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Construction Forum STL is a nonprofit dedicated to addressing the “big issues” facing the St. Louis construction industry. We believe that when the construction community comes together to network, discuss ideas, and share information we are all better for it. This website is a dynamic, collective repository for knowledge, information, news, research, and ideas that can make our industry stronger.

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## Echelon Rides Winds of Change

By Tom Finan on December 5, 2014

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by Tom Finan, Executive Director, ConstructForSTL

Greg Ancel and Ryan Barr, avid cyclists, are applying principles they learned in both construction and team bicycling to the concept behind Echelon Constructors, the firm that the pair founded in August.

In February Ancel, a 30 year industry veteran, stepped down from his position as Partner and Director of Operations with ARCO, a company he joined in 1993. Barr, a Civil Engineer, spent his first 13 years at Brinkmann Constructors as Project Manager and Director of Development; followed by a development position at McEagle Properties, which was foreshortened by the recession of 2008; and five years with Parkway Construction Services.



Ryan Barr and Greg Ancel

The name Echelon refers to a tactic employed by cycling teams riding into a crosswind. In calm winds, teams will typically form a single file “pace line”, with the lead rider setting the pace and the other riders hugging the tire of the rider in front of them, thus being pulled along by the slipstream and saving up to 40 percent of their expended energy. Riding into a crosswind however, teams will spread out across the road in an angular, chevron-shaped line, called an echelon.

On the Echelon Facebook page, the organization states: “We, at Echelon Constructors, are the lead rider of the construction and development team making our clients’ projects run smoother and with less effort.” The Echelon is a symbol of the kind of collaborative effort that Ancel and Barr hope to build around their firm.

The pair hold corporate titles of “co-founder/partner” at Echelon (the website’s URL is [www.Echelon810.com](http://www.Echelon810.com), with the 810 referring to the date the company was founded), Ancel and Barr have brought together their combined experience to craft what they describe as a truly collaborative approach.

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Ryan Barr, competing in an Ironman triathlon in Boulder, CO.

Both of them come from a negotiated Design/Build background. Ancel has strong experience in light industrial, manufacturing, senior living, and multi-family. Barr's expertise includes development, office, retail, medical, and senior living.

"We're both experienced in the cradle-to-grave process – solving the problems with particular pieces of property, design and delivery," Ancel said. "It is not in our personalities to sit on the sidelines waiting for the process to happen.

Based on our experiences getting engaged early with the client, architect, engineer, and subcontractors minimizes issues down the road. We really want to help connect the dots for the team."

Barr said that their approach starts with the owner's endgame in mind and then creates a strategy for delivery, "from acquisition to their exit structure out of the property."

The firm is currently finishing a couple of smaller projects. They stated that 2015 is shaping up to be a very successful year for them. "People who know us, know what we're capable of delivering," Ancel said. Ancel and Barr said they will follow their clients out of town. But they added that they are focusing on the St. Louis region to create the opportunities for their superintendents to rotate back home after a stint on an out-of-town project.

"We're looking at a dozen projects right now, and four of them are out of town," Ancel said.

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