Parking Study
Task Force
Report of
Recommendations

September 2007
Parking Study Task Force: Report of Recommendations

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Executive Summary

The University of Akron’s main campus is growing. The University’s ongoing, major renovation campaign, the “New Landscape for Learning,” has added 11 new structures to campus, including two classroom buildings, its 15th residence hall, a Student Recreation and Wellness Center, a Student Union, and an Honors Complex, as well as 30 acres of green space. The next addition to the University’s landscape will be an on-campus football stadium with seating for 30,000. The University also is in the process of adding the historic Quaker Square complex to its holdings.

Because of this remarkable transformation and its favorable impact on enrollment, demand for parking is increasing rapidly. At the same time, some of the buildings constructed as part of the New Landscape for Learning initiative have encroached on existing parking. The planned stadium for the east side of campus will reduce parking by approximately 550 spaces starting this winter. In addition, Quaker Square needs an adequate, long-term parking solution for it to deliver its full benefit to students and the community as a University property. Given all of this activity, there needs to be a heightened sense of urgency regarding parking availability and access to campus. Adequate and efficient parking and transportation are key components of a modern, vibrant, urban institution like The University of Akron.

The Parking Study Task Force spent about eight months discussing the recommendations provided by The Consulting Engineers Group, Inc. (CEG) of Cincinnati, performing further analysis, and ultimately creating recommendations of its own. The campus community had about three weeks in which to review and respond to the draft recommendations. The Task Force considered the feedback gathered and incorporated some portions of the feedback into its recommendations.

Overall, the Parking Study Task Force recommends the following should be acted upon immediately:

1. Create a shuttle system that is accessible, timely and safe
2. Build a new parking deck
3. Implement a strategy that compels residence hall students to park their vehicles in lots that are periphery to campus (this is critical to a successful long-term parking strategy at the University)
4. Study peer universities and implement a visitor parking strategy for all aspects of University events

These recommendations, as well as about a dozen others, are discussed in the following report. Please think carefully about these recommendations and work with the necessary parties to act now on parking and transportation at The University of Akron.
Introduction
In May 2006, The University of Akron contracted The Consulting Engineers Group, Inc. (CEG) of Cincinnati, a group of consultants with considerable experience assisting urban universities, to develop a viable parking and transportation asset management strategy. In November 2006, the firm submitted its final report with recommendations for both short-term enhancements to the existing parking/transporation infrastructure and a long-term parking and transportation strategy.

In March and April of 2007, Dr. F. John Case, the University’s Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, presented CEG’s recommendations to university constituencies, including faculty, staff, and students, and solicited their feedback. Furthermore, people could submit their feedback through a comment box on the Parking Study Task Force website.

In January 2007, the Parking Study Task Force, consisting of faculty, students, staff and contract professionals, was convened to formally review CEG’s findings, perform further analysis, and issue parking and transportation recommendations to President Luis Proenza. The Task Force’s official charge was to:

- Keep the following goals in the forefront of its discussions:
  - Address the current and future parking and transportation needs of the University
  - Recommend steps that will result in a reliable and comprehensive transportation system that reduces parking demand and improves campus vitality
  - Consider new development projects and their impacts on parking and transportation
- Create an overall strategy for parking at the university
- Review and analyze the recommendations provided in CEG’s November 2006 Parking and Transportation Asset Management Strategy
- Collect and analyze information related to the recommendations, using benchmarking research, models, and in-depth analysis for recommendations that are seriously considered
- Consider cost and usage data and trends, employee opinions and preferences, and student opinions and preferences in suggesting its program
- Seek input from constituency groups concerning preferences relevant to the available options, including students, employees, visitors, community leaders, etc.
- Develop a consensus draft analysis on the parking and transportation plan for the University
- Provide opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the committee’s proposed recommendations
- Make a final report of recommendations to President Luis Proenza and to the University’s Board of Trustees
- Identify an implementation strategy for all recommendations approved, both short-term and long-term
The Task Force was chaired by Dr. F. John Case. Task Force members represent many groups across campus, ensuring that diverse points of opinion would be considered. The Task Force consisted of the following participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barry Barbe</td>
<td>President, Residence Hall Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle Bohland</td>
<td>President, Associated Student Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. F. John Case</td>
<td>VP for Finance &amp; Administration / CFO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Liikala Conwi</td>
<td>Associate Director, Office of Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Crawford</td>
<td>Representative, Associated Student Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolyn Dessin</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanda Elam</td>
<td>Graduate Assistant, Chemistry Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Richard Glotzer</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Family &amp; Consumer Sciences; Director, School of Family &amp; Consumer Sciences; Fellow, Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Hadley</td>
<td>Adjunct Associate Professor, Geography and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hammond</td>
<td>Assistant Athletics Director, Athletics Facilities &amp; Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie Madden</td>
<td>Associate Vice President Auxiliary Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Mink</td>
<td>Master Locksmith, University Police Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Pierson</td>
<td>Director, Architectural Services &amp; Capital Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Susan Ramlo</td>
<td>Professor, Engineering &amp; Science Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darin Siley</td>
<td>Student Services Counselor, Admissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Harvey Sterns</td>
<td>Professor Psychology; Director and Senior Fellow, Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oletha Thompson</td>
<td>Associate Vice President Campus Life, Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Margaret Wineman</td>
<td>Interim Dean, College of Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Ziegler</td>
<td>Representative, Associated Student Government</td>
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The Process

Throughout the many meetings and discussions, the Parking Study Task Force requested, reviewed, and analyzed a tremendous amount of data. Examples of the types of information evaluated include:

- A survey of residence hall students to determine who has cars on campus and the amount of daily usage
- A utilization study of existing parking areas at the beginning of the school year
- A map of parking areas with their descriptions
- Potential future sites for parking areas both on and off campus
- An inventory of all visitor parking spaces on campus
- Scheduling and coordination data for the previous year, including data for classes, special events, etc.
- Fall enrollment statistics for the last two weeks of the semester
- A parking survey of other Ohio public institutions of higher education

After several brainstorming sessions and in the process of considering CEG’s priorities, the Task Force decided to align with CEG’s report and four primary goals. These goals are:
• **Increase the parking supply**
  The consultants said we would be short about 1,600 spaces in FY2007/08 with recent and proposed campus changes.

• **Create a reliable and comprehensive parking and transportation system**

• **Design a fee structure that better reflects the true cost of providing parking services**
  We also need to develop the means to pay for new infrastructure that would help meet future demand for parking.

• **Communicate and collaborate to improve service, coordinate efforts and manage scarce resources**

The Task Force’s ultimate recommendations center on these four goals.

A draft of the Parking Study Task Force recommendations was made available to the campus through a website for a period of three weeks. At this time the campus had the opportunity to review the draft recommendations and provide comments for improvement. Feedback was encouraged and all Parking Study Task Force representatives were available to receive comments to be shared with the Task Force for consideration in the final report. A total of approximately 325 individual and group comments were returned. A summary of the major ideas/feedback are provided in Appendix I.

Additionally, the Staff Employee Advisory Committee (SEAC) representative conducted a survey of its membership to determine their thoughts about the draft recommendations. The summary of these results are provided in Appendix II.

Overall, the recommendations provide a framework for the University’s parking and transportation strategy. Some recommendations will take longer to implement, if accepted, due to the efforts to collaborate with other organizations where appropriate, estimate and secure funding, and appropriately communicate the respective changes to all affected parties. The Task Force’s detailed recommendations follow.
The Recommendations

GOAL No. 1: Increase the parking supply

First recommendation: Build a deck or expand an existing deck to meet demand for parking that is expected to increase at a steady rate over the next five years. Options include:

- build a deck in the area bounded by Spicer, Exchange and Nash streets, and the Route 8 access road;
- build onto the Exchange Street deck in the area between Lot 37, Schrank North and South Building and Lot 38, and expand Exchange Street deck into Lot 41;
- potentially building a deck on the Quaker Square property in partnership with the City of Akron;
- add levels to the Polsky Deck;
- expand the East Campus Parking Deck westward; and/or
- expand the North Campus Parking Deck westward.

Additionally, the following locations are being investigated for additional parking:

- the vacant building and parking lot on the southeast corner of Exchange and Goodkirk streets,
- the Urban League Property on College and Market streets,
- the Opportunity Park Garage, and
- Chapel Parking on Hamilton Street.

Security and safety issues may need to be addressed with some of these locations.

Note: Figure 1 includes additional parking locations considered, but not recommended for the reasons indicated.

Second recommendation: Require residence hall students to park their cars overnight in periphery lots, such as the East Campus Parking Deck, Polsky Parking Deck and/or Lot 45, the surface lot north of the North Campus Parking Deck.
Note that special consideration would need to be given to students with disabilities living in the residence halls.

Over the long-term, it is recommended that the University phase in the recommendation allowing only residence hall students of sophomore standing and above (those having completed at least 32 credit hours) to purchase parking permits. The Parking Study Task Force recommends that a separate group be formed to plan the implementation of this recommendation.

**Third recommendation:** Move University-owned vehicles, trailers and dumpsters taking up parking spaces in central campus to safe, secure, covered locations further out. This action is already under way.

**Fourth recommendation:** Plenty of anecdotal evidence leads us to conclude we do not have adequate parking for visitors to campus. The University currently has a visitor parking lot and parking meters. Thus, we recommend that Parking Services study peer universities to learn how they serve visiting motorists and create a parking strategy for visitors to the University campus both during the weekdays and weekends for special events.

Also, it appears that employees and students use meters intended for visitors. This limits the amount of spaces actually available for visitor parking. The Task Force recommends that Parking Services explore options that would discourage employees and students from using meters.

**Fifth recommendation:** We recommend the University devise a separate parking strategy for special events that draw large crowds, particularly at midday.

**Sixth recommendation:** We recommend the University consider strategies to encourage carpooling and bike riding to campus destinations. Furthermore, we recommend the University continue to investigate proven transportation alternatives at other institutions that may be effective at The University of Akron.

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**GOAL No. 2: Create a reliable and comprehensive parking and transportation system**

**First recommendation:** The Task Force invested a great deal of time studying ways to move people around campus, and this is an intrinsic component of any parking solution. Our current shuttle system is underused because it takes too long to complete a circuit and because it is undistinguished from the city bus service.

We recommend the creation of a new shuttle system. It is critical that the shuttle system is timely and has:

1. Expanded hours from the current system,
2. Covered bus stops with security cameras, and
3. Emergency phones.
We recommend a shuttle system with seven 25-passenger buses. The university shuttles would travel three separate, contiguous routes at about 7-minute intervals. These routes are illustrated in Figure 2. A description of each route with the estimated mileage for each leg of each route also follows. A shuttle system would make it easier for students and employees to use outlying parking lots. Students and employees who live in adjoining neighborhoods could use the shuttle rather than drive to campus.

We also recommend purchasing an eighth shuttle to serve only students and employees with physical limitations and their companions. Originally, the intent was to have people with disabilities use the regular shuttle system, but research showed that it could take up to 7 minutes to load a person in a wheelchair, and that would delay the shuttle system to such a degree that it could discourage time-rushed students and employees from using it.

Overall, this proposal would cost about $700,000 to $800,000 annually. (This figure assumes a three-year leasing structure for the seven shuttles; it does not include the dedicated bus for people with physical disabilities or the expanded hours, covered bus stops with security cameras, and security phones.) Funding for this service must be established. We recommend forming a separate task force to propose options for a fee structure for this purpose. If the complete shuttle system cannot be implemented, we recommend that the shuttle routes be implemented in a phased manner and in the following order:

1. South/East “Blue” Route
2. West “Yellow” Route
3. North/East “Red” Route

An additional route will need to be developed to accommodate the Quaker Square property once it is owned and operated by The University of Akron. The route must be operational in January 2008.

We also recommend exploring whether the City of Akron and Summa Health System have an interest in collaboratively developing and utilizing this shuttle bus system.
Figure 2: Three proposed shuttle routes, represented by the red, yellow and blue lines.

NORTH/EAST “RED” ROUTE:
The purpose of this route is to facilitate the use of remote parking lots in the north and east by commuters, and to bring residents of Fir Hill towers to campus so that they can leave their cars off campus. This will reduce the demand for parking spaces at the heart of campus.

- East Campus Parking Deck (ECPD) to Fir Hill Towers: 0.4 miles
- Fir Hill Towers to Bierce Circle: 0.8 miles
- Bierce Circle to ECPD: 0.5 miles

  - Total Approximate Mileage: 1.7 miles
WEST “YELLOW” ROUTE:
The purpose of this route is to bring students from the residence halls south of Exchange Street to the heart of campus (Student Union) and the Polsky Building, and to transport people between the heart of campus and the Polsky Building. This will encourage people to leave their cars in peripheral lots (Polsky Deck and lots south of Exchange Street) rather than bring them to the heart of campus, reducing the demand in central areas. Additionally, this route will help many students and faculty move more quickly between classes located on different ends of the campus, and greatly increase campus accessibility.

- Bierce Circle to Polsky (High Street): 0.7 miles
- Polsky (High Street) to Folk Hall: 0.9 miles
- Folk Hall to Student Union: 0.4 miles
- Student Union to Bierce Circle: 0.9 miles

  o Total Approximate Mileage: 2.9 miles

SOUTH/EAST “BLUE” ROUTE:
The purpose of this route is to enable students living in private residences south of Exchange Street to leave their vehicles at home and be shuttled to campus. This will reduce the demand for parking spaces at the heart of campus. It will also assist students living in the University residences (Town Houses, Grant Street Residence Hall, Gallucci Residence Hall, and Exchange Street Residence Hall) in getting to campus safely.

- J.A.R. Arena to Student Union: 1.2 miles
- Student Union to Gallucci Hall: 0.3 miles
- Gallucci Hall to Buchtel Field: 0.7 miles
- Buchtel Field to J.A.R. Arena: 0.7 miles

  o Total Approximate Mileage: 2.9 miles

Second recommendation: We recommend that Parking Services consider a system that encourages people who are on campus for the duration of the workday to park at periphery lots, thus freeing up spaces closer to the campus center for students and employees who are on campus for only parts of the workday. The inability to find spaces at midday in the campus center is a significant problem for students, part-time faculty, and faculty and staff who leave campus at mid-morning and return by 2 p.m.

The following is an alternative that we considered to meet the second goal, but that we ultimately set aside.

We studied in-depth the advantages and disadvantages of assigned parking and a tiered or preferred parking system. Under a tiered/preferred system, students and employees would pay a surcharge to park in a lot or deck near the campus center. We do not recommend either assigned or tiered/preferred parking because:
such an arrangement would exacerbate the shortfall of spaces that will occur over the next 12 months (a deficiency estimated at 1,600 spaces); parking locations are not equally distributed across campus, demand for parking across campus is uneven (e.g., demand is high around Mary Gladwin Hall and lower around Olin Hall); and such approaches may be difficult for Parking Services to monitor.

GOAL No. 3: Design a fee structure that better reflects the true cost of providing parking and transportation services. Develop the means to pay for new infrastructure

The different financial recommendations may or may not cover a new parking deck, operations and maintenance, and/or a parking reserve. The estimated cost for each of these expenses is provided in the table below.

**Figure 3: Parking Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>New parking deck</td>
<td>$25 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>$5,167,710 million/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking reserve*</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Parking reserve fund to meet rising utility and maintenance costs and any unforeseen capital project expenses

Financial recommendations to help offset these costs follow.

**First recommendation:** Some of our discussion related to the cost of permits and the university salary structure. Working with Parking Services, we devised two possible designs for a salary-based fee structure. The first (Figure 4), bases the fee by salary range. For the second (Figure 5), the fee is set by a percentage of one’s salary. Neither option would change the amount of funding that Parking Services collects annually.
Note: The Parking Study Task Force thoroughly considered the impact of any parking changes on students. The consensus of the committee was that once an approach is determined for employees, a similar approach would be used for students.

**Second recommendation:** We believe it is reasonable and necessary for Parking Services to sustain a $350,000 reserve fund to meet rising utility and maintenance costs, and any unforeseen capital project expenses. Parking Services, a stand-alone auxiliary, reports that its maintenance and utility costs are about $350,000 annually. Its current reserve fund, while capably managed,
has dwindled in recent years as maintenance and utility costs have risen. We recommend a one-time increase in cost of parking permits to generate sufficient funds to maintain a $350,000 reserve fund. To meet this goal, we believe the annual cost of permits would need to increase on average about $20. The increase should be implemented this fiscal year (pending union discussions).

Third recommendation: Eliminate the parking subsidy for employees, but do it in such a way that it does not pose a hardship. We recommend that employees who purchase a permit receive a one-time increase to their base salary of $120. Today, University departments pay $120 of their employees’ permit fees. The addition of $120 to employees’ base salaries will enhance subsequent pay increases, along with their retirement benefits. The change will also eliminate a time-intensive administrative process: the collection of the employee subsidy from departments. It is important to note that the tax effect will be the same as it is today. The subsidy is currently taxed through the W-2 process.

Fourth recommendation: Build a 1,600-vehicle deck for about $25 million. We recommend a $50 increase to the annual cost of a permit to cover construction and debt service costs. This increase should be assessed only after the deck opens. A deck typically takes 18-24 months to build.

Fifth recommendation: We recommend that retirees should continue to be able to acquire a permit for free unless they are employed by the University. If they are employed by the University, they would use the same permit fee structure as regular employees.

Sixth recommendation: After residence hall students are required to park in periphery-designated lots, any future increases in their permit fees should be minimized. When this occurs, appropriate measure would have to be implemented to help assure safety and easy access to Main Campus.

Alternatives that we reviewed, but ultimately set aside are the assigned and tiered/preferred parking approaches that were discussed under Goal Number 2. They were set aside for the reasons stated under Goal 2.

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GOAL No. 4: Communicate and collaborate to improve service, the coordination of efforts and the management of scarce resources

First recommendation: Form a Traffic Review Committee with representation from the City of Akron to help assure that efforts are coordinated and resources are shared wisely. This recommendation, which was made early to President Luis Proenza, is already moving forward.

Second recommendation: Improve communications. As soon as possible, we encourage Parking Services to explore:
- a means to improve real-time communication to motorists who are looking for a parking space (e.g., an electronic capacity-tracking system to count cars entering a deck or lot, and electronic signs out front to tell motorists when the deck or lot is full); and
- the feasibility of enhancing the department’s web site to include interactive features that inform and alter behaviors so that parking on this campus meets the needs of more people.

Conclusion
The Parking Study Task Force worked diligently to consider all of the different aspects that affect parking and the various constituencies’ requirements. With review and implementation of the approved recommendations, a parking approach for employees, students, and visitors, which incorporates our current parking strategy, will be developed. Finally, the Task Force emphasizes the importance of this report’s review and of constant communications with the University community.

*On behalf of the University community, the Parking Study Task Force chair, Dr. F. John Case, wishes to thank the members of the Parking Study Task Force for their time and effort in reviewing the data, deliberating, and producing the report. Thanks to all of the members for their time and effort in this endeavor.*
Appendix I: Summary of Campus Comments on Draft Parking Recommendations

A draft of the Parking Study Task Force recommendations was made available to the campus through a website for a period of three weeks. At this time the campus had the opportunity to review the draft recommendations and provide comments for improvement. Feedback was encouraged and all Parking Study Task Force representatives were available to receive comments to be shared with the Task Force for consideration in the final report. A total of approximately 325 individual and group comments were returned. A summary of the major ideas/feedback are provided below. The summary was reviewed and discussed by the Task Force and incorporated into the recommendations where appropriate.

Ideas/Feedback that the Parking Study Task Force discussed
1. The Polsky Deck is not a good location for overnight parking.
2. University vehicles used for academic purposes should be located central to the campus.
3. Encourage bike riding and car-pooling.
4. The $120 subsidy will be subject to federal, state and local taxes if added to the base salary. This will reduce the benefit that is already being received.
5. Eliminate free permits to the retirees.
6. Do not support the addition of the $120 subsidy to the base salary.
7. Do not agree with the permit price based on salary.
8. Build a deck out of university funds and do not charge this back to students and employees through increased parking permit fees.

Ideas/Feedback that the Task Force had already considered
1. Designate residence hall parking lots/spaces.
2. No first year residence hall students should receive a permit.
3. Create a shuttle system that has:
   a. expanded hours from the current system,
   b. covered bus stops with security cameras, and
   c. emergency phones.
4. Encourage parking in periphery lots at a reduced rate.
5. Shuttle system must be timely.

Ideas/Feedback that the Parking Office will look into
1. Place security cameras in all of the parking decks.
2. Install wide-angle mirrors in all levels of the deck ceilings or posts to show oncoming traffic.
3. Remove speed bumps in the decks to avoid cars that maneuver around them and create the potential for accidents.
4. Place security cameras in the parking lots.
Appendix II: Summary Results from Staff Employees Advisory Committee (SEAC Survey)

1. New deck location: 38% wanted lot 39 expanded, 34% wanted lot 26 expanded
2. Move residence hall students: 58% thought this a good idea
3. Move UA vehicles: 85% agreed with this
4. Text responses to suggestions for more parking resources were varied; the most popular responses were:
   a. Build deck on lot 34 (next to Computer Center)
   b. Car pooling with incentives
   c. Ban freshman residence hall students from having cars
5. 75% thought an expanded shuttle system was necessary
6. Only 28% thought that moving employees to the periphery was a good idea
7. Text responses:
   a. Shuttle
      i. Most persons thought a quicker shuttle would be better
      ii. Some suggested using smaller vehicles
   b. Employees at periphery
      i. Some thought it a good idea as long as the shuttles were convenient
      ii. Others felt it a safety issue and stated that they arrived early so that parking would not be a problem
8. 56% Favored Table 1
9. 61% Were not in favor of a one-time fee of $20 to fund the parking reserve fund
10. 52% Did not like the removal of the parking subsidy
11. Most text comments centered on the cost of parking as a tax against employees who had to come to work. Additionally, comments indicated that with increased cost came no guarantee of a spot as there were not enough spots to go around.
12. 78% Thought a Traffic Review Committee was a good idea
13. 80% Thought it important to improve communications about parking
14. 67% Thought it important to improve the parking web site
15. Comments about improved communications indicated disparate information but one common theme was that lot full signs are not always accurate and sometimes are left in place too long.
16. Constructive comments for the overall recommendations indicated that there is a great need for another deck and that the deck needs to be fairly convenient to the center of campus. Indications of problems were reported with Carroll Street being too rough and needing to be resurfaced as well as the Polsky Deck leaking fluid onto cars when it rains.
SEAC’s overall ratings of the Parking Study Task Force’s recommendations follow:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
<th>COUNT</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Terrible</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
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**TOTAL:** 255 100.00%