

## ENR Podcasts: Exploring AI, MBEs and the Future of Transportation

By [Richard Korman](#), September 14, 2023



ENR.com's podcast team, Senior Editor Aileen Cho and Technology Editor Jeff Yoders, landed in the middle of ENR's recent technology conference to record what key industry tech executives were saying about the future of artificial intelligence and how it may change construction.

They had already posted [podcasts](#) that focused on advocacy for minority contractors, the future of transportation infrastructure design-build and the professional life of two married engineers working at the California Dept. of Transportation. Below are small samples of what these podcasts share:

- [Talking AI at FutureTech '23](#): As they made their way around ENR's FutureTech 2023, Cho and Yoders asked about the current and future AI impacts on construction. Bassem Hamdy of Briq compared skepticism surrounding it to what initially greeted construction technology based on automation and digital robots. Hamdy said the technology has been shown to be able to save thousands of hours of labor, and is "thankfully, helping to run a better business." Calvin Kam of Strategic Building Innovation said now that "everybody's jumping" to AI, it "elevates" to a higher-level any discussion about design optimization. Lisa Kelly, Earthcam vice president of new business, said that while she hears about AI everywhere, she also likes seeing more information about its "actionable uses."
- ['Insuring' Success for M/WBEs](#): In another episode, the team interviewed insurance broker Ingrid Merriwether, who explained that working with minority and women-owned contractors changes the perception that they lack experience and depth. "Our program shows that's not true," she said, adding that the dollar volume of her firm's work awarded to such companies comes with a loss ratio that is less than 1%. In her view, that dispels the notion that minority and women-owned firms lack competence. "We show that when you remove barriers, [those contractors] outperform their much-larger peers," Merriwether said.
- [Transportation's Past and Future](#): In this podcast episode, Cho talks and reminisces with Eric Keen, CEO of HDR and a longtime transportation construction leader, about the industry, the firm's vision moving forward and why he sees progressive design-build as progress, especially when design is 60% complete before a price is locked in.
- [Caltrans' Married Couple](#): Cho interviews engineers Marco and Christina Ruano about their courtship, construction, claims and other adventures in their time at the big California transportation agency.