FDOT DISTRICT TWO

Intelligent Transportation Systems Newsletter July 2009



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes from the District Two ITS Engineer	1
Traffic Incident Management	3
Maintenance	5
Road Ranger Update	5
Construction	6
North Florida TPO Update	7
Performance Measures	8
Operations	9
Spotlight on Donna Danson	10
Extra-Mission Guyana	12
Photo Gallery	14
Staffing/Contact Info	15

ITS Announcements

Alachua TIM Meeting August 12th

First Coast TIM Meeting September 15th

Please contact the ITS Office at (904) 360-5465 if you would like to participate in the meetings.

 α

DISTRICT TWO ITS ENGINEE

Ш

FROM THI

NOTES

Notes from the District 2 ITS Engineer

I would like to begin by thanking all of my staff for their support with the District Two ITS newsletter. We are now entering the third year of distribution so I anticipate that bigger and better things will be presented in the coming months. This June and July have been one of the most challenging periods in my seven years with this office due to the increasing exposure of the ITS program and Next Generation 511 system. The maintenance and operation of the ITS deployment has continuously improved over the past year, but this month "took the cake" with the initialization of the new 511 interactive voice recognition and website. This improved system basically puts us in full view of the entire State on a daily basis, thereby unveiling any strengths or weaknesses in our ITS program.

individual the can now go onto www.FL511.com website and see what information is being generated by our operations staff. Likewise, they can see what devices are working or which ones are down, thus displaying our maintenance capabilities. The information can be viewed on the map dynamically or in table format, so this knowledge is keeping us on our toes each and every day. The operation and maintenance staff has been alerted on these new features so that the quality checks performed twice a day receive greater attention. Due to these new features our maintenance contractor. Traffic Control Devices, and Kevin Jackson have

taken their efforts to a new level and we can proudly state that a large majority of our devices are fully operational. Our other maintenance team, Florida Industrial Electric, has also placed greater emphasis on keeping the system operational. Now, if we can only get the manufactures to improve the turnaround time on repairs we'd have 100% of our equipment up and running.

The Next Generation 511 system has been operational for over one month and there have been minimal problems in District Two. The ITS office in Tallahassee has their consultant monitoring our performance on a daily basis, providing us with feedback from messages left on the 511 voicemail system. I am proud to say that the latest report had zero incidents/complaints involving District Two. In comparison, several of the other Districts had 15 or more complaints about lack of data on existing roadway conditions, incorrect information on the conditions or unrecognized roads. Credit should go to our Operations Contractor who insured the data placed into the system was complete and accurate prior to the launch. Likewise, their due diligence on gathering traffic condition information is paying huge dividends, even for incidents as far away as Alachua County.

Nothing is perfect and we did get one complaint the day after the June 17th launch. It was a

Notes from the ITS Engineer continued

feedback message from a truck driver who had an everyday route along I-10 from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. When I contacted the gentleman I learned that he regularly uses the 511 system to maintain his daily schedule. On this one occasion he encountered an unexpected detour that delayed his schedule by 10 minutes and said this amounted to several thousand dollars of lost revenue. I took his information, conducted an investigation, found where the problem occurred, took corrective action and then called this gentleman back to let him know we have resolved the issue.

This truck driver was appreciative on the response to his feedback message and was very complimentary of the new 511 system. provided a comparison on the improvements he has noticed since the new system was put in place and has now become a regular feedback caller, telling us what he comes across while using the system. His latest feedback message, received last week, told us the system was working great and he truly appreciates the efforts put forth by the Department in providing updated traffic information. This type of message is what our team strives for since it supports our goal of getting the word out on traffic conditions throughout District Two.

One final topic to discuss is that the District Two ITS office had its first Rapid Incident Scene

Clearance activation a few weeks ago. There were a few "quirks" along the way that have since been corrected but overall this initial activation should be deemed a success. The incident occurred on I-10 westbound near mile marker 347 at 5:05 AM. Overall, the total amount of time the road was closed was for 46 minutes, thus easily meeting our Local Open Roads Policy goal.

We have discussed the issues with FHP, the TMC operator involved and the RISC contractor so that we can try to avoid these "quirks" in the future. To keep the explanation simple, FHP used their list instead of the software to activate the RISC contractor, the TMC operator did not reference the software that was designed to make their job easier and the RISC contractor did not maintain the lines of communication developed in the process. We met the 90-minute Open Roads goal with a few "stumbles" along the way that have since been corrected.

Pete Vega **ITS** Engineer



Traffic Incident Management

On July 21st the FDOT sponsored the I-95 Corridor Coalition Training on Coordinated Incident Management with over 70 team members present. Mr. John O'Laughlin, Delcan, and Tom Martin, I-95 Corridor Coalition, led the training with great support from our Team Both John and Tom have several members. vears of experience in the field of Law Enforcement and shared their experiences while working with the Highway Patrol, handling roadway incidents in other parts of the country. The objective of the I-95 Corridor Coalition was to provide this training so that there is some consistency across State boarders as motorists travel along I-95.

The training incorporated responsibilities of the different responders and how each could help partnering agencies with safely managing traffic at the incident scene. The instructors showed that most of this MOT information could be found in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) and is readily available on-line for the participants review. The instructors asked the participants to discuss how incidents are handled locally and what issues/concerns the responders had when setting up the MOT. They then discussed how similar incidents are handled in other States so that the attendees could get a comparison.

The instructors showed a multitude of video on accidents that occurred at the site of an incident

after MOT had been set-up. These videos reflected what the responders could encounter at any incident scene, even if they think they were well protected at the time. John then discussed the project being done by the Northeast Florida TIM team and how it would be incorporated into future training that would be shared with other incident responders around the Country.

Overall, it was a very valuable class that lasted around six-hours. We are proud to say that the instructors felt Florida was one of the leaders in the management of incidents who are often used as an example on how to do things correctly. The local TIM team will review this training over the next two to three TIM team meetings so that this information can be shared with others that could not attend. Below is a list of the attending agencies that show how impressive the turn-out truly was for our team:

Jacksonville Sheriff's Office
Alachua County Sheriff's Office
High Springs Police Department
Gainesville Police Department
St. Johns County Sheriff Office
Florida Highway Patrol
High Springs Fire Department
City of Jacksonville Environmental Department
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Southern Wrecker Company
Walt's Wrecker Service
University Towing Company

Traffic Incident Management continued

TIM Training Attendees-continued

I-95 Corridor Coalition

City of Jacksonville City of Gainesville **FDOT Maintenance FDOT Construction FDOT Traffic Operations FDOT ITS Departments FDOT Central Office** St. Johns County **Jacksonville Transportation Authority FDOT Motor Carrier Compliance Department** Jorgensen Contract Services SmartRoute Systems Metric Engineering HTNB Engineering **PBSJ Company Delcan Company**

The First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team meeting was included within the training. Incidents were debriefed by the Team and agency reports were given. Chief Grady Carrick introduced the *First Coast First Responder Training Video* and team members watched two modules during lunch. One key element of this meeting was the amount of participation from individuals who rarely get the opportunity to

attend the bi-monthly TIM meetings. The information they provided was very informative and helpful when the team addresses a response at future incidents.

The Alachua Traffic Incident Management Team will hold its next meeting on August 12, 2009 at 10:00 AM at the Florida Department of Transportation's Maintenance Office conference room in Gainesville. Mr. John Brennen with the Department of Forestry will join our meeting to discuss the effect of wildfires on our highway system.

FUTURE 2009 TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETINGS: FIRST COAST

September 15th November 17th

ALACHUA

August 12th
October 14th
December 9th

Donna Danson District 2 ITS Project Manager

Maintenance

Traffic Control Devices is now maintaining four Phases of ITS deployments and are doing a fantastic job of getting the equipment operational. The Phase III deployment is the most challenging since a few Dynamic Message signs and vehicle detectors are awaiting parts from The delay is not meeting our manufacturers. customer service expectations so Pete Vega has contacted the Traffic Engineering Research Lab (TERL) in an effort to put the manufacturers on notice. He states that once the TERL begins to get involved there is a possibility of having these firms placed on the suspended vendor list. Since this is a very competitive industry, such an occurrence is the last thing the vendors want to happen.

Florida Industrial Electric is maintaining one phase as part of their construction contract. They committed to maintaining the system along I-95 north of the Fuller Warren and have a little less than two years left on their agreement. Pete and I met with them to stress the need for greater emphasis on the maintenance of these devices. We explained the exposure that is being generated due to the new 511 system and the expectations that Central Office has for us to keep the equipment operational. Since they are striving for more construction opportunities they have promised to dedicate additional staff to maintain the system, however they are encountering some of the same problems with the manufacturers.

Overall, the maintenance team has nearly reached their objective for this fiscal year and must now focus on quality control to insure exemplary performance in the future. Each firm has been asked to keep a log of what work is being performed so that we can provide this information to the TERL. Since the ITS program is still in the infancy stages now is the time to track the performance of the equipment so that we can remove the bad vendors from our program. Tracking the costs to maintain these items is the final step towards having a dependable and efficient system on our roadways.

Kevin Jackson
District 2 ITS Field Specialist

Road Rangers

Good news! The Florida Department of Transportation's Road Ranger Service Patrol began service on July 1st. All routes are being covered with five Road Ranger Service Patrol operators, Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM.

We are looking forward to increasing to eight vehicles and operators when we receive additional funds through sponsorship. Welcome back Road Rangers!

(see photo gallery for more)

CONSTRUCTION

Construction

This July has been one of the busiest months in the past year due to the onset of several arterial and interstate ITS projects. The arterial project along State Road 21 has been advertised and the Philips Highway project should be advertised next month. The construction team is completing the Request for Proposal (RFP) package for the SR 15 project that should be advertised in November. We have begun the design of the Phase VII project along State Road 9A and so far things have proceeded very smoothly. biggest challenge for this Phase VII design is the method that will be used to cross the Dames Point Bridge. Directional Boring is out of the question so we are looking at using existing conduit (if it is available) or mounting additional hangars with conduit on the northbound side of the bridge.

The Phase VI project on I-95 from I-295 to St. Johns County is in the submittal phase. The contractor, Highway Safety Devices, has provided the types of products they want to use in the deployment. The biggest challenge for them has been that the TERL now has the ITS Approved Products List (APL), thus preventing the contractor from using unapproved devices deployed on previous projects. This will be a test for them since there will be a learning curve on the installation of devices they have not used in

the past. Likewise, ITS devices that now have standards but no APL approved product must go through a stringent documentation process. This is another task not experienced by this vendor during past projects.

The most difficult portion for the team has been getting acclimated with the System's Engineering process required by FHWA. It involves an enormous amount of documentation that assures the District is following the ITS Regional Architecture created several years ago. The hardest part has been to develop requirements for each project that will match up with previous deployments while allowing us to keep up with the improvement of technology in the future. Fortunately for us, the ITS contact for FHWA in Tallahassee was just hired and is not expected to review the documentation for nine months, thus we have plenty of time to produce the information they will be seeking.

John Kell
District 2 ITS Construction Project Manager

North Florida TPO Projects

The North Florida TPO hosted a Northeast Florida ITS Coalition meeting this past June to solicit input for arterial projects in the future. There are a few system upgrade projects in Duval and St. Johns County, as well as a few ITS projects for JTA. There is also one Roadway Weather Information System (RWIS) project that FHP requested which is under consideration. The North Florida TPO also realizes the importance of the Road Ranger program, thus they have committed funding to the District to offset any budget shortfall that may occur for the next few fiscal years.

One key project the North Florida TPO is keeping tabs on is the Philips Highway project. This deployment will upgrade the traffic signal controllers, install CCTV cameras and add Dynamic Message signs along the corridor. Once the project is completed they will ask their consultant to perform a follow-up to the DRIP study recently completed by HNTB. This follow-up study will show the before and after effects of an arterial ITS deployment that is parallel to a major interstate.

The North Florida TPO has been an active participant in the expansion of ITS within the region and realizes that this is just one component in the "tool box" for managing traffic. They understand that the benefits are cost

effectiveness and speed in deployment when considering the use of technology. The District ITS office has not mastered the latter part of this effort but are examining ways to streamline the process to meet the expectations of the North Florida TPO. One method is the use of their System Manager contract that will be able to respond much faster to the needs of this region. This contract should be executed in August and the System Manager already has five task work orders pending to assist with the deployment effort.



Performance Measures

We have decided to begin providing performance measure data with this fiscal year's newsletters to display what is occurring "behind the scenes" as we continually seek to improve the program.

For fiscal year 2008/2009 the Transportation Management Center handled 8,098 events. An event is considered any roadway occurrence that requires a response from maintenance, law enforcement, fire/rescue and/or a Road Ranger. It also includes any actions taken by the TMC staff utilizing the SunGuide software, Dynamic Message Signs and/or 511 system to alert motorists of roadway conditions such as long traffic queues due to congestion.

A subcategory of events is roadway conditions impacted by an incident that impedes the flow of traffic. An incident could be a crash, debris or roadway damage impeding the flow of traffic on any one lane. This subcategory is broken down by severity levels that capture the number of lanes impacted and amount of time taken to clear this section of the roadway. There were 387 total incidents handled in fiscal year 2008/2009 by the Transportation Management Center.

At this juncture, I will not address the average response time or duration of an incident due to the reduction and then lack of Road Rangers

during fiscal year 2008/2009. The loss of the Road Rangers created tremendous deviations in the data that would not provide solid numbers for review over an entire year. In the upcoming newsletters we will provide this data on a month to month basis for your review.

Next Generation 511

Central Office, with the assistance of all FDOT Districts, continues to work on "tuning" the next generation Statewide 511 system.

Progress is being made through a combination of educational outreach and "tweaking" of the system. Extensive testing continues, but we need your help! If you encounter a problem with the system, we need to know! You can say "feedback" from the phone system and leave a message describing the problem you If the problem is with the encountered. FL511.com website, you can click on the "feedback" link and leave the details of your problem.

As Uncle Sam says...WE NEED YOU!

Operations

We are entrenched in the middle of summer and our traffic patterns here in North East Florida reflect that. Congestion is a little more manageable with school out but the heavy afternoon thunderstorms continue to cause issues with our motorists.

As you will recall, on June 26th there was a water spout here in Jacksonville that the TMC was able to locate on camera and track. Accident numbers jumped and several bridges were periodically closed. Thankfully, no real major damage was caused by the water spout but it did serve as a reminder of how powerful Mother Nature can be. That is something we should take to heart as Hurricane season is upon us. Please head to www.floridadisaster.org for information on preparedness, response and recovery.

Remember- Get a Plan.

Great news for motorists here in Jacksonville: The Road Rangers resumed services on July 1st.

The Road Ranger Mission* is to provide FREE highway assistance services during incidents to reduce delay and improve safety for the motoring public and responders. Road Ranger benefits:

- •Reduction of accidents
- •Reduction of incident duration by assisting the Florida Highway Patrol
- •Assistance to disabled or stranded motorists
- •Removal of road debris
- •Reduction of congestion produced air pollutants
- •Increased safety at incident scenes

During the month of June we watched our total incident numbers drop for the third straight month but incidents with road blockage increase nearly 70%. From May to June the total incidents number dipped from 618 to 595 while over the same time period incidents with roadblock jumped from 163 to 277. The total number of incidents drop reflects the lack of congestion events due to school being out while the increase of lane blocking events can be attributed to the effect that heavy rains have on motorists. Without ITS devices outside of Jacksonville (and parts of Jacksonville) the TMC depends on FDOT and FHP personnel to give us traffic information reports. You can reach our 24/7 line at (904)301-3700 extension 122 or our work day line at (904)360-5465.

You can now also leave feedback on the Next Generation 511 system about road conditions and bugs you may find in the system.

*Courtesy of Patrick Odom

Know Before You Go! Dial 511.

Ryan Crist TMC Supervisor



Spotlight on...Donna Danson

Donna Danson grew up in an idyllic setting in the little community of Dinsmore on Jacksonville's northside. Born 4th in a family of 7 children (6 girls and 1 boy), her father believed in equal opportunity for all, especially when it came to running the family's chicken farm.

"Daddy believed his daughters were 'liberated' and offered us the opportunity for 'equal employment," says Danson. "We put out feed, gathered and prepared eggs for delivery, and kept the farm mowed."

But along with the hard work came the added blessing of being part of a close-knit and extended family. Lots of uncles, aunts and cousins were always on hand as well as the "animal family" they loved and cared for. "We had enough acreage to raise cows, hogs, chickens and horses — our other pets included dogs, cats, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, skunk, deer, otter, fox and even a jackass!" Donna recalls fondly.

But Donna's mom also made sure her 7 children had a life outside the family farm. "Mama saw to it we were involved in the church choir, community and school theater, piano lessons, etc." says Donna.

Donna was once crowned Duval County Community Queen and even sang in a couple of clubs around town, hoping to be "discovered." "I knew Loretta Lynn had been discovered in a small club," she says. And Donna actually had a chance to audition before Tammy Wynette and George Jones but had to decline due to family issues. "I always wonder... what might have been?!" she says, borrowing lyrics from the famous song.

Instead, destiny led her to us. When she was hired on as the first engineer to work with the Intelligent Transportation System in 1996, she used DOS software to run 8 DMS and 3 cameras from her office computer. Today, the program has grown to include 33 DMS and 80 cameras. Donna has received two Davis Awards, one in 2004 for her work with the Road Ranger Service Patrol Training Team and another one in 2006 for Hurricane Relief efforts. In 2009, she also received the Golden Shovel Award.

"I love my job as I work with outstanding coworkers and it affords me the opportunity to constantly learn and advance. It has been very exciting to be involved in the growth of our ITS Program, and I feel we do make a difference and help save lives," Danson said.

Before Donna began her career with the DOT, she was a stay-at-home mom for 23 years, teaching piano lessons out of her home while raising her 5 (continued on next page)

Spotlight on...Donna Danson continued

children. Donna says the birth of her children defined and shaped her life. "That's when I learned the REAL meaning of love," she says.

In addition to her 5 children, Donna has 7 grandchildren. She enjoys reading, dancing, horseback riding and working in the yard.



Rarely is Donna seen without her "happy face" on

511 Marketing & Public Outreach

In less than a month, teachers and students will dust off their backpacks and head back to school. The 511 Marketing Team will be joining forces with the Teacher Supply Depot on August 14th for their annual Back to School Expo. Last year, nearly 1,000 teachers stood in line outside the westside facility to get their share of free supplies. This year, we'll add some fun 511 prizes into the mix, and we'll also have our 511 tent set up so the teachers can get some welcome relief from the sun while they're waiting in line.

But that's next month... for now, we'll let the teachers and students enjoy what's left of their summer. Speaking of summer and all the fun things that go along with it, we made a trip to the I-95 Florida Welcome Center just in time for the July 4th holiday weekend. We put smiles on a lot of little faces with our 511 beach balls. Sorry, Mom and Dad. Hopefully you didn't get pinged too many times with a beach ball to the back of the head. At least for the kids, the car ride probably went a little faster.

Rounding out this month, our own Penny Kamish spoke at a Hurricane Preparedness Expo for seniors at the Mary Singleton Senior Center. It was held in conjunction with our friends from the Florida Department of Financial Services. We've been fortunate so far in this 2009 Hurricane Season, but August has dealt us some unfriendly blows in the past, so we'll be keeping a close eye on things.

EXTRA- Mission Guyana

Jill Dawson just returned from a 2 month trip to Guyana where she did missions work through her local church. This is a follow-up to the story we first brought you back in May... in her own words.

I had heard that stepping off the plane was like stepping into an oven, but coming from Florida, I figured only northerners would feel that way. Let me tell you, I was wrong. The sun was unbelievably intense. Now that I'm back, I feel like I'm standing in the shade all the time.

We were in the coastal region of Guyana, about 3 hours east of Georgetown (their capital) and 1.5 hours from Suriname. It is part of the Caribbean Community of nations known as the Caricom, and the people are either of African or Indian descent. The national language is English, but many people do not finish school so they adopt Creolese which uses English vocabulary, but the sentence structure is not proper. At times I had no idea what they were saying to me. A couple of phrases we heard were "dem cut suga for drink tea" (they cut sugar cane to get the sugar we use in tea) and "dem gon fa fix toilet" (they're going to come to fix the toilet).

Rice was easier to come by than clean water. Many of the locals didn't have running water, so they had to walk up the street to the nearest

pipe on a day the water was running and fill their The houses were made of either buckets. concrete or wood and usually stood up on columns. The sun would weather the wood and paint so quickly that the houses almost looked like they were made of driftwood. But inside where the sun had not beaten down on the wood, you would sometimes see gorgeous hardwoods like Purple Heart. Some of the world's most prized hardwoods are found in Guyana.

One village we wanted to visit was about a 1-hour bus ride plus a 7-hour boat trip away. There was no electricity and only two pay phones for the whole village. We were going to visit a local couple, Grandville and Sherine Patterson. When I spoke with the wife the second time on the phone her voice was shaking and she said to me, "There's been an accident. My husband went out on the boat in the middle of the night to fetch lumber, the boat sank and they haven't found him yet." We had never spoken with Grandville, but we gasped as the chills went down our spines and tears filled our eyes. There was nothing we could He was a very influential man in the do. community and loved by many. There were over 350 people at the service.

Also, the man who picked us up from the airport (75 years old) and who was also the coordinator of the congregation we were working with lived across the street and ran a shop out of his house. 12

continued

Guyana

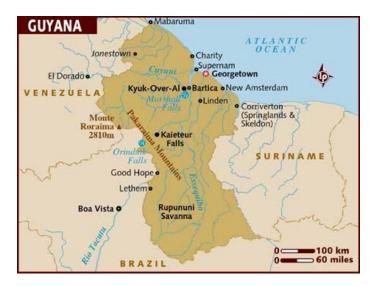
(TRA-Mission

EXTRA- Mission Guyana continued

We would buy eggs and ice cream and different things from him. One day I went over to buy something and noticed he had what looked like severe conjunctivitis. But with each passing day there would be a new development. He became very weak and got what they thought was chicken pox. Then they thought it was shingles. It was getting worse, so they took him to the hospital. When his skin starting peeling off the hospital personnel were reluctant to help him for fear it was contagious! So his family started bathing him and changing his dressings. It was only 8 days after I had first seen him in the shop with what appeared to conjunctivitis that we got a phone call saying he had died in the night.

But there were touching stories, too. One woman couldn't read and had not attended school. Each time I visited her I would read 8 to 10 scriptures, answering such questions as 'why do we grow old and die' or 'what happens at death?' The next week I would come back and she would remember everything I had read to her. That was the most amazing feeling because I came to realize that scriptural truth is available to anyone who wants it regardless of his or her level of education.

I feel like I have a much better understanding of myself now. My spiritual and personal goals are more defined. Every day I do things and realize



Guyana- over 2000 miles from Jacksonville, but a world away

that Guyana changed me for the better. There are things I love about living in the US (wearing heels and not being covered in sweat), but there are things I loved about Guyana that I can't have here. Coming back was bittersweet. However, I'd have to say that seeing frogs jump out of the toilet was a rude awakening to the fact that we were in a third world country.

PHOTO GALLERY



On the first day back on duty, Road Ranger Jeff Salyer comes to the rescue of the Probe Vehicle and Sherri on JTB





TIM Training Sessions-Standing room only!

Jill's Amazing Mission to Guyana



A girl in Guyana feeds a monkey



A Guyanese woman



Jill seeking shelter from the hot Guyana Sun



Jill's home away from home



Local Guyanese transportation

Contact Information

Donna Danson ITS Operations Project Manager 904.360.5635 Donna.Danson@dot.state.fl.us



Kevin Jackson ITS Field Specialist 904.360.5454 Kevin.Jackson@dot.state.fl.us



John Kell **ITS Construction Project Manager** 904.360.5455 John.Kell@dot.state.fl.us



Peter Vega **District 2 ITS Engineer** 904.360.5463 Peter.Vega@dot.state.fl.us









TMC Desk at FDOT 360-5465 Mon-Fri 6a-6p TMC Desk at FHP - *FHP (301-3700) x 122 -24/7/365

Penny Kamish, Project Manager Derrick Odom, TMC Supervisor Ryan Crist, TMC Supervisor Jason Summerfield, Network Manager John (Sean) Wilcox, TMC Assistant Supervisor Sherri Byrd, 511 Marketing Manager

D2 Day Operators

Brian Deiter Jesse Gilmour Jessica Lakey Mike Pirrone

D2 Night & **Weekend Operators**

Jason Evans David Rolfe Sarah Stephenson Adam Page

D3 Day Operators Santos Morin

Adrienne Catapano Jessica Vazquez

511 Probe Sherri Byrd Kristen Kirk