

## FDOT DISTRICT TWO

Intelligent Transportation Systems Newsletter –  
March 2012  
Issue 53

Spring has sprung! Daylight Saving Time is here!



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## ITS Announcements

<b>Alachua TIM Meeting</b>	Gainesville Maintenance Office	04/11/2012 10am
<b>FHWA Advanced TIM Workshop for Mid-level Managers</b>	District 2 Urban Training Facility	05/15-05/16/2012

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

## Notes from the District 2 ITS Engineer

The first few months of 2012 involved the most challenging experiences I have ever encountered personally or professionally. Each day brought something new to the table that required my utmost attention, thus prioritization was the key in surviving these occurrences. I give the ITS and TMC staff kudos for their patience during the tough moments since my demeanor was pretty rough around the edges and my communication with them was terse at best. Fortunately, I see the light at the end of the tunnel as the bricks on my shoulder get lighter each passing day.

During this time Donna and I joked about the fast paced work week we had been dealing with these past several months. On Monday the usual greeting was “Hey, how was your weekend? Catch up with you by the end of the week”. At the end of the week the norm was “Gosh this was a busy week. It just flew by!” In between we would have a chance to coordinate in 10 minute segments to insure we were on the same page. The same type of conversation held true with my other ITS staff members (Glenn, John, Kevin and the Consultant team). The reality is that the District Two ITS program is nearing the point where I can say “We are there and it’s time to deliver!”

Priority one on my plate is moving the Gainesville temporary deployment forward so that we can complete installation of wireless cameras and sensors along I-75 by the end of May or middle of

June. The Gainesville staff is generating a contract that specifies the size and wattage of solar panels needed to run the equipment. Once these solar units arrive we can begin installation of devices from the south end of Paynes Prairie to High Springs. The VPN connection to their facility is operational and we have hired a temporary TMC operator to monitor their network, traffic signal devices and cameras on a daily basis to determine the benefits received from this effort. If this proves fruitful we are considering permanently keeping the TMC Operator position for Gainesville with the new TMC contract due to begin in July/August.

As many of you may have heard the Florida Legislature recently passed a Transportation bill that included the deployment of permanent ITS devices from the Micanopy exit to State Road 121. Central Office is still examining the bill to determine what requirements are contained within the verbiage. Once they complete this assessment we will be given the green light to install Dynamic Message Signs, additional cameras/sensors, fiber optic cable, fog/smoke sensors and power to all the devices within this stretch of road. The good thing is that the preliminary design was done several years ago when I submitted a candidate ITS project for this area. The TMC Consultant, Metric Engineering, and I recently updated this preliminary design to the point where we can provide information for the immediate completion of 30% plans.

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**Notes from the District 2 ITS Engineer cont.**

The second high priority on my list was to utilize the remaining budget for the TMC operations contract prior to the end of its term. This contract will run its five year course in July but due to our focus on economies of scale over the past few years we saved a bunch of money and were able to try a pilot project of sorts for arterial roadway systems. Our vendor, Total Traffic, brought on several new level one operators who now monitor signal systems and cameras for local agencies in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Clay County. These operators run performance reports at 6 AM in the morning that determine where traffic signal issues may exist. By 7 AM these reports are provided to local agencies so that field personnel can plan their work day, hence providing them with a faster start in addressing their workload.

Once the morning gets going these operators monitor the signal system ATMS.now software for possible issues with field/network equipment, check the performance of the CCTV cameras on arterial roads and place messages on arterial signs located in Jacksonville and Clay County. In the future we hope to train these operators well enough where they can perform trouble-shooting tasks on traffic signal and network equipment as problems arise. This type service will ease the burden on local agency field personnel who already have their hands full trying to deal with the current workload.

The challenge doesn't end there though since we've had a few surprises with on-going ITS

projects over the past few weeks. First, there is the Philips Highway project that hit a snag due to a poor performing sub-contractor. We've worked with that contractor to get them back on track and hope to begin testing the deployment in the next two months. Then there is the Phase VII project along State Road 9A that was due to be completed in two months. Unfortunately, the contractor had six to eight months of work (at best) before we could even begin the testing phase. The Department determined that the performance of the contractor had reached the point where it was time to Default the firm and work with the Surety Company. The decision does set this project back by several months but at this point John and I felt this project would never be completed under current conditions.

Fortunately there are a few projects that are going well; like the Phase VIII, State Road 200 and College Drive projects. Or so I thought until I was notified on March 22<sup>nd</sup> that the contractor had broken a 2" service line within the limits of the College Drive project. Luckily, John realized I already had my hands full and dealt with this issue immediately, thereby relieving me to deal with other tasks. This issue was taken care of by that evening and the project is back on track (Thank Goodness!!!).

On a brighter note, we did get the video wall controller contract approved and placed the order

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### Notes from the District 2 ITS Engineer cont.

for this equipment on March 21<sup>st</sup>. To avoid the technical “mumbo-jumbo” I will explain it in layman’s terms. The current controller only allowed us to place one type of video stream, MPEG2, on the video wall in the TMCs. The new controller, called Activu, will allow us to place any type of existing video stream onto the wall (MPEG-2, MPEG-4, H.264, etc.). This capability will be very useful for years to come as the electronics industry pumps out newer products with varying degrees of difference from current standards. The other plus with Activu is that we can now have mobile coordination with Incident Personnel in the field, hence they can send back video from the field onto our video wall and we can send Incident Commanders maps, charts and video to their wireless device in the field.

Always the optimist, I feel things will get better over the next few weeks and the pieces of our puzzle will soon come together. We are close on the install of arterial dynamic message signs, completion of Bluetooth deployments and final software development of the bridge wind sensors. All of this will tie into our ultimate role within the Department and the future of Transportation System Management & Operations process we are currently going through. Once done I am expecting dramatic improvements in how we manage traffic throughout major metropolitan areas in District Two.

Pete Vega  
District 2 ITS Engineer

### North Florida TPO Update

The North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (NFTPO) projects are coming along nicely and are fitting in well with the Transportation System Management & Operations the Department is moving toward in the future. The Philips Highway, State Road 200 and College Drive projects should be completed by the end of this summer. The Arterial Dynamic Message Sign project is scheduled to be let near the end of April. The Airport interconnect is reaching 90% design for a September let date and the Jaxport interconnect design is picking up steam with 60% plans due in the next few months. These projects will incorporate the needs of Duval, Clay and Nassau County, thereby providing a regional approach to managing traffic conditions.

The Beach Boulevard wireless project is well underway with the installation scheduled for the end of April. This project will allow the Jacksonville Traffic Signal office to have a direct network connection to their systems on the beach and along State Road A1A. Once this is complete we will attempt to wirelessly tie in the St. Johns County traffic signals along State Road A1A to the system. If this is achieved we can get them on the ITS network and will work on a solution to transfer data to their office on State Road 16 using the wireless infrastructure the Department has along I-95 in St. Johns County. This will mean that St. Johns County can save several thousand dollars per year in communication costs trying to link up with the signals along State Road A1A.

## North Florida TPO Update continued

The Bluetooth project is coming along but I have decided to put a hold on further deployments due to a **sweet deal** we have been offered by the vendor, TrafficCast. The current Bluetooth product involves a number of components and external cabling to make it work. Historically, the more equipment involved the more opportunity for failure points. TrafficCast recently transitioned to a newer Bluetooth product that uses POE (power over Ethernet). This will mean smaller cables (hence easier installation), less components and the likelihood of better performance over the long run. The best part about it is that this upgrade WILL BE FREE!! TrafficCast will pick up the existing equipment and replace it with the newer model, thus the only cost to us will be time. We hope to get back on track by the end of April and expect to make up time due to an easier installation process involving the use of Ethernet cable.

The wind sensor deployment is almost complete. By the second to third week of April all of the devices should be installed in the field. The current status is that the ITS office is working with the vendor, Microcom Design, on a software package that can be distributed to our Incident Management partners. This software will allow the user to connect to a server that collects the data from the NOAA satellite. The design is about 80% complete and the vendor is currently working on the format for the spreadsheet that will make it

user friendly for everyone. The goal is to install this software in May so that we can be ready for Hurricane season by the end of June.

As for the Regional Transportation Management Center project the Department is currently finalizing documents that will enable the Department of Management Services (DMS) to oversee this vertical construction. They are considered the State Agency experts for this type of construction and will bring valuable experience to the table. I have been meeting with the DMS Project Manager on a bi-weekly basis preparing for the selection phase of the Architectural firm. Some of the key benefits that are being discussed are utilizing much of the existing utility infrastructure to drive down costs and gain a benefit from economies of scale. Things like water supply, electrical service and Chiller Water can become quite expensive during construction, however all of this infrastructure is currently available due to existing capabilities on the State campus.

We hope to get the Architectural firm on board in the next several months. Once this occurs I will have a better feel for the timing of construction. Fortunately for us there exists a set of 100% plans developed for the previous facility that can be reused in this design, thus enabling us to cut down on the schedule by several months. More information on this project will be made available this coming July.

## Maintenance

As a follow-up to last month's newsletter, replacement of the CCTV cameras, Microwave Vehicle Detectors, Video Encoders, and Switches continued on I-95 between I-10 and the Southern I-95/I-295 Interchange. Traffic Control Devices (TCD), District Two ITS Maintenance Contractor, has completed the replacement of the CCTV cameras and encoders throughout the corridor and has replaced approximately half of the switches in these cabinets. The remaining switches and all of the Microwave Vehicle Detectors along the corridor are scheduled to be replaced by the end of April.

Five more of the bridge mounted wind sensor devices were installed this month. The devices were installed on the Doctor's Inlet Bridge on US 17, the Trout River Bridge on I-95, the Main Street Bridge, the Acosta Bridge and the Matthews Bridge. There are now fourteen of these sensors deployed throughout Duval, St. Johns and Nassau Counties. Eight more sensors will be deployed prior to the start of Hurricane Season. The ITS Group is working with the wind sensor vendor to obtain a new software, which will be much easier for FDOT to share with other agencies and that is much more user friendly than the current version. With the current version, the user must have a verified user access with NOAA, know the bridge sensor ID in the NOAA System and be able to "decrypt" the data, which is not in a user friendly format. The new software will make the wind speed data available to anyone with rights as granted by FDOT and will be in a user friendly

tabular or graphic format. The full deployment of wind sensors will allow FDOT and other agencies to monitor wind speeds during high wind events to determine when motorists should be restricted from using bridges due to safety concerns.

TCD did not install any Bluetooth Travel Time devices this month due to some improvements that the Manufacturer is making to the product and their software. The new device improvements include a Power Over Ethernet or POE capability, which makes the device installation and maintenance easier because the installations require fewer parts and therefore, fewer failure points. The Manufacturer has agreed to replace the devices which have not been installed, with the new POE units. In the next month, all of the uninstalled units will be packaged and sent back to the Manufacturer which will be replaced with these new units. Once the new units are received, TCD will continue their work to install the devices along the roadways throughout Jacksonville.

The storage shelf units, workbench and rolling toolboxes for the storage room were received this month and are being installed one at a time as we shift inventory around within the room. Hopefully, by the middle of April all of the items will be assembled and in use. These new features will free up space and enable ITS Maintenance staff to have the devices and replacement parts better organized to be able to find them easier when needed.

Kevin Jackson  
ITS Field Specialist

## Construction

For several months, we have been discussing the fact that work was slow on the Phase 7 Project. Since the beginning of the year, the work had virtually stopped. As a result of this lack of work, FDOT has recently defaulted the Contractor for this project and the responsibility for the project has fallen back to the Surety Company. FDOT Construction, ITS and Legal staff are working with the Surety Company to try to get the Project back on track in order to begin making progress toward installation of the ITS System, which will cover the Northeast Quadrant of SR 9A. The timeframe for this project to resume construction is currently unknown, but it is hopeful that there will be a short amount of time lost until a new Contractor is brought on board to complete the work.

The Contractor for the Phase 8 Project, on I-295 from I-95 South to I-10, is continuing to make progress on items throughout the project corridor. During the month of March the Contractor installed the remaining DMS structures and continued installation of conduit, pull boxes, MVDS poles and power services. There are still no FDOT Qualified Manufacturers for the spun concrete CCTV poles for this project. Manufacturers are currently working with FDOT to obtain approval. No CCTV poles can be purchased until FDOT has a Qualified Manufacturer. The project continues to progress and is on schedule to be completed on time. This project will complete the installation of the ITS System on the western I-295 loop around Jacksonville.

The Phillips Highway (US 1) Project, on US1 from Greenland Road going north to Wishart Road, continues to progress. The Contractor continues to work on conduit and pullbox installation for power services and fiber optic cable installation. This project includes the installation of 18 CCTVs and video encoders, 10 Arterial Dynamic Message Signs (ADMS), and upgrading 18 existing signal cabinets for central command and communications. The project also includes interconnection with the existing FDOT District Two and City of Jacksonville (COJ) fiber optic networks. This interconnection will provide additional communications redundancy for both District Two and COJ. The upgraded signal cabinets and completion of the fiber network will allow the signal controllers throughout the corridor to be monitored and adjusted dynamically as congestion is detected with the CCTV cameras. Finally, the new ADMS will work in tandem with previously installed DMS along I-95 which will enable traffic to be rerouted around congestion if needed. Completion of this project, by the end of the year, is eagerly anticipated by both FDOT and City personnel.

The SR 200 Project, which includes the installation of CCTVs along SR 200 to the East of the Intracoastal Waterway is expected to be complete on time. Crews are pulling cable for the power and composite cable for the CCTV cameras from the signal cabinets to the mast arms on which the CCTVs will be mounted. Although they have had

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**Construction continued**

some issues using existing conduits to run the new cable, the crews continue to be persistent and work toward getting all of the cables pulled and cameras installed. This project is scheduled for completion in April. The CCTV system will provide much needed video coverage of SR 200 in the Fernandina area for next year’s Amelia Concours D’Elegance, which this year attracted about 23,000 spectators to the area.

The College Drive Project began Construction on March 5<sup>th</sup>. The Contractor is currently installing conduit along the project corridor. This Project includes the installation of fiber optic cable along College Drive, a small section of CR 220 and Sleepy Hollow Road to provide a communications link from the Clay County Traffic Operations Center to Blanding Blvd.

John Kell  
District 2 ITS Construction Project Manager

**RISC – RAPID INCIDENT SCENE CLEARANCE – UPDATE**

Since February 15<sup>th</sup> we have not had any additional RISC incidents but our Contractors stand ready to activate. Debrief meetings were held for both incidents occurring on February 15<sup>th</sup> at the First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team meeting. Bonus funding was achieved for the I-95/Lem Turner Rd incident but not for the I-95/Duval Road incident.

We are fortunate to have our RISC Contractors to assist with the quick clearance of our interstates. A special thanks to Walt’s and Southern Wrecker Services!

**Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Update**

**FIRST COAST TIM TEAM UPDATE**

First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team held a meeting on March 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM in the Duval Conference Room at 2198 Edison Avenue. Gracie Kennedy with FDEP and Lavante Davis with City of Jacksonville conducted a training session on environmental cleanup procedures.

The last two Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) incidents were debriefed and Jill Dawson with Metric presented the Incident Performance Measures Report. Bruce Hill with Florida Forestry Service introduced the *Highway Safety Smoke Management Interagency Agreement* signed by the Director for Florida

Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Update cont.

**FIRST COAST TIM TEAM UPDATE continued**

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Chief for the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, and the Florida Department of Transportation. Copies of this agreement were made available to all Team Members.



First Coast TIM Meeting

**ALACHUA TIM TEAM UPDATE**

The Alachua Traffic Management Team will meet on April 11<sup>th</sup> at the FDOT Operations Office, 5301 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Gainesville, FL. Since there has been a request for training in this area, Don Mozick with Florida Department of Environmental Protection will be giving a presentation on the handling of hazardous material spills and provide procedures that must be followed by responders.

At our last meeting we spent much time debriefing the incidents occurring on January 29<sup>th</sup> on I-75. Ryan Crist, FDOT TMC Supervisor wrote the following article about this incident:

*January 29<sup>th</sup> was the beginning of a 48 period where tragedy struck and heroes raised from the smoke and fog in Alachua County. When dealing with Mother Nature the best one can do is go with the facts that are in front of you. We have all been trained to assess the situation and make the best decision on the information that is available. Even when these best practices are used Mother Nature can change her mind at any minute and conditions may change. That was the case that Saturday night. To no one's fault, Mother Nature shifted gears and an unavoidable crash occurred.*

*What happened was a tragedy but what occurred after the fact was a display of team work, training, courage, bravery and hard work. The way all those Incident Responders thrust themselves into the situation, risking their own safety to secure the roadway and protect the traveling public was commendable. Resources were shared and deployed through various agencies, roles were expanded, sleep was not an option and team work kept this tragedy contained to the initial crashes.*

Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Update cont.

**ALACHUA TIM TEAM UPDATE continued**

*Fingers weren't pointed and team work carried these brave men and women to reduce secondary crashes and kept traffic moving as well as the arterial roadways would allow them. With numerous fires in the area the job that was done was extraordinary. Personnel and resources were shared on the city, county, district and statewide level. To all of those who had a hand in the Alachua County response, thank you. To the friends and family of those who lost a loved one our thoughts are with you.*

Volume 4 – February 2012 - of the *Alachua TIM Newsletter* has been sent to all members. All editions of this newsletter can be found on our website: [jax511.com](http://jax511.com). This is a great source to stay informed to what is happening in this area of our state.

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR ALACHUA TEAM MEMBERS!

Donna Danson  
District 2 ITS Operations Project Manager

**District 2 TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM MISSION:**

*The Florida Department of Transportation District Two's Traffic Incident Management Teams through partnering efforts strive to continuously reduce incident scene clearance times to deter Congestion and improve safety. The Teams' objective is to exceed the Open Roads Policy thus ensuring mobility, economic prosperity, and quality of life.*

**District 2 TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM VISION:**

*Through cooperation, communication and training the Teams intend to reduce incident scene clearance times by 10% each year through 2015.*



**FIRST COAST**

**FDOT URBAN OFFICE TRAINING CENTER –  
2198 EDISON AVENUE- JACKSONVILLE  
904-360-5400**

**MAY 15, 2012      JULY 17, 2012  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2012      NOVEMBER 13, 2012**

**ALACHUA**

**FDOT GAINESVILLE OPERATIONS OFFICE –  
5301 N.E. 39<sup>TH</sup> AVE- GAINESVILLE  
352-381-4300**

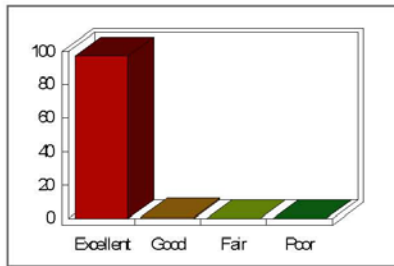
**APRIL 11, 2012      JUNE 13, 2012  
AUGUST 8, 2012      OCTOBER 10, 2012  
DECEMBER 12, 2012**

## Road Ranger Update

The Road Ranger Service Patrol Operators received outstanding comments from the *Quarterly Comment Card Report*. Overall satisfaction for services rendered was rated at 97.61% “excellent”.

### Satisfaction with Services Provided

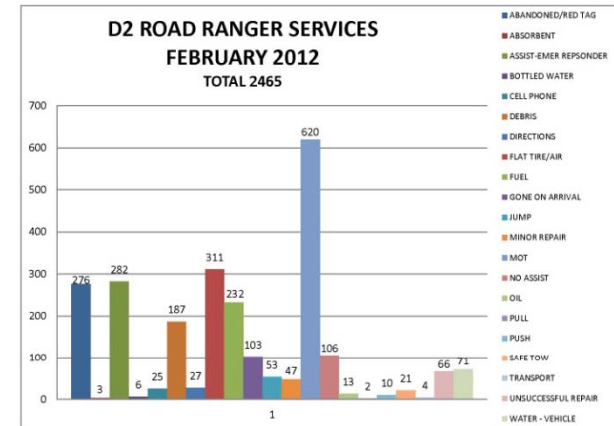
Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Excellent	408	97.61	97.61
Good	4	0.96	98.56
Fair	0	0.00	98.56
Poor	0	0.00	98.56
<b>Total Valid</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>98.56</b>	
<b>Response not given</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1.44</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>



According to the comment cards received, the Rangers arrival times were within 15 minutes 89% of all incidents. Having the Rangers on site within 15 minutes is a great assistance to our total incident management program, proving not only are the Road Rangers a blessing to most motorists but they play a significant part in obtaining our Traffic Incident Team Mission Goal.

The Road Rangers provided 2465 roadside services to stranded motorists and incident responders in the month of February 2012.

The Department remains open to acquiring other interested supporters so hopefully new sponsors will be announced in the near future.



The results of the on-line “Annual Statewide Road Ranger Survey for Incident Responders” will be provided in next month’s newsletter as the deadline to complete this form was March 5, 2012. The goal of this survey was to get input from Incident Responders on the Road Ranger Program from their perspective. This data will be used for program improvements and to determine needed enhancements.

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## Performance Measures

Roadway clearance duration has decreased over the last few months. In December roadway clearance duration was up to nearly an hour, but the average has decreased each month since then so now the average is less than 50 minutes. Similarly the Open Roads duration has decreased from over 47 minutes in December to less than 39 minutes for the first few weeks of March. This is a positive trend that proves the value of reviewing performance measures since it fosters efforts to reduce roadway clearance duration times. It is interesting to note though, that the incident clearance duration has remained nearly the same since January. Even though it is preferred to see this average decrease, it is more important that the travel lanes be cleared as quickly as possible. So responders are to be commended for prioritizing and clearing the roadway quickly even though the incident scene cannot be cleared immediately.

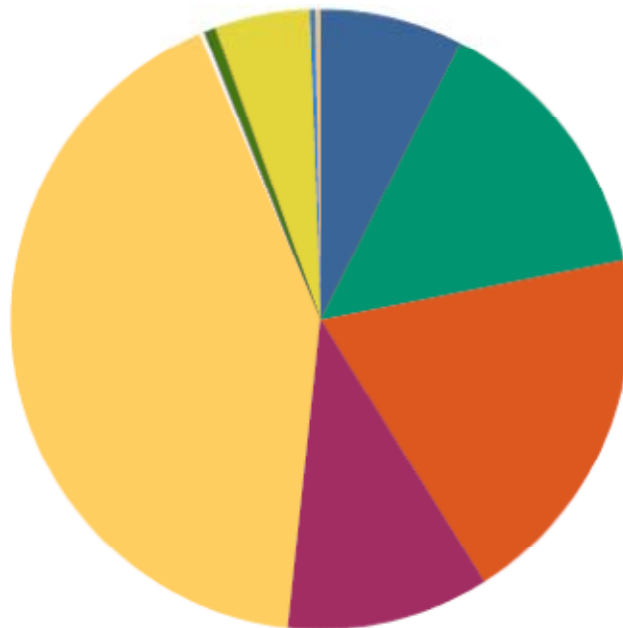
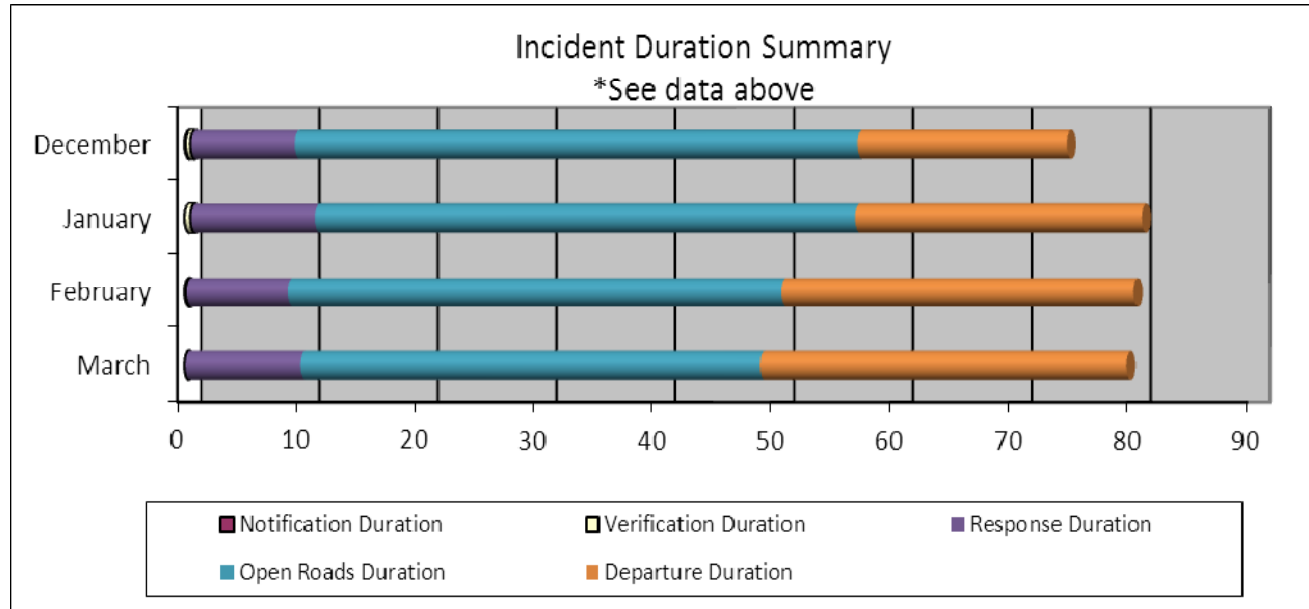
Daylight savings time began this month. That means that many commuters are watching the sun rise on their way to work just before 7:30 AM. This can potentially affect driver behavior as glare restricts visibility. One of the main roadways affected by this law of nature is Interstate 10 given that the majority of traffic on that roadway is headed eastbound in the

morning. Congestion builds on the roadway as motorists slow down when the sun hits their eyes. This is a good reminder to wear sunglasses and use visors. Regarding effects of nature on the performance measures, there has been little rain during the last few months. This may not be great for the yard, but it is good for the traffic because lots of rain always means lots of crashes. This may be one reason that the Open Roads duration has been shorter the last couple months.

The charts on the following page shows the performance measures data from December to March 19<sup>th</sup>. Although the total incident clearance duration has not changed much since January, the Open Roads duration saw a decrease each month. The pie chart shows the percentage of each event type that the TMC has handled since the beginning of the year.

Jill Dawson  
Metric Engineering

Performance Measures continued



Abandoned Vehicle	7.6%
Bridge Work	0.0%
Congestion	14.4%
Crash	19.2%
Debris on Roadway	10.5%
Disabled Vehicle	42.1%
Emergency Road Work	0.1%
Off Ramp Backup	0.0%
Other	0.5%
Pedestrian	0.0%
Police Activity	0.2%
Scheduled Road Work	4.8%
Special Event	0.0%
Vehicle Alert	0.4%
Vehicle Fire	0.2%
Visibility	0.1%
Weather	0.0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Marketing

Can I just start by saying how impressed I am with our 511 Marketing Team? We're coming straight off a triple play, having worked the past three weekends at area festivals. And at one of those events, we pulled our biggest numbers ever! But more on that in a minute.

Our whirlwind tour started with a trip to Palatka the first weekend in March for the Putnam County Azalea Festival. During this event, over 400 people had a chance to spin the 511 prize wheel and interact with our marketing team members.

Our next stop was right down the road at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds for the Gate River Run. This event is where we broke our own personal record by speaking to over 1,700 runners! That's the most we've ever reached out to in a single event! A big thanks to team members Jesus, Alexis, Katie and Michelle for making this possible.

Then it was on to St. Augustine for the 31<sup>st</sup> annual Lions Seafood Festival where we had a crowd of over 700 gather to spin the prize wheel and hear the 511 message. In the coming months we'll be making stops at Bishop Kenny High School, Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival in Fernandina.

Also, if you're in the downtown area, be sure and pick up a copy of the Financial News and Daily Record. Our 511 ad is featured between the

Warranty Deeds and Mortgage Deeds section. The ad will run daily, Monday – Friday, through June 15<sup>th</sup>!

So far, it's been a fabulous spring and we look forward to the coming months. As always, we welcome your comments, thoughts and suggestions. Remember, know before you go! Log onto [www.FL511.com](http://www.FL511.com) or dial 5-1-1 before heading out the door. Also, our free 511 Traffic App is now available for download to Apple products... iPhone, iPad and iPod. Simply go to the iTunes store and search "Florida 511." And Keep Moving!

Sherri Byrd  
511 Marketing Manager



[WWW.FL511.COM](http://WWW.FL511.COM)

## A DAY IN THE LIFE...Jill Dawson Metric Engineering

It's been a few years since I went to take a bite out of the Big Apple. Not a lot of planning involved, this trip to New York came suddenly and rather domestic compared to the other trips I took to South and Central America this past year, but it was no less adventurous as you'll learn. It all pretty much started with an invitation to Gilead graduation. What's that? You might be thinking. Basically Gilead is a 5-month Bible education course to train married couples to be missionaries in foreign countries. When the students finish the course, a graduation ceremony is held and that's what everyone else gets to see. Space is limited, so invitations are hard to come by. It's free, but you have to know someone. So when I got an invitation to go, I just couldn't say no.

This was the 132<sup>nd</sup> graduating class with the first class having been held in 1943. The class is designed to help the students to become more effective preachers and teachers of God's Word, but the students are also trained in how to handle the emotions of living in a foreign country where everything is unfamiliar and likely to be a much lower standard of living than they are accustomed to. In the past, most of the students attending the class had previously not served as missionaries, but this year was the first time that almost all of the students had already been serving as missionaries in foreign assignments. Although many of the students were sent back to the same country they had been serving in previously, they

would now be returning with a renewed spirit because of the wealth of knowledge and skills they gained during the training course. Some of the students included an Australian couple that have been serving in East Timor for years and would be returning there after the class. There were also several French couples assigned to serve in African countries which seemed like an easy fit since French is the national language for much of Africa. Being a missionary in a foreign land can present many challenges so the talks given at the graduation reminded the students of the need to trust in Jehovah God and remember the reasons they are serving as missionaries.



*Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn*

While attending Gilead graduation was quite a treat, it goes without saying that I would have to take advantage of my time in the big city. This was

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**A DAY IN THE LIFE... continued**  
**Jill Dawson, Metric Engineering**

not my first trip to NYC, so I decided to forego some of the typical tourist traps that I had already experienced like the Empire State Building or Chinatown. No, I had better things to do, like eat Thai food. Really, I ate Thai food almost every day. Was this my goal? Well, not exactly. It's just that there were all these people in town from California, Texas, the Canary Islands and all kinds of other places and every time we would go to hang out with a different group of these visitors, I would find myself at a Thai restaurant. One night we mixed it up a little and actually ate Indian food. But that's still curry, so I don't know that it was much of a variation. I love to eat ethnic foods, but I have to say, that egg sandwich I had for breakfast at the end of the trip was really good! A welcomed change.



My trip did include more than just eating Thai food though. One night, after leaving the Thai restaurant, we headed over to Times Square with

some friends of friends. Little did I know what a special night it would be for them. After a short train ride, we stopped at Grand Central Station since it was their first time in New York and they had never seen this famous monument to transportation. After walking around a bit, we found ourselves following the one guy in our group who seemed to know everything about New York. He took us over to the whispering wall where we discovered that when you whisper in one corner, the person standing in the opposite corner could hear you! After experimenting with the wisdom of the acoustics in this architecture and taking snapshots of ourselves whispering into the marble wall, we realized that very memorable words were being whispered from one corner to another. A guy in the group was proposing to his girlfriend! With my camera at the ready, I quickly tried to capture the moment. I had never met these people before that night, but here we were, witnessing a momentous occasion in their lives. How cool!



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## A DAY IN THE LIFE... continued Jill Dawson, Metric Engineering

The other highlight of my trip was Broadway. It was my first Broadway show, opening night of Evita and as I later learned, Ricky Martin's Broadway debut. The show was flawless! Our trip home however, was not so flawless. All seemed fine at first as we navigated through gobs of people in Times Square searching for the right Subway entrance. We found the entrance and then the train, but wait, it was closed for construction. No problem, we said. We'll ask for directions. It seemed to be working out great since we had caught the train we were told to use, but after riding along for a few stops we realized we were going in the wrong direction.



*Our picture on the side of a building in Times Square*

That's when we decided to get off the train and actually read the map this time. It was about that time or perhaps it was after we caught another train and got lost again that we decided we could catch

a cab. Upon reaching the street level we found ourselves in Harlem. I don't care what they say about Harlem being an up and coming neighborhood; it was not a place I wanted to be at night. The only comforting thought was that we happened to be next to a hospital. So in the event that we did get shot, at least we were close to a trauma unit.

Thankfully I can say that we eventually escaped the neighborhood without getting wounded, but we did have a hard time catching a taxi. Apparently few people must hail taxis on a Monday night in Harlem. Finally though, we found a taxi that was on duty with no passengers and he actually stopped for us. The situation changed however, when we perceived that this driver rarely if ever ventures outside of Harlem, let alone drives the distance to Brooklyn. It was as if we had asked him to drive us to Mars. He was willing to take us, but I had about as much faith in his ability to take us there as I did in myself to navigate the Subway. So when he stated the price it was an easy decision to bust out of the taxi and onto the streets of Harlem again.

This time we wised up and asked a member of the NYPD to help us out. Seeing our plight, he so kindly and thoroughly explained the Subway system and showed us the routes on his smart phone. Pointing us in the right direction, we took

**A DAY IN THE LIFE... continued**  
**Jill Dawson, Metric Engineering**

off running across the street to follow the route we thought we finally understood. Down into the Subway again we were reading the signs and maps and realizing that we couldn't find the train he told us to take, but we did find one that would at least take us in the right direction, so we jumped on it hoping not to get smacked by those doors that only open for like 10 seconds. We seated ourselves right next to the map so we could study the routes to figure out where to change trains to find our way back to Brooklyn. After a while and at least one more train change, we finally found ourselves back in Brooklyn. I have to say, as memorable as Broadway was, getting lost on the train was no less memorable than that actress singing "...don't cry for me Argentina."

Speaking of memory though, when I got back to Florida, still in my sweater, the temperature read somewhere over 80 degrees. I had a hard time believing that I had actually gone to New York and stood in freezing temperatures just hours before, but then I saw my pictures and remembered, I actually was in New York City!

Jill Dawson  
 Metric Engineering



**Operations**

March has been a very busy month for the Traffic Management Center. Daily drivers, spring breakers, and snow birds that are heading back home have kept the TMC (Traffic Management Center) Operators continuously working hard, kept on alert for any impending lane blocking events throughout our district. It's a great feeling knowing that motorists have a safe trip home through Northeast Florida using all of our resources at the TMC. March also marks the one year anniversary for SPARR (Smartphone Application for Road Rangers), the app for Road Rangers, and Feedback Operations. It's hard to believe that FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) introduced the SPARR app to Road Rangers/ TMC, and the debut of Feedback Operations approximately one year ago.

SPARR app has been an asset to the Road Rangers and TMC Operators on daily missions to keep the highways running smooth and safe. Since introducing SPARR to traffic incident management, SPARR has been focusing on budget consciousness, saving time when putting incidents into SunGuide, improving mobility, integrating Automated Vehicle Location, reducing radio chatter by 85%, and ensuring high efficiency/ accuracy when obtaining detailed information about the motorist's vehicle from the Road Rangers. The Traffic Management Center has seen an increase in events from the Road Rangers since SPARR's introduction one year ago. The motto behind the development of SPARR was to "work smarter, not harder."

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### Operations continued

March also marked another one year anniversary for Feedback Operations. Central Office tasked the Traffic Management Center with monitoring feedback for the State of Florida. Feedback Operations was developed to ensure that feedback from the motorists was being screened and sent to the proper districts. This feedback also gives the motorist an opportunity to become a traffic reporter for the various TMCs around the State of Florida. Since the introduction of Feedback Operations, the quality of information being distributed by the motorist to the 511 system has increased dramatically.

The Traffic Management Center recently started a pilot program called Signals. Signals started in collaboration with the City of Jacksonville, City of Gainesville, and Clay County Traffic Offices. ITS is always evolving and Signals is one way where ITS would help the motoring public keep moving through arterial roadways efficiently and in a timely manner. Signals involves TMC personnel to be at the local traffic agencies in assisting them in utilizing their arterial DMS's for incidents, monitoring travel times, troubleshooting problems with traffic lights and working with the Regional Traffic Management Center during major lane blocking events on the interstates. As the Signals Operations moves forward, motorists will benefit from having earlier notifications through arterial roadways.

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)359-6842 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 that is relayed to our operators in real time. Remember the story above and...

### **“Know Before You Go! Dial 511”**

Santos Morin  
TMC Supervisor



City of Jacksonville Signals Office

PHOTO GALLERY



The Azalea Festival in Palatka...Alexis, one of our wonderful operator/marketing folks with a gentleman who just learned about 511



511 once again participates in the Gate River Run Expo

PHOTO GALLERY 2



The newest member of our TMC Family,  
Bright eyed Sofia Lorraine Bratcher.  
Born March 1, 2012 at 14:14, 6lb 3 oz 19" long.

Our own Rebecca Bratcher with Sofia  
(many of us remember those days of sleeping sitting up!)



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**D2 Day Operators**

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 Michael Harper  
 Jessica Lakey  
 Katie Langella  
 James Speed

**Fill-In & Feedback**

**Operators**  
 Ben Brown  
 Alexis Corsetti  
 Jonathan Figueroa  
 Joshua Mattie

**D2 Night & Weekend Operators**

Jason Evans  
 David Rolfe  
 Tyler Sowers  
 Brett Vincent

**D3 Day Operators**

Jesus Avila  
 Ed Capps  
 Adrienne Catapano  
 Joanna Garcia

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