

The Request Tax: Re-evaluating 20 Years of Web Performance Dogma

- **Speaker:** Alex Moon
- **Room:** CC 236
- **Time:** Sun 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm
- **Format:** Lecture (30 Min + Q&A)
- **Difficulty:** Introductory
- **Track:** Development & Dev Tools
- **Additional Tags:** Networks
- **Presenter Location:** In-person
- **Experience:** first time speaking / several-th time speaking
- **At:** anywhere / at lfnw

Description:

For nearly two decades, web developers have lived by a simple rule: **reduce your HTTP requests**. In the era of HTTP/1.x, that advice made perfect sense — TCP handshakes, head-of-line blocking, and connection limits meant that bundling everything together was the only way to achieve acceptable performance.

But the web has changed. With HTTP/3, QUIC, and modern CDN architectures, Alex has observed real-world cases — especially in Headless WordPress and WPGraphQL — where **smaller, granular requests outperform monolithic ones**, thanks to better caching behavior and more efficient delivery at the network layer.

This talk investigates what Alex calls the **“Request Tax”** and asks whether our long-held performance dogma still applies. Attendees will explore:

- **The Wire** — How HTTP/3’s UDP-based streams and multiplexing reshape the cost model of a request
- **The Cache** — Why giant all-in-one fetches can sabotage CDN efficiency, and how granular requests improve cache reuse
- **The Data** — Comparisons between legacy patterns and modern architectures, backed by research and Alex’s own testing

This session doesn’t promise a silver bullet. Instead, it offers a clear-eyed look at where old rules still matter, where they fail, and why it may finally be time to stop fearing the humble HTTP request.

Target Audience:

- Web developers
- Sysadmins
- Web performance practitioners

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