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STATEMENT

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Bike the Bend statement – July 9, 2015

We are here at Seitz Park this morning standing near the newly re-decked East Race Headgates Bridge. This bridge highlights one of many improvements in our community, made possible by our sponsors, our riders and Bike the Bend, Inc. In the past six years of rides averaging 2,000 participants annually and record volunteer participation in 2015, over \$58,000 has been gifted back to our community through the generosity of our sponsors, riders and Bike the Bend, Inc., all dedicated to bringing the vision of Louise E. Addicott – Bike the Bend - to the community. This gift, like so many others, focuses on making our community more beautiful and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Details on other community investments can be found in your [folder](#).

We are proud of the clear and significant community impact made by Bike the Bend and its sponsors and riders, yet, we stand before you today with mixed emotions as recent events have led us to question the future of this community-focused event.

Safety has always been of paramount importance to us as we follow Louise Addicott's vision for families and friends pedaling side by side together on vehicle free streets, enjoying their community and discovering hidden gems in the area. From the first meeting in 2009 with St. Joseph County, South Bend and Mishawaka government and University of Notre Dame officials, our focus was on creating a safe event. We wanted families to feel safe riding together, side by side, regardless of age or skill level. A vehicle free route was the key component that our riders came to trust. We have tried our best to remain true to Louise's vision while accommodating the needs of churches, residents and businesses along our routes. Law enforcement officers and volunteers worked together to realize this vision in the early years of the Bike the Bend.

However, that changed with the 2014 ride. In the hours and days following Bike the Bend 2014, we received an unprecedented outpouring of concern from riders and volunteers regarding a serious and careless disregard for the safety of riders at seven (7) South Bend intersections. The volume and consistency of these reports made them too alarming to dismiss and threw the future of Bike the Bend into doubt. Our leadership shared these concerns with the Mayor and Police Chief Teachman. A copy of the letter we sent along with the rider and volunteer comments and concerns is in your [folder](#). Bike the Bend has always reimbursed local governments 100% for their services, including the cost of 40-50 off duty police officers. However, we deducted \$2,523.18 from the bill of \$10,890.30 we received from South Bend. This

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was the amount Bike the Bend was charged for services at these seven South Bend intersections.

As a result of our letter, in August of 2014, the Mayor facilitated two meetings between Bike the Bend and the South Bend police. These meeting concluded with an agreement between police and Bike the Bend to work together on route planning. A few days later the Mayor issued a letter of support for Bike the Bend, offering a compromise concept of a vehicle-limited route and family friendly bike ride, giving bicyclists priority. A copy of this letter is in your [folder](#).

We began route planning with the South Bend police for the 2015 ride in November 2014. The focus of the planning was to reduce the need for public safety personnel where possible without jeopardizing rider safety. Several meetings and communications were held with the last one being in early May 2015. Our formal application for Bike the Bend 2015 was submitted to the Board of Public Works and approved in February 2015.

On May 19 of this year, just 3-1/2 weeks before Bike the Bend, we were blindsided. We learned through an inquiry to the police that the South Bend Fraternal Order of Police had recommended to its members that they not sign up for special duty for Bike the Bend. The email we received gave the reason for this action as the “disparaging remarks about the professionalism and job performance made by your organization to the City after last year’s event.” This contrasts greatly with what police officers were telling the public in the days leading up to Bike the Bend 2015. Publicly officers were saying they were “worn out” from the demand of events in the wake of the city’s 150th anniversary festivities and other events.

It appears to us that a campaign was orchestrated by the FOP to punish Bike the Bend for having the temerity to criticize a few officers. It is clear that officers did not sign up for Bike the Bend, not because they were “worn out”, but because they were following the recommendation of their union in retaliating against Bike the Bend for calling attention to a few South Bend officers who were not performing the most basic requirements of their role during Bike the Bend 2014. Not only did the FOP support a work stoppage, but it was stated they were prepared to use their position to stop all police-related entities in the greater community from supporting Bike the Bend. What the public may not know is that the contract between the City and the FOP severely restricts who can direct vehicle traffic at intersections, other than sworn officers. Without police support, the vehicle restricted hallmark of Bike the Bend was not possible. A copy of the email Bike the Bend received regarding the Fraternal Order of Police’s recommendation is in your [folder](#) as well as our subsequent email to the Mayor and Chief Teachman.

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After intervention from the Mayor's Office and just nine days before a ride for which planning had begun the previous November, the FOP, on June 5, rescinded its negative recommendation to its members. However, the damage had been done. As of three days before Bike the Bend, only 3 South Bend public safety personnel had signed up for special duty. On Bike the Bend Sunday, 2 officers and 6 Volunteers in Policing from South Bend showed up. Thankfully there were also 5 officers from Mishawaka, 5 officers from St. Joseph County, 3 officers from Notre Dame plus 125 Bike the Bend volunteers to guide the close to 2000 adults and children participating in Bike the Bend. Rider comments regarding public safety have run the gamut from "I will not return without adequate police support" to "Hope to be back with more family next year".

Our experience over the past year has left us with many questions:

1. How does the South Bend Board of Public Works review an event application and at what point in the process and to what extent are other city departments involved?
2. Does the Fraternal Order of Police have the authority to overrule or boycott a City-approved event, especially one requiring traffic control at intersections since it represents the primary individuals allowed by contract to direct vehicle traffic? Is this in violation of the No-Strike-No Lockout provision of the City/FOP contract?
3. Is the City prepared to let a bargaining unit discriminate against an organization, like Bike the Bend, especially one that has received the required permit, that puts the City in a positive light, that generates community involvement and excitement and draws visitors to the community, that reimburses the City for services received and also directs investment back to City's infrastructure, like Bike the Bend?
4. Bike the Bend has always reimbursed the City for services or materials received. It has been reported in the media that only 5 events out of 266 events held in South Bend reimburse the City for special event services such as police and public safety. Is the media report accurate? What is the City's policy for charging organizations?
5. Most of us believe no institution is above accountability or constructive criticism in a democracy. At a time in our nation's history when questions about police accountability are a leading issue, whatever happened to civilian oversight of the South Bend Police Department?
6. We believe the Bike the Bend bike ride provides an excellent opportunity for positive interaction between the public and police officers and over the years we have seen several examples of such interaction. However, it does not appear that the South

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Bend Police Department as a whole shares this view. Why is special duty at Bike the Bend not viewed as an ideal opportunity for positive interaction with the community?

We, together with members of the South Bend community, share Louise's vision that Bike the Bend should be a community focused event with safety and family recreation at its very foundation. However, the information we share with you today leads us to believe that not all necessary community representatives share in that vision. We hoped the issues leading to the problems we saw in 2014 had been resolved. Unfortunately, we were sorely mistaken as seen by the lack of support from South Bend police during Bike the Bend 2015.

Community safety and support means everything to the success of events like Bike the Bend. Because Bike the Bend cannot risk a threat to our riders' safety, we are announcing today with great sadness, that we will not be doing another Bike the Bend for our community.

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