



“Snow” in Jacksonville, January 2015



SNOW in upstate New York 2015



NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS (TSM&O) PROGRAM MANAGER

On December 27th, 2014, at 10:10 PM a dramatic event occurred in my life that has defined where I am today. My mother passed away at Florida Hospital in Orlando that evening at the age of 85 years and 9 months. I ask for no pity, sorrow or remorse because the experience reminded me of how blessed my life has been. In past newsletters I have used my experiences with mom to get the message across but never to the extent I am about to share. The evening of her passing was a very traumatic experience for my brother and two sisters. As I stood in the corner of the room in the ICU there was a calm within me that had them worried about how I was dealing with the situation. All I could say was that "I am fine and grateful for the many years we had to spend with her before her passing."

I guess the response revolved around my 20+ years with FDOT and the tragedies I've witnessed while involved with roadway events. I've been to accident scenes where children were thrown hundreds of feet from the accident site, motorists/passengers were burned to a crisp and body parts were strewn all over the roadway. All were pronounced deceased on site. Once you've experienced that you realize just how valuable life is and the sadness that comes with the passing of an individual in such an unexpected way. So...even during this sad moment in my life I had to count my blessings for having the opportunity to be by my mother's side during the waning moments of her life.

My fate with transportation came at an early age while growing up in New York City. That's when I first learned the value of sidewalks, pedestrian push buttons and using caution when crossing the street. We lived in south Manhattan which was walking distance to many of our destination

points so by the age of five I was allowed to walk alone to the local grocery store for milk, eggs or candy. Prior to mom allowing me such liberties she taught me to look left, right and then left before I stepped off the curb. She also insisted that I use the crosswalk even if it was a few hundred feet away.

By the age of eight she allowed me to use the transit system by myself to get around the City. Those were the glory days since I could head to a game at Shea Stadium in Queens by train or the ice skating rink in Central Park by bus. I felt so emboldened and free until I realized that it cost money to utilize this public service and mom had to stretch every dollar she could to support four kids. That being said, she taught me that being poor was an opportunity for growth and better things were just around the corner. Her solution to my transportation dilemma was to buy me a second hand bike for \$10 so that I could wheel around Manhattan whenever I wished.

At the age of nine my mom decided it was time to visit family in Puerto Rico so I had my first experience on a plane. Unfortunately, the turbulence was terrible and we had to make an emergency landing in the Dominican Republic. I still recall mom trying to keep me calm even though I saw the panic in her eyes. She kept saying "the pilots know what they are doing so we are safe." Once we reached Puerto Rico I realized the only way back was on that plane so I'd better get over this bad experience in the next few days.

By the age of ten my mom felt it was time for me to give rail a shot. We took an Amtrak train from New York to St. Petersburg so we could visit her sisters. It took two days to make this



NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS PROGRAM MANAGER CONTINUED

trip but it was the most fun a kid could have ever experienced (especially with no turbulence or chance of crashing from 30,000 feet). I finally got the chance to see the entire Eastern Seaboard. I was in awe of the lush landscapes and nature as we made our way down south. You see, this was something foreign to a kid growing up in the “Concrete Jungle.” My perception of nature was a ten by ten plot of grass and some trees surrounded by concrete. Central Park could be considered “nature” if you could drown out the noise from the traffic.

Mom felt that at the age of ten I needed better surroundings if I were to succeed in life so she relocated the family to St. Petersburg. This was quite a reality shock since there were no trains and limited bus service in our neighborhood. I still had my trusty \$10 bike, unfortunately it was different because access to stores and parks was not as convenient. No sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks or passing taxi cabs every 30 seconds. It made me realize how important transportation is to one’s daily survival and the importance of our roadway network for motor vehicles.

A year after arriving in St. Petersburg mom got her driver’s license and bought her first car. I still remember the glimmer in her eye as she asked me and my siblings if we wanted to take a ride to the pizzeria. She always complained about the bus schedule and having to walk long distances to the bus stop. It was even worse when the afternoon thunderstorms passed through like a monsoon in a matter of minutes. Mom had discovered freedom and opportunity with this purchase so to her “the sky’s the limit” as far as her future went.

When I graduated from high school the expectation was that mom would hand over the

keys to her black Cutlass Supreme so that I had some mode of transportation while in college. Lo and behold, she had other plans and was waiting for me at our doorstep was a black twelve-speed bike and backpack. Of course I was mad at first but then I realized she expected me to fend for myself if I was ever to make it in the real world. So, I proudly rode that bike to school and work until I could afford to buy my own car. The bike actually came in handy during college since finding an open parking spot was a burden while pulling up to a bike rack beside the Engineering building was SO convenient.

After graduating from USF the first career opportunity I had was to go work as a field engineer for Dow Chemical. In the first few months I learned that I was required to get my CDL license so that I could transport chemicals like sulfuric acid, hydrogen peroxide and ammonia to our job sites. Initially I felt this was a deal breaker and that I could never learn to drive a rig. I called my mom to let her know about the situation and she basically told me to “suck it up and get over it.” Once I got over my tantrum I realized that if she could learn to drive a vehicle for her survival then driving a semi was no different. After a while it became fun to get the opportunity to drive a unit with 3,000 pounds of hazardous material in the back!

So, as I’ve mentioned in previous newsletters the hours at Dow Chemical were extremely long and the knowledge that I’d have to relocate to Chicago for a managerial position was daunting. Mom was very ill at the time so I asked for a few weeks off to visit her before I made the move to the Windy City. The response I received was shocking, yet very enlightening when I was told “no” I could only



**NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS
PROGRAM MANAGER CONTINUED**

get three days to go see her. That's when I decided that a six-figure salary was not as important as family so I resigned. I felt it was fate because I now had a chance to find my calling and it ended up being with FDOT and the transportation industry even at a 70% pay cut.

So, in a sense my entire career with FDOT revolved around a woman that taught me about working hard and transportation at an early age in life. The past few years prepared me for the moment of her passing and allowed me to appreciate what I've experienced so much more. I was fortunate in that I had the chance to say "good-bye." That is a gift I truly appreciate after witnessing so many tragic fatalities that take this opportunity away.

Pete Vega
District 2
Transportation System Management & Operations (TSM&O) Manager



**NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS/TMC
PROGRAM MANAGER**

There is a big part of the ITS arena that I would have never thought about until I began my time here. That is the tower, something that on the surface doesn't seem to have a place in ITS. However, they are an integral part of how we are able to manage incidents and keep traffic flowing as smooth as possible.

There are numerous different contracts and programs that we have with the tow/ wrecker

community that we exercise. The most obvious of this is the Road Ranger program, managed by our Donna Danson. This program is the result of a strong partnership between two wrecker companies, and is very important to D2 ITS. The Road Rangers not only assist stranded motorists, but also provide temporary maintenance of traffic at incident scenes, and are our eyes and ears on the interstates (and Butler Boulevard). This program is coveted by both District 2 and the public.

We also have the Safe Tow program. Here, tow trucks relocate stranded or wrecked vehicles to safe areas away from the traveled way. This not only helps clear the roadways faster, but also adds to the safety of the motorists that are stranded with their vehicles, as well as the overall safety of the traveling public. The Safe Tow program can be used on both the interstates and arterial roadways of our district.

Another program we have is RISC (Rapid Incident Scene Clearance). This, to me, is the most intriguing of the programs. Here, heavy duty wreckers and supporting equipment are used to clear heavy vehicles (semi-tractor trailers) from the roadway. I have yet to see this done in person, but have seen photos and heard the stories of twisted, rolled over semi-trucks being righted with a preponderance of mechanical strength compounded with ingenuity on the part of the wrecker operator. In a relatively short amount of time, a confusing scene of metal and truck tires can be cleared so that motorists can have a clear path through the roadway.

Recently, Donna and I traveled to Gainesville to perform a mandatory inspection of a new wrecker company that had applied to become



NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS/TMC PROGRAM MANAGER continued

a RISC contractor. This was to determine if they had procured the necessary equipment to respond to heavy vehicle incidents per the contract qualifications. The equipment combined with all the tools needed per the contract was astounding. It looked like the company was ready for the apocalypse, but they were for sure ready for any event that could occur on the roadway. I was fascinated by the caliber and detail of equipment they had, and confident that between their tools they had on hand and their experience that they could clear any incident that comes their way.



Donna Danson "inspecting" a RISC vehicle

All of these programs we have are designed to help us meet the Open Roads Policy. We want the roads back to normal as quickly as possible; this allows for greater safety and the mobility of the public.

Josh Reichert
ITS/TMC Program Manager

NORTH FLORIDA TPO UPDATE

The North Florida TPO has provided us with the opportunity to put the final touches on managing a regional transportation system in the coming year. The North Florida RTMC should be completed in the next several months however there was a gap that still needed to be filled. St. Johns County and the City of St. Augustine's traffic signal systems were isolated from the rest of the region due to the geographical location of their operation centers. The North Florida TPO provided funding for this fiscal year so that we can connect these systems to the new RTMC by the beginning of 2016.

Once this project is complete we will be able to assist Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns County with roadway operations for incidents, major events and congested roadways. This was the "end-game" of the ITS Master Plan that was developed several years ago whereby traffic for Jacksonville and its bedroom communities could be managed to get the most throughput on our roadway systems. There are still a few minor holes to be filled with partnering agencies like Jaxport, JAA and JTA but that is being worked on via our bi-weekly network meetings between respective IT staff.

We are coming up on 10 years since our inaugural meeting for the region's ITS Coalition and looking back I'd have to say "it's been a job well done." It could never have been accomplished without the support and funding of the North Florida TPO Board and staff. As mentioned on numerous occasions, this group is the benchmark that many other municipalities try to emulate so we should all feel fortunate to have them as a partner.

A good example of their support was a recent shortfall in funding for an adaptive signal



NORTH FLORIDA TPO UPDATE cont.

system on US 17 that was offered to us by Central Office. A little over half the funding was available from Central Office to execute this project so we sought funding from the NFTPO. The NFTPO provided the remainder of the funds that will allow us to optimize the traffic signal system along US 17 from Holly Point Road to Collins Road. This is a very congested area that has varying peak travel times, hence installing an adaptive system may allow us to deal with the unexpected peaks in demand. If you've ever traveled down this corridor you'll understand that it's "hit or miss" along this corridor depending on NAS schedules.

So, in about nine months we will be neighbors with the NFTPO as we relocate to the North Florida Regional Transportation Management Center. Once this occurs they will be able to see transportation issues first hand as we deal with problems along our arterial and interstate roadway systems. This opportunity should pay huge dividends as their staff tries to target the roadways that need the most attention.

Pete Vega
TSM&O Program Manager



MAINTENANCE

The ITS Maintenance Group has been tasked with getting the Philips Highway ITS System operational. This system was installed by a Design/Build Project several years ago and has had issues with many of the CCTVs failing along with some issues with the Arterial Dynamic Message Signs. Last year an inspection was performed at all ITS device sites to determine the possible cause(s) of the persistent issues and several items were found to be deficient. We are now taking the recommendations of this inspection as well as suggestions by the CCTV vendor and implementing these changes. These changes mainly center around surge suppression and grounding of the equipment and require some wire changes as well as changes to the configuration of the Transient Voltage Surge Suppression within the cabinets and at the CCTVs.

Besides the work on Philips Highway, we have been working on our normal daily troubleshooting and repairs of system devices and performing preventive maintenance throughout the system. However, we did have to replace a CCTV cabinet on I-10 westbound at Edgewood Avenue due to a car accident. The car knocked the cabinet off of the base and damaged it bad enough that it was beyond repair. The good news though was that all of the equipment inside of the cabinet was still operational. So, once the cabinet was replaced and the devices were installed in the new cabinet, the site was operational once again.

Kevin Jackson
ITS Field Specialist



CONSTRUCTION

The Phase 9 project limits are on I-295 from Atlantic Boulevard to the southern I-295/I-95 Interchange. The contractor and their sub-contractors have been installing power service poles, trenching conduit, installing device poles and installing DMS and ADMS foundations. This project will complete the installation of ITS on the I-295 beltway. The project is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2015.

The construction of the I-95 ITS communications portion of the SR 23 project is underway. Work is currently on hold on this project as the contractor has decided to sub-contract the installation of the underground conduit. It is currently unknown when work will begin again on this project. The work must be completed before the end of the SR 23 North contract time, which is currently the end of 2015.

The design for the ITS devices and power infrastructure for I-95 in St. Johns County is progressing on schedule. 90% plan comments have been received from FDOT and 100% plans are being prepared. The construction of this project is dependent upon the fiber optic communications infrastructure to be installed on I-95 in St. Johns County as part of the SR 23 Contract.

The design for the installation of fiber optic communications infrastructure on I-75 from SR 24 in Gainesville going north to the Georgia Line is on schedule. The 100% plans are to be submitted on or before February 13th for FDOT review and comment. This project will install the fiber optic conduit, cable, pull boxes and communications hubs which will be used by the next I-75 project to connect ITS devices between Gainesville and the Georgia state line. Construction for this project is anticipated to begin in the fall.

The contractor has completed the installation of backbone conduit, pull boxes and splice vaults on

the I-75 portion of the ITS Project from CR 234 to SR 121. The contractor is currently installing the ITS device poles and backbone fiber optic cable along I-75 throughout the project limits. Conduit and fiber optic cable along the US 441 portion of the project is anticipated to be completed next month. This project is scheduled for completion in late Spring of this year.

Craig Carnes
Metric Engineering

FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

At time of preparing this newsletter, the January First Coast Team Meeting had not yet taken place, as it was rescheduled for later in the month. Next month's newsletter will debrief that meeting.

Efforts still continue to train as many responders as possible in SHRP 2. If you are interested in having a training session for your agency, please contact Craig Carnes at ccarnes@metriceng.com. His schedule is flexible to suit your agency's needs, including nights and weekends. Please see the TIM website <http://www.jax511.com/D2TIMwp/> for more information about the SHRP 2 training. This website also contains information related to the TIM team including meeting minutes from previous meetings, meeting schedules, contact lists, RISC related documents and links to related websites.

The next First Coast TIM Team meeting will be held on **March 17, 2015** at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center, 2198 Edison Avenue at 10:00 A.M. Thank you for your attendance at these meetings since improved communication at the TIM meetings contributes to successful incident management in the field. We welcome



FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE
continued

all incident management agencies in the area to attend the meetings. If you do not currently receive emails related to the TIM Team and would like to be added to the list, please contact Donna Danson at donna.danson@dot.state.fl.us.

ALACHUA-BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The Alachua-Bradford TIM Team will hold its next bi-monthly meeting on **February 11, 2015** at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office, 5301 N.E. 39th Avenue at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendar to attend this meeting as this will be the Team's first meeting for the 2015 calendar year.

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.

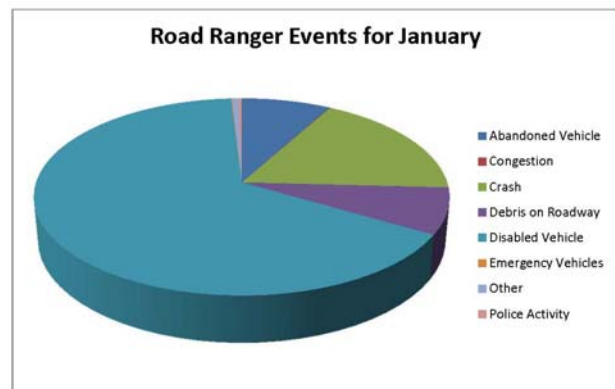
Donna Danson
District 2 ITS Program Manager

ROAD RANGER UPDATE

The Road Rangers held their monthly safety meeting on January 7, 2015 at 11:30 AM at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center. Marshall Adkison stressed safety with reminders to keep focused on traffic when responding to an incident and to not be in a hurry when at a stop. The group was also reminded to deploy all cones, and provide enough space at an incident, being sure to provide a good distance between the truck and the disabled vehicle or incident scene. It was also highlighted that the Road Rangers must take proper precautions when merging back into traffic from incidents. Not only do the safety meetings allow the managerial staff to remind Road Rangers of proper procedures, but the Road Rangers also learn much from each other.

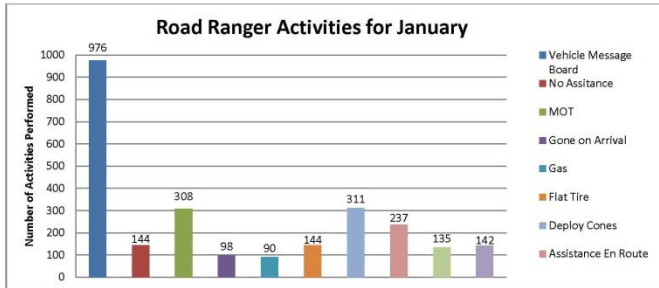
The Road Rangers play an essential role in incident management and are utilized to make incident scenes safer for our incident responders and motorists. So far, the month of January has been busy for our Road Ranger service as the rangers have been involved in assisting with over 1,200 incidents.

The following charts illustrate the event types and activities that the Road Rangers have responded to and performed through January 25th.





ROAD RANGER UPDATE continued



RISC – RAPID INCIDENT SCENE CLEARANCE – UPDATE

Quick Clearance for Safety and Mobility to make travel in Florida safer and more efficient is a key component of the Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) Program. RISC contracts with towing companies to provide quick, safe clearance of large vehicle crashes that are overturned or damaged to the point where the vehicle cannot be towed by a smaller tow truck on the interstate. District 2 currently has RISC in 9 counties covering I-10, I-75, I-95, I-295, 9A, and J. Turner Butler Boulevard.

District 2 has not had a RISC incident in January, but our RISC Contractors remain ready to respond if needed.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The month has been filled with a whirlwind of events and activities. The year opened up with Jacksonville welcoming the Tennessee Volunteers and Iowa Hawkeyes to the 2015 TaxSlayer Bowl on January 2 at Everbank Field. The City of Jacksonville and the surrounding areas continue to benefit from the steady decrease in fuel prices. According to AAA, in the Jacksonville area the highest prices for fuel were recorded on 7/16/2008, with unleaded listed at \$4.079, while a year ago it was \$3.326 (-18%), and currently \$2.028 (-50%). Additionally, January called for an end to winter break for students and for those on vacation; time to go back to school and work, which in turn means more drivers on the road.

Thus far in the month of January it appears that the amount of crashes is lower than last month and lower than the average for the last 12 months. In December, there was an average of about 25 crashes per day, and there have been about 23 per day in January, but the average for the last 12 months is about 23 per day. As mentioned above, the steady decline in fuel prices, the end of winter break and completion of vacations may be attributable to the decrease in crashes and congestion identified in December, however January is consistent with the yearly average as the traffic patterns return to daily commuter traffic.

Road Rangers participated in or assisted with nearly 4,000 activities for the month of January due to events such as crashes, congestion, abandoned and disabled vehicles, flat tires and MOT on the roadways. In terms of the amount of crashes in District Two, there was a significant increase by approximately 14 percent from December. The inclement weather could have led to more events on our roadways.

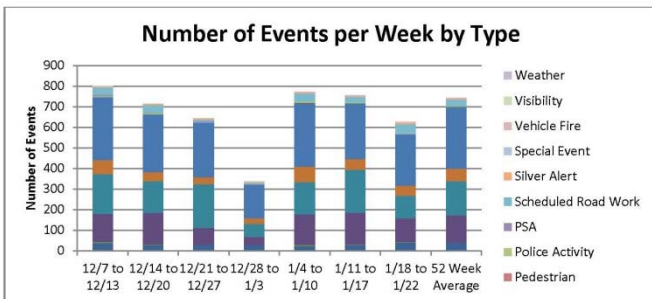
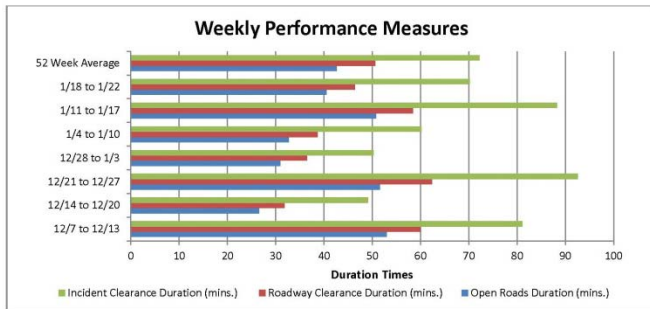
The Open Roads Duration, Incident Clearance Duration and our Roadway Clearance duration have been higher than the corresponding weekly average forty percent of the time in the past month. Looking at the Weekly Performance Measures chart below, we can see that only three of the last seven weeks reported all duration times above the weekly average. During the weeks of December 7 to December 13, December 21 to December 27 and January 11 to January 17 there was a 9%, 37% and 33% increase respectively in the number of crash events from the previous week, which could have



PERFORMANCE MEASURES continued

contributed to the average being slightly higher for that week than usual.

The following charts show the Performance Measures for the Open Roads, Roadway Clearance, Incident Clearance durations and events for the past seven weeks.



OPERATIONS

It seems like the year 2015 started off with no sun for a few weeks. Being from the Northeast one would think I would be used to the cold and gray but I guess a decade down here thins your blood. I am ready to trade in my shoes for flip-flops and for winter to be over! As I write this, my parents are preparing to get 30 inches of snow over a 2.5 day period so I guess perception is everything. The dreary days did get me thinking about operations and how rain, early sunsets and fog can influence events.

On Monday, December 22nd 2014 we had 2.15 inches of precipitation in Duval County. That amount is the highest total within the last two months. In Duval County during that 24 hour period the Transportation Management Center (TMC) managed 140 events with crashes accounting for 52 of them. Of those reports two of them were severity level 2 or 3 with a roadway clearance duration of 201 minutes. Severity level 2 is lane blockage for between 30-119 minutes and severity level 3 is all lanes blocked for any amount of time or any lane blocked for over 120 minutes.

For comparison sake let's use the following Monday, December 29th 2014 to see what weather influences we can track. That Monday was rain free and the temperature maxed out at 81 degrees. That day in Duval County the TMC managed only 106 events of which only 9 were crashes resulting in 34 less events managed. On this Monday they also only had two events that were categorized as severity level 2 and 3 but those two events had a roadway clearance time of 32 minutes.

While the jump in total events, crashes and clearance times seems accurate looking at this small sample size it is a little misleading for high severity events. Most crashes pushed right up against the incident severity level 2 with the majority resulting in the travel lanes being opened between 20-25 minutes on December 22nd so that total of two was very close to a huge spike. In short, things are as they seem. Just add water and the best laid plans for motorists go awry.

Here's to no "Blizzard of 2015" and warmer weather. December was a busy month for the TMC. The Month of Holidays brought 3,240 total events for our staff to manage! That is over 100 events per day while managing 407 lane blocking events. The Road Rangers were



OPERATIONS continued

busy as well handling 1,740 events with their main event types handling were disabled vehicles, crashes and abandoned vehicles. Flip flops and shorts, hopefully coming soon.

Without ITS devices outside of Jacksonville (and parts of Jacksonville) the TMC depends on FDOT and TIM Partners to assist us with 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 also leave feedback on the 511 system (iphone and smartphone applications) about road conditions and bugs you may find in the system that is relayed to our operators in real time.

Remember, “Know Before You Go! Use FL511”.

Ryan Crist
TMC Manager

MARKETING

I don't know about you, but as soon as the calendar year rolls over, I start thinking ahead to summer vacation. It could be that I'm just tired of warming my feet by the space heater every night. Or maybe it's those “Visit Jamaica” trips they keep teasing us with on the Travel Channel. But whatever it is that keeps steel drums and Bob Marley looping through my head, also makes me want to grab my car keys and hit the open road. This must be the same sense of adventure that keeps RV enthusiasts coming back to the Equestrian Center year after year for the annual Jacksonville RV Super Show. For 4 glorious sun-soaked days (fingers crossed) we'll pitch our 511 tent and mix and mingle with the best of them. The event kicks off Thursday, February 26th and won't wrap up until the last RV drives off the lot Sunday, March 1st.

This year, we're kicking our 511 prize wheel to the curb, and instead, we'll encourage motorists to download our free app, available for Apple and Android, to win a prize. It's that simple! And before you know it, we'll all be rolling down the road together, tires humming on the pavement, skirting all the traffic delays thanks to our new 511 Apps.

Now that I've channeled Bob Marley, I have this strange reggae rendition of “The Wheels on the Bus...” looping through my head. Not so much because of the RVs, but rather our upcoming visit to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority. You may have heard that JTA has launched a new initiative, complete with new routes, extended hours and even an App that alerts passengers to the exact location of their bus. JTA has long been a partner and valued supporter of 511, but even more so going forward, as we work together to promote safe, efficient travel in the metro Jacksonville area. As we extend our coverage to the arterial roadways, JTA will rely heavily on us for up-to-the-minute traffic information. They'll even have access to some of the city's cameras, which in turn, will allow their dispatchers to communicate valuable traffic information to their bus drivers. To learn more about JTA's newly revamped bus system, visit www.jtafla.com. There, you'll also find a link to our 511 home page.

And remember, wherever you're headed, make sure your trip begins with a call to 511. You can also log onto www.FL511.com or download our free 511 Traffic App available for Apple and Android. Know Before You Go and Keep Moving!

Sherri Byrd
Marketing Manager



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Juana “Jenny” Rijos-Escribano

Juana “Jenny” Rijos-Escribano was born on March 29th, 1929, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She grew up in a community that had dirt roads, outhouses and no doors or windows in her home. Transportation was limited to walking or catching a ride on a horse drawn wagon. When World War Two ended, the opportunities in America were abundant and all it took was a person to take “the plunge” to find better opportunities in life.

As I go through this tale I will relate the importance of our jobs and how it impacted Jenny’s life until the day she died. Once she decided to come to America she needed a means to get to Ellis Island. At the time the only method of affordable travel was by ship (Jaxport) so off she went on her first ever journey by sea! Upon arriving in Manhattan she needed to find employment but first she had to learn how to get around the Big Apple. A map, the classified ads and a pair of good shoes helped her find a job as a seamstress in the Fashion District. No more dirt roads for her in the concrete jungle that had an abundance of streets, avenues and sidewalks (FDOT).

Once she settled into this job Jenny realized that she’d never survive on the meager salary she was earning so she got a second job. The only problem was that to get from point A to point B would be very difficult on foot so she learned how to take the bus between both jobs (JTA). Life was grand but she felt there was more to see in New York City so she learned how to travel in the subway system (future JTA). Jenny kept herself busy prior to having her first child and decided to take a trip to the northern part of New York State via rail (Amtrak). After several years she felt homesick and wanted to visit her parents so she hopped on a plane out of LaGuardia Airport (JAA).

By the time Jenny was 30 she had mastered the varying transportation modes in New York City and felt the world was her oyster. There were no limits to the amount of jobs she’d take on or places she could see. Reliable transportation in the city was taken for granted until the day she decided to move to Florida. Jenny relocated to St. Petersburg at the age of 46 and was shocked at the limitations encountered for transportation modes. No subways, buses that ran every 45 minutes instead of 5, no taxis whizzing by every 30 seconds and no sidewalks! She quickly realized that this change in lifestyle may have been a mistake but then learned that a car can get you anywhere you want to go at a moment’s notice.

Once again she grabbed a map, kept a full tank of gas and mastered St. Petersburg’s grid roadway network in a matter of weeks (FDOT). Jenny limited her driving to work since she was again holding down two jobs and family lived nearby, so I doubt if she went through one tank of gas per month.

For a first time driver she didn’t do so badly until she had her first accident while heading to the store (FHP/JSO). She was cited for failure to yield to oncoming traffic and received her first ticket ever. I remember her being decimated by the ticket as if she were a criminal. After that day I don’t think I ever saw her drive within 5 MPH of the posted speed limit. As Jenny grew older and her eyesight began to fail she learned how to use the back roads along arterials instead of interstates to make her way around town (FDOT). She swore never to use transit again based on her experiences in the late 70’s (JTA).

When Jenny reached the age of 80 it was time to give up her driving privileges. She side-



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Juana “Jenny” Rijos-Escribano continued

swiped one too many cars in parking lots and actually dinged a neighbor’s car in her neighborhood while heading home. When the neighbor reported the accident to the police (JSO) they knocked on Jenny’s door to begin their investigation. She tried to pull the “poor old lady” routine on the officer but several of the neighbors were eyewitnesses to the event. The funny thing was that they said she stopped when she sideswiped the car then sped up from 5 MPH to 10 MPH to try and get into the house before anyone saw her.

That was the end of Jenny’s driving days and the freedom she once had in life. The ticket she received led to the Court system revoking her license until she could pass a driver’s test. That was hopeless with her poor eyesight and weak legs. She tried the transit system again (JTA) but it hadn’t improved since her first experiences in Florida. Jenny felt like a prisoner in her own home and was feeling badly about having to ask friends, neighbors and family for rides to the grocery store. In the end it was probably the beginning of her downfall as she reached the final years of her life.

I bring this up because we are the people that Jenny and other motorists depend upon to have the quality of life she was used to in her earlier days. Millions of people look to our expertise whether it’s by sea (Jaxport), air (JAA), transit (JTA), rail (FDOT) or roadway (FDOT). When an accident occurs and a call is made to 911 they expect Law Enforcement and Fire/Rescue to be the heroes. This is why it’s critical that we realize the importance of what we do on a daily basis. This is also the reason why we must look into the future to provide a better transportation system for our customers.

As I’ve mentioned in previous newsletters, connected and autonomous vehicles are a must if we are to provide the level of service expected from motorists. I fear the day when I lose my freedom by handing over the keys to my car while knowing we are inches away from having this technology become a reality. Juana “Jenny” Rijos-Escribano enjoyed her 85 plus years of life and I think it was because of the services we provide each and every day to the citizens and visitors of Florida. It’s now up to us to take it up another notch.

Pete Vega



**Juana “Jenny” Rijos-Escribano,
multi-modal traveler.**



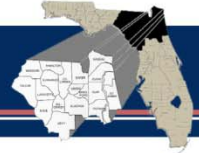
Photo Gallery



Above & below, pictures from the 2014 FL Automated Vehicles Summit, and what the future may be like



Winter Holiday Media Day at the TMC



TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT
2015 MEETING SCHEDULE
To Be Announced

FIRST COAST TIM TEAM MEETING

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

March 17, 2015

ALACHUA/BRADFORD TIM TEAM MEETING

FDOT GAINESVILLE OPERATIONS OFFICE
5301 N.E. 39TH AVE- GAINESVILLE
352-381-4300

February 11, 2015

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