meters, as do Georgetown and Delta Townships.

AMI and smart meters have been installed in the United States since the late 1980s. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates there are over 70.8 million AMI electric installations in the United States as of 2016.

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# GOSSIP: THE TIE THAT BINDS

By Lewis G. Bender, Ph.D., Michigan Public Services Institute (MPSI) Facilitator and Instructor

*This article is part of a series by Dr. Lew Bender addressing the challenges facing public works leaders and their teams.*

## Beliefs you may have about gossip:

- Everyone does it.
- It brings people together.
- It engenders mutual trust.
- It provides non-hostile boundaries for inter-personal behavior.



*Bender*

"Right, Lew. And donkeys fly. In my team, gossip does the opposite of all that. It divides us. It engenders dysfunction and lack of trust within the team and causes all kinds of hostile boundaries."

So, can both sets of statements be true? In a weird and twisted way, the answer is yes! Both sets of opposite statements are true. Yet, it is the set of negative statements that continuously undermines effective team leadership. Gossip has many uses and impacts within any team. In many cases, the most visible and lasting impacts are negative.

In a dysfunctional team, gossip is a **weapon** in the hands of problem employees. In a high-performing-healthy-culture team it channels and reinforces high-performance and supportive behavioral expectations. Clearly, gossip can be used to reinforce healthy or unhealthy team cultures. It can unite team members around shared positive or negative goals. It can provide a basis for mutual support within a totally shared culture team, or gossip can support "camps" within a divided team culture. If a team leader is to be effective in any team culture, they need to understand how gossip can be used to support or undermine a healthy team.

## THINGS EVERY TEAM LEADER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GOSSIP

### Gossip is Compelling

"Did you hear about where they saw Jack and Jane the other night?" Now, walk away without hearing the rest of the story. Yes, some people can. But most of us stick around for the rest of the story. Now, let's say Jack or Jane is your boss. Do you really think you will walk away? For most people gossip about other people that they care about is almost irresistible. So please understand that gossip will happen, **and you will not stop it!**

Researchers also indicate the conversation will be much shorter if you hear something positive about Jack or Jane than if the gossip is negative. Why are we apt to focus more on negative than positive gossip? It is theorized that we are curious problem-solvers. We have successfully evolved because of our curiosity and our ability to understand and anticipate problems. Negative gossip satisfies our innate curiosity and desire to anticipate and solve problems. Purposely, not knowing or anticipating a problem or, worse, a threat is not part of our DNA. So, when the problem child tells their fellow worker that "the boss is trying to screw us." The fellow worker will probably listen.

### Gossiping is an Act of Trust

One researcher describes the act of gossiping as similar to the act of large apes physically preening each other. However, unlike humans, the great apes don't have vocal cords and proportionally large brains. The great apes display trust and mutual support by the act of preening. Humans use gossip to display the behaviors of inclusion and mutual trust. Whether

it is a problem child gossiping with members of their posse about how the boss mistreats them or members of a leadership team gossiping about the behaviors of the problem child. The central behavior is the same. "I/we trust each other. We can be honest with each other." Implicitly, this means I have your back. We don't tend to gossip with people we don't trust.

This reality of trust serves toxic people in several ways. Two notable ways include the following: First, the gossip-trust connection engenders a great deal of loyalty among members of the toxic posse. The message of the problem child through gossip is, "You are on my team, not on the boss's team." It is an act of disloyalty and mistrust for a member of the problem child's team to interact or support the "bosses' team positively." Second, gossip supports a shared view of the world and behavior. Gossip serves as the vehicle for reinforcing the "us versus them" mindset, which is essential for the survival and even thriving of toxic people in the workplace. With the effective use of gossip, a toxic person can get their followers to ignore the facts and stay within the negative view of the problem child. The "us versus them mindset" means that positive decisions and actions by the boss get quickly translated into negative motives and intentions. Toxic people are very good at interpreting 'what the boss really means."

### **Gossip Serves as a Moral Guide for Behavior**

Most of us want to "fit in." When we join a new department or organization, we become very observant of the behaviors of our new co-workers. When do they take breaks? Are they on time or not? How do they address each other or the boss? Social scientists suggest that this natural response to being accepted by others is greatly influenced by informal communication-gossip. Collectively, we define what is acceptable and unacceptable, as well as good and bad behavior. In a toxic workplace, newcomers quickly learn that they are not to be reasonable with the boss or be quickly branded a "kiss-ass."

The same phenomenon occurs in the boss' team. Do we get along with labor or draw heavy, inviolable lines? Do we, through gossip and other means, let a foreman know that he is on "their side" too often? Ironically, the codes of moral acceptance and behavior reinforce each

other in both a toxic and healthy environment. In a toxic environment, the moral-behavior code never reinforces openness, honesty, and effective problem-solving.

As a team facilitator, I have always been struck by statements like: "It has always been that way." The moral codes of shared behavior rarely change over time. To change, they take deliberate efforts by leaders whom team members then support to change from a negative and divisive culture to an open, honest, and inclusive culture. This is a difficult challenge that requires diligence, commitment, and focus.

### **Gossip Fills Important Voids**

We hate voids. If there is no real explanation supported by facts, we will make one up. We have to know. Or at least have the illusion of knowing. Enter the wonderful world of gossip! We can explain each other's motives, intentions, and behavior with gossip. "I know why the boss put us on this crap detail-go ahead; speak up like I did. Tell 'em about their stupid decision to change the schedule." Gossip can establish and reinforce world views, take current events and actions, and spin them to reinforce those views. It can easily explain behavior and decisions without any facts.

With gossip, we have a ready-made process for explaining things in our world. Whether it is attempting to explain overall human behavior or why the boss made that decision, the underpinning motivation is the same: We cannot stand not to know. Once we believe something, it's hard to convince us otherwise.

If I believe the boss is against us, it's hard to accept that changing the schedule was to help us enjoy summer hours. Communications theory calls it Unconscious Competence. This means we have arrived at a point of behavior and worldview that is part of us. It is who we are. Conservative, liberal, democrat, republican, pro-labor pro-choice, etc. Changing from this worldview is very challenging. Gossip from friends and associates reinforces our worldviews. This is true in society as well as the workplace. Our acquired belief systems-reinforced by gossip-are very difficult to change.

So, given these and other realities related to gossip, what can a leader do to reduce the negative impacts of gossip within her team? Notice I said to reduce the impact, not eliminate gossip. I have five suggestions.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDRESSING GOSSIP WITHIN YOUR TEAM

1. **Keep Employees Informed.** If you can, overdo this. Get in front of explaining anything, any decision, any action that is new or different. You become the translator/interpreter of your decisions and actions. Emphasizing open communication reduces the success of toxic people in misinterpreting your actions.
2. **Mold hates Sunshine.** Gossipers Hate Honesty and the Truth. Team leader, you hear much of the same gossip and rumors that members of your team hear. Stop ignoring this garbage. You establish yourself as a reliable source of information immediately. I have a team leader who consistently attends the morning meetings of his staff and intentionally addresses the latest rumors and gossip. He often says: "This is what I'm hearing..." and finishes with the truth and the facts. It is very effective in undermining the credibility of toxic gossipers.
3. **Identify and Discuss the Negative Impacts of Gossip.** Most people don't want to harm others. Some people thrive on hurting others. By discussing the harmful impacts of toxic gossip, you might not change the behavior of toxic people. You may, however, strengthen the other team members so that they do not buy into the games of negative problem employees. As the team leader, you should make it clear that toxic gossip is unacceptable within the organization.
4. **Use the Rotary Club's wonderful "Four-Way Test" for gossip:**
  - First: Is it True?
  - Second: Is it Fair to all Concerned?
  - Third: Will it Build Good Will and Better Relationships?
  - Fourth: Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

What a great set of standards for members of a team. Minimally, the Rotary Test could promote honesty and directness within a team. It is also a good guide for team leaders to follow in their own communications.

5. **Confront Chronic Offenders.** You know who they are and most of the gossip they spread. Why ignore it? You see, many leaders think that they must have 'proof' that "Lew" said this or that. You don't need proof. All you need is a question. "Lew, I heard you said this (fill in the blank) about my decision yesterday. Is that true?" Now bite your lip until it bleeds. Say nothing. Let Lew deny what he said. (You know he will). When he denies it, tell him you are happy to hear it. "Lew, I thought if you or I had a problem, we would take it straight to the other person." Thanks for clarifying that. And please don't hesitate to let me know if you have a problem with anything I say or do.

A simple, straightforward, non-accusatory question is a great way to increase accountability without all the emotional games that toxic people like to play.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

We have touched upon gossip in the workplace. Gossip permeates many of our interactions. It thrives in social media and within our larger community. In many ways, the challenges we face in the workplace are a microcosm of our overall social world.

# 2025 GREAT LAKES EXPO

## GLX: Education, Exhibitors and Networking

Join us at the 2025 MI-APWA Great Lakes Expo for three days of unparalleled learning, networking, and innovation at the premier event for public works professionals in the Great Lakes region.

This year's Expo promises to be bigger and better than ever, featuring:

- **Cutting-edge educational sessions:** Dive deep into the latest trends and best practices in infrastructure management, technology, sustainability, and more. Our diverse program offers something for everyone, from seasoned professionals to emerging leaders.
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- **Networking opportunities:** Build valuable connections with colleagues and peers from across the region. Expand your professional network, share ideas, and collaborate on future projects.
- **Special events:** Don't miss our exciting social events, including the Welcome Reception and Awards Banquet, where you can celebrate your achievements and build lasting relationships.

A blue graphic for a social hour event. It features several stylized icons of drinks: a martini glass, a beer mug with foam, a wine glass, a bottle of wine, and a shot glass. The text is centered and reads: "Join us for a SOCIAL HOUR Wednesday, May 21st 4:30 - 5:30 PM Exhibit Floor THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS EJ Fredrickson Supply Rowe Professional Services Company UNIQUE Paving Materials Corp." The background is a solid blue color.

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## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Herman Moore

The Michigan Chapter is excited to announce that Herman Moore, an NFL All-Pro Wide Receiver and Detroit Lions Legend, will be the keynote speaker at GLX 2025.

Moore is the Founder & CEO of Team 84 LLC, a certified minority business holding company and a serial entrepreneur. He entered into business in the early 2000s after a 12-year career as one of the most productive wide receivers in NFL league history. He spent 11 seasons with the Detroit Lions (1991-2001) and one with the New York Giants (2002), selected by the Lions in the first round (10th overall) of the 1991 NFL Draft.

He was named to the NFL Pro Bowl on four occasions (1994-97) and NFL All-Pro three times (1995-97). In October 2007, Herman Moore was among 124 modern-era players, coaches, and contributors on the preliminary list of nominees for the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2008. Moore was one of only seven other first-year eligibles to make the list. He was inducted into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame in 2010.

Moore played college football at the University of Virginia (1988-90) where he was a two-time All-American wide receiver, earning first-team honors in 1990. At Virginia, he became the all-time ACC leader for receiving yards in a single season with 1,190 in 1990 and established career records for touchdown receptions (27) and receiving yards (2,504). He was inducted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 2010.

Following his playing career, Moore became a successful NFL analyst, promotional products vendor, Cinnabon franchise group owner, and business consultant to corporate and nonprofit clients. In 2003, Moore was honored as one of Crain's Detroit Business 40 under 40.

In 2011, he established The Herman Moore Tackle Life Foundation (501(c)(3), which provides essential life skills and experiences for successful individual growth and development. Programs include sports camps, health and nutrition education workshops, comprehensive fitness and mental health programs, career development, and entrepreneurship.



Moore

With his sports background and extensive knowledge of various topics like business leadership, education, entrepreneurship, and community, Moore will bring a unique perspective and skill set as he inspires us toward positive change.

### HERMAN MOORE AUTOGRAPH PRICING PER ITEM – 2025

- \$20 per trading card
- \$15 per 8x10 photo
- \$50 per mini helmet
- \$50 per white panel football
- \$75 per authentic football
- \$75 per full-sized replica helmet
- \$100 per authentic helmet
- \$50 per replica jersey
- \$100 per authentic jersey (i.e. Mitchell & Ness)

### CUSTOM INSCRIPTION

- 20-character inscription - \$25
- 50-character inscription - \$40

# 2025 GREAT LAKES EXPO

## Why Young Professionals Should Attend the APWA GLX Conference

*Mirandi Alexander, civil engineer for the City of Farmington Hills. She was a scholarship recipient for the 2024 expo, which covered the GLX registration fee.*

I was honored to receive a scholarship from the APWA Young Professionals (YP) Committee to attend the 2024 APWA GLX Conference at Boyne. This incredible opportunity allowed me to gain industry knowledge, network with professionals, and experience a fantastic event that I wouldn't have been able to attend without it.

The conference kicked off with a golf outing at the Alpine Golf Course. Not knowing too many people beforehand, I was welcomed by members of the YP Committee, making me feel immediately included. I volunteered at the challenge hole with another scholarship recipient, which turned out to be an incredibly fun way to meet attendees. This event set the stage for an amazing conference experience.

That evening, the Welcome Reception brought everyone together in a luau-themed event. I was surprised by how well everyone embraced the theme, making it a fun and relaxed way to continue networking with the people I met on the golf course.

The second day was packed with insightful sessions focused on fleet management, operations, and innovations in public works. One standout session was with Lewis Bender from MPSI, who discussed the challenges of managing public expectations and demands. It was reassuring to hear that many municipalities face similar challenges, and I gained valuable insights into handling them effectively. Between sessions, the exhibitor floor provided additional networking opportunities, allowing me to connect with vendors and industry experts.

The final day included more informative sessions and a fascinating tour of the East Jordan Foundry. That evening, the awards ceremony and casino night provided a perfect way to unwind. I had a blast testing my (not-so-great) blackjack skills in a risk-free environment, all while enjoying the company of current and new colleagues.



*Alexander*

I was incredibly impressed by the effort and dedication that went into organizing this conference. The APWA members' commitment to creating a welcoming and educational experience for young professionals was evident. I met so many inspiring individuals, and I truly believe that attending conferences like this is essential for young professionals looking to grow in the public works industry. The networking opportunities alone were invaluable. I even convinced my boss to support my APWA membership and approve my attendance at the 2025 conference.

For any young professional considering attending, I highly encourage it. This experience not only provided professional growth but also created lasting connections. I cannot wait to return this year!

# YP Committee Sponsors Young Professionals

Congratulations to Bryson Lawrence and Austin Downie, recipients of the Young Professionals Sponsorship for GLX 2025. The sponsorship covers the GLX registration fee.

## BRYSON LAWRENCE

I have eight years of experience working with DPW municipalities. Currently, I serve as a Water Operator for the Village of Fowlerville, a role I have held since July 2023. I hold licenses for S3 and D3 Water Works System Operator. Prior to this, I gained nearly six years of experience with the City of Kentwood's Streets Maintenance Department. Outside of work, I am a father of two boys and enjoy running, hunting, and spending quality time with my family.



Lawrence

## AUSTIN DOWNIE, P.E.

I work as an engineer with OHM Advisors. I am part of our Municipal Department, where I help serve the infrastructure needs of several communities in both Oakland and Washtenaw County. I've been with OHM since early 2018 when I joined the company shortly after graduating from the University of Toledo. Outside of work, I'm an avid sports fan and enjoy just about any outdoor activity with skiing and mountain biking being my favorites. I'm always seeking my next adventure, whether that's a personal trip or complex project at work, and I'm excited about what the future holds as a newer member of APWA.



Downie

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# 2025 GREAT LAKES EXPO

## Schedule at a Glance

### TUESDAY, MAY 20

11:30am - 6:30pm	Exhibitor Set-up
12:30pm	Golf Outing
1:00 - 5:00pm	Wine Tour
7:30 - 9:30pm	YP Welcome Reception

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

7:00 - 8:30am	Registration Open
7:00 - 11:00am	Exhibitor Set up
7:30 - 9:00am	Breakfast
8:00 - 8:30am	Annual Meeting - Branch President & Past President Awards
8:30 - 9:30am	MML Update
9:30 - 11:00am	Keynote Speaker
11:00am - 4:30pm	Exhibit Floor Open
11:00 - 11:30am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
11:30am - 12:30pm	Concurrent Sessions
12:30-2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 3:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
3:00- 3:30pm	Break - Visit Exhibitors
3:30 - 4:30pm	Concurrent Sessions
4:30 - 5:30pm	Social Hour on Exhibit Floor

### THURSDAY, MAY 22

7:30 - 8:30am	Breakfast on Expo Floor
7:30am - 2:00pm	Exhibit Floor Open
8:30 - 9:30am	Concurrent Sessions
9:30 - 10:00am	Break - Visit Exhibitors
10:00am - 12:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
12:00 - 2:00pm	Lunch with Exhibitors
2:00 - 4:00pm	Concurrent Sessions
5:30 - 6:00pm	Cocktail Hour
6:00- 7:00pm	Awards Ceremony
7:00 - 10:00pm	Vegas Night



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# DE-ESCALATING LEADERSHIP: MANAGING PUBLIC ANGER IN PUBLIC WORKS

By Linnea Rader, Treasurer, MI-APWA

Finance and Human Resources Director, Van Buren County Road Commission

Lead with Linnea, Professional Development Trainer, Coach and Blogger

## THE GROWING CHALLENGE

Leadership in Public Works is getting a renewed challenge as of late. We've always had the responsibility of managing the expectations of our constituents and addressing concerns, but these responsibilities seem to be taking a drastic turn.

Sure, there have always been individuals who may act inappropriately. There have always been angry residents; we have never been able to please everyone. But lately, people are MAD. And that anger seems to be growing.

Has it been the introduction of social media and keyboard warriors? Is it the increase in remote work so more people see our crews out working on their streets? Was it COVID and the shutdowns, health risks, and deaths? Whatever the cause, the result is that the general population is angrier than they used to be.

## LEADERSHIP RESPONSE

As leaders it is more important than ever that we not only lead by example but also ensure that our teams understand what is expected, how to remain safe, and what to do in bad situations.

Many of our organizations are developing de-escalation training programs to do just that. Have you?

Now, if you're saying, this is no big deal; I handle these situations all the time. As they come, I figure out the next steps and get them done. If so, good for you! But have you talked to your support staff? Have you talked to your front line? Are they managing it like you? Are you truly managing it yourself? Or is it building up inside of you? The same can be said for your team...



*Rader*

“

“The challenges facing public works leaders aren't going away, and neither is our responsibility to create safe, supportive work environments.”

”

## INTERNAL IMPACT

This transcends into our organizations as well. Because, well, we are also humans. Many of us are also angrier or have shorter fuses than we used to. The situations we used to handle without hardly blinking an eye, the snarkiness we used to overlook, the single finger salutes we would laugh off, the personal verbal attacks we would walk away from - they are hitting more of us square in the gut and eliciting a response.

be aware, be vigilant, and even if you don't think you need it, consider developing a de-escalation program.

## BUILDING YOUR DE-ESCALATION PROGRAM

So, what do these de-escalation programs need to cover?

- **Expectations – Give examples.** Talk to your people, get some examples from them, and then develop the ideal way the situation should be managed.
  - What do you want your teams to say or try to communicate? What do you want them to hand off?
  - At what point should your team member exit the situation?
- **Notification requirements –** If your team has a negative encounter, who should be notified, when, and how? What documentation should be created? Remember that you (and they) may not be questioned about the interaction for days, weeks or even months. Details can be important.
- **Body Language and Voice Tone training** – Does the body language and voice tone of your communication match your intent? Are they focused on positive, productive management of the situation or are they eliciting a negative response?
  - For example, standing square with someone who is frustrated can be perceived as confrontational; moving one leg back and standing in more of a relaxed stance can help de-escalate situations. Moreover, this stance allows you for more quick movement to exit the situation if needed (think of sports and keeping your feet moving and not planted).

The more your programs can cover that is relevant to your teams, the better. If you can provide opportunities to practice these skills, it will assist in building muscle memory and will more likely be utilized in stressful situations.

## SUPPORTING YOUR TEAM

Utilizing an employee assistance program (EAP) can also help address your employee's emotions, concerns, and frustrations. Providing opportunities to get beyond any anger they harbor will also increase the success of your program.

On top of everything, make sure your teams know you support them and want them to succeed. When situations arise and they manage them well, recognize them. Situations like these are typically emotionally charged and present unique challenges. Recognize their accomplishments and if they don't go according to plan, guide and mentor them.

## TAKE ACTION NOW TO PROTECT YOUR TEAM

The challenges facing public works leaders aren't going away, and neither is our responsibility to create safe, supportive work environments. I encourage you to begin developing your de-escalation program today—even if it starts small. Schedule a team meeting this week to discuss recent challenging interactions, identify training needs, and create clear protocols for your staff. Remember, investing in these skills protects not only your employees but also strengthens public trust in your department. Your team deserves the tools to handle difficult situations with confidence. Don't wait for the next incident to happen before taking action.

If you want to consult on training or coaching for your team, please reach out.

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And be sure to check out my website and sign up for exclusive content [www.leadwithlinnea.com](http://www.leadwithlinnea.com).

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# MICHIGAN FLOOD RESPONSE LEADS NOLA AND CHICAGO

By Brandon Wong, founder and CEO, Hify

*Michigan's public works teams are demonstrating how real-time monitoring can complement major infrastructure projects. Early flood warning systems help provide immediate benefits, for example, helping crews know when to respond and where, while also gathering continuous data to inform long-term planning as storms trend towards becoming more frequent and severe.*

Michigan is no stranger to flooding. Flooding is the most deadly and destructive of natural disasters, and in 2014, Detroit experienced the most expensive flood in the country, with damages estimated at \$1.8 billion. In 2021, three severe storms overwhelmed Metro Detroit's drainage systems, prompting the headline: "How many 500-year storms must Detroit endure?"

For public works officials, severe storms can lead to costly disruptions—shutting down roads, clearing out storm drains, and repairing damaged infrastructure. Recovery is expensive. But some Michigan cities are taking a different approach, investing in real-time flood monitoring to help them act before another crisis unfolds.

**“For public works officials, severe storms can lead to costly disruptions—shutting down roads, clearing out storm drains, and repairing damaged infrastructure. Recovery is expensive.”**

## FROM ONE MONITOR TO A CITYWIDE NETWORK

Dearborn, a city of 100,000 just west of Detroit, had one stream gauge on the Rouge River before 2023. It wasn't enough. The city wouldn't know a flood was happening until residents called it in, and crews had to inspect roads manually during storms.

That changed in 2023. With support from Michigan's MiNextCities pilot program, Dearborn, in partnership with Hify, installed 33 flood monitors at critical locations—underpasses, stormwater basins, roadways, and sewer outlets. These sites are the first to flood, and they cause the biggest challenges for drivers, emergency responders, and public works crews.

Dearborn has since adopted full responsibility of the network. Now, instead of responding to floods after the fact, city officials are immediately notified as water levels rise and are able to react before problems escalate. The system has already helped prevent major disruptions, and marks a paradigm-shift in how the Dearborn's Public Works Department leverages real-time information and analytics to manage severe floods.

## Quick Action Prevents a Bridge Closure

One of the biggest early tests came in August 2023, when a severe storm caused levels along the Rouge River to rise within a foot of a state-

owned bridge in Dearborn. Based on visual inspections alone, the Dearborn staff might have been forced to shut down traffic indefinitely out of caution, blocking a major traffic artery of the city. Instead, flood monitors showed that levels, while high, had not reached any structural elements of the bridge and were trending downward.

Early flood warnings coupled with real-time updates helped the public works department and state officials agree to keep the bridge open. That prevented unnecessary delays for commuters, avoided activating public communications staff, and saved money that would have otherwise been required to perform a structural engineering analysis.

## FLOOD RESPONSE CONTINUED

---

"I was raving about [Hyfi] to the mayor's office," said Tim Hawkins, Dearborn's Director of Public Works. "It would have been such an inconvenience to the public if I had to shut down this bridge. As a testament to what the service can do, you avoided the closure, because I had data that could prove it to the state."

### Stopping a Log Jam Before It Became a Massive Flood

Dearborn's early flood warning system also helped minimize damages before costs escalated. Weeks before the August 2023 storm, officials were notified when a smaller storm caused water levels to quickly rise, however, unlike the rest of the river, upstream levels did not go down.

Crews checked the site and found a massive log jam ten feet tall, 100 yards deep blocking the Rouge River. Left unchecked, the damage from the August storm that followed may have resulted in closing the bridge or worse just weeks later. Instead, crews were able to clear the blockage before it caused any damage.

### Keeping Roads Open and Crews Efficient

Beyond emergencies, Dearborn's early flood warning system offers crews new information to help them operate more efficiently:

- Roads flood fast, and data helps crews act faster. Instead of waiting for traffic reports, the Public Works Department can now redirect traffic before roads become impassable.
- Stormwater basins and sewer outlets as early indicators. These areas are designed to hold excess water, but when they fill too quickly, it's a warning sign for potential flooding. Monitoring these sites helps predict which neighborhoods could flood next.
- Real-time response and long-term solutions. Sensor data is helping Dearborn better design infrastructure improvements and inform long-term strategic plans.

## MICHIGAN'S INFLUENCE NATIONWIDE

From Chicago to Tampa, the success of Dearborn's flood monitoring gained attention

as cities across the country are adopting the same approach. With inspiration from the work in Dearborn, the city of New Orleans launched their own network ahead of the 2024 hurricane season.

During Hurricane Francine, officials in New Orleans used a similar monitoring system to track street flooding in real time. That allowed first responders to prioritize where to send crews and protect key infrastructure.

## FROM RESPONSE TO RESILIENCE

Michigan's public works teams are demonstrating how real-time monitoring can complement major infrastructure projects. Early flood warning systems help provide immediate benefits, for example, helping crews know when to respond and where, while also gathering continuous data to inform long-term planning as storms trend towards becoming more frequent and severe.

Real-time flood monitoring has already proven valuable in Dearborn. It first identified significant debris jams. Then it helped protect property and lives by identifying flooded roadways before they became impassable while also saving time by preventing an unnecessary bridge closure despite high river levels. Avoiding traffic delays, costs of a structural analysis, and avoiding unnecessary public communications highlight quick benefits. Meanwhile, the growing data repository will help support large-scale infrastructure planning and future flood mitigation efforts.

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# ROAD SCHOLAR RECAP



By Linnea Rader, Treasurer, MI-APWA  
Finance and Human Resources Director, Van  
Buren County Road Commission

## “I BELIEVE IN YOU!”

Is this a phrase that you say to yourself or your staff on a regular basis? An amazing leader will find ways to say these and similar words regularly. What is better than words though?

### ACTIONS.

If you're one of those amazing public works leaders, it's important that you know it has recently gotten easier to take action and show your front-line staff that you believe in them and their future! The APWA Road Scholar program is an exceptional way to send the message and develop more knowledgeable and productive members of your crew.

in a wide variety of subjects to ensure they can safely and efficiently do their jobs. We also encourage these same employees to mentor others, share their knowledge or experience at every opportunity, and just make each other better employees and people in general.

The APWA Road Scholar program has truly given our Road Commission an opportunity to show our employees we believe in them. Each year the Van Buren County Road Commission sends 2-3 new year one attendees to the Road Scholar program. Currently we have six graduates, five current students attending, and plans in motion to send 2-3 new attendees this October. One great testimonial to the success of the program

“If I had to pick one reason to recommend the Road Scholar Program, it would be that knowledge is power and the more you learn and put into practice, the more valuable you are to your organization.”

*Brian Burrows, Van Buren County Road Commission employee,  
Road Scholar graduate, and committee member*

Each October for three years your employees would attend Road Scholar for one week and receive a wide variety of trainings. There are leadership and team dynamic trainings to explore ideas in improving morale and communicating with residents. Other training sessions include OSHA 10-hour certification, traffic control, MMUTCD, trenching and shoring, electrical safety, pesticide applicator, winter operations methods, chainsaw use and safety, and so much more. Visit the Road Scholar website at <http://www.miroadscholar.com> for more information and to register your staff!

comes from Road Commission employee, Road Scholar graduate, and now committee member, Brian Burrows.

If you are a leader, it's likely safe to assume you know how difficult it can be to find training for the boots on the ground front-line employees, especially a training that challenges individuals of all skill levels. At the Van Buren County Road Commission, we strive to train our employees

*If I had to pick the one thing that I found most beneficial to me and my career, it would be the leadership and team dynamics sessions. After going through the 3-year program and putting the skills I learned into practice I was promoted into a supervisor role at my agency. If I had to pick one reason to recommend the Road Scholar Program, it would be that knowledge is power and the more you learn and put into practice, the more valuable you are to your organization.*

Another committee member, Morgan Smith, former Equipment Operator, now Inventory and Records Coordinator, from the City of Farmington Hills, is also a graduate of the Road Scholar program. She shares with us the following:

*Road Scholar has made me more confident in my career and with people in general. We all came to discuss and receive training about public works but unexpectedly had many great sessions regarding communicating with residents, coworkers, leadership and most importantly ourselves. I attended Road Scholar very early in my still young career and I'm so grateful I was able to. I wasn't expecting to learn how to navigate my goals and realities while being receptive to the goals and realities of those around me.*

*Entering a new environment with individuals from all over the state with different experience levels provided great opportunities to hear others' experiences and get advice on how to handle common situations we face in our field. We spend a week having discussions, with collectively a few hundred years of experience, with the ability to tap into all that knowledge. I've made friends during sessions and at dinners that I'm now comfortable reaching out to for advice or just to see how they're doing and it's nice to have a wider network of people who understand what we do.*

*I would absolutely recommend Road Scholar to others. You don't have to be an extrovert. You don't have to want to make all these connections and change your whole life. And the event is hosted by a group of people that just want you to have a great week and a safe career. Take away from the program whatever feels right for you. If you're looking for something to ignite or reignite your passion for what you're doing in the public works industry this is a great place to be.*

Lastly, Jeremy Tyson, Equipment Instructor with the Road Commission for Oakland County, 2024 Road Scholar graduate, and committee member shares his experience.

*Road Scholar has impacted my life and career by giving me the resources to move my knowledge and career further along in my organization. This happens through the information I get from the instructors as well as fellow classmates. I now can reach out with questions and get answers through the connections I made; it's an unbelievably valuable resource. I would recommend Road*

*Scholar to people for its ability to give you the correct knowledge and plenty of it.*

As you can see from the insights of just a few of the Road Scholar graduates, the program is hitting the mark and providing training our front-line personnel. If you haven't started sending your crew members yet, this can be your year! Registration for the 2025 Road Scholar program is now open. Register your front-line crew today and give them the training they need to be successful in your organization. Show them you believe in them too!



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## **Eric Scott Fishing Tournament**

May 14, 2025  
Grand Haven, MI

## **2025 Great Lakes Expo**

May 20-23, 2025  
Acme, MI

## **Detroit Metro Branch Golf Outing**

June 13, 2025  
Auburn Hills, MI

## **Rod Korhorn Memorial Golf Outing**

July 16, 2025  
Alto, MI

## **MPSI Fall Session I**

September 7-12, 2025  
Mt. Pleasant, MI

## **MPSI Fall Session II**

September 21-26, 2025  
Mt. Pleasant, MI

## **Midwest Snow Plow Rodeo & Equipment Show**

October 6-8, 2025  
Kent County, MI

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