

Wishing the very best to our own “Red Horse”, Captain Alex Varela, U.S.A.F., as he heads out on deployment! Stay safe and we’ll see you in December!





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

On Friday, February 17th, Denise Bunnewith coordinated a meeting between the ITS staff and Professor Sanjay Ahuja to discuss the opportunity for UNF to acquire the ITS office’s device data for use in research projects. Dr. Ahuja heads the Computer Science Department’s Cloud Computing Research Group that looks into “Big Data” and its uses within the Cloud. You may be wondering “why in the heck is Pete’s team of transportation professionals meeting with someone in computer science?” Well, during the meeting I was sort of asking myself the same dang question until the light bulb turned on and things began to click. In my head I kept thinking, “This is it! Eureka! I finally figured out this Rubik’s cube thing-a-ma-jiggy!”

About ten years ago, UF Professor Ken Courage connected with my office seeking data for use with his STEWARD project which involved the archiving of ITS data. At that time we were at about 20% deployment, yet with all the excitement he could muster Dr. Courage called me to exclaim, “This is the most amount of data we’ve ever had during my career!” My response was, “Huh, what the heck is he talking about? I just sent him a week’s worth of data.” Come to find out he did the math and realized that over a one year period he’d be getting Terabytes of data from our 20% worth of deployment. The reality was this wasn’t a big deal to me because all his team was doing was storing the data. No Eureka moment yet, right? That’s when I began to think there may be something more we could do with it.

So, going back to Dr. Ahuja and the Cloud, it started to sink in that we had some powerful information that was not being put to good use. During the discussion we began to brainstorm the possibilities. I initially expected this meeting to take about 15 minutes, however after an hour I realized this was the breakthrough moment we’ve been seeking for years in North Florida. Keep in mind that vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communication relies on data, and lots of it, to be a successful venture. The key component is managing this huge amount of information while delivering it where needed. During the meeting I learned the term for a new quantity we could easily achieve. It’s called Petabytes which sounds like a gazillion bunch of data!

The reality is that District Four, Five and Six are all working on a similar effort with Universities in their area. The difference is that each of us has various needs based on economic circumstances. Whereas their region’s economy relies on tourism, the North Florida region’s economy is heavily focused on freight, growth management and bicycle/pedestrian concerns. Our ability to work with UNF in harnessing this data would go a very long way toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our roadway system. The challenge would be “how do we manage Petabytes (1000⁵) of data that in the future may grow to Zettabytes (1000⁷ bytes) which is much larger than the Gigabyte (1000³) levels we are accustomed to at the moment.”



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

One benefit of this partnership will be the opportunity to manage traffic by time of day instead of by peak hours through the upcoming vehicle-to-infrastructure communication. Likewise, the analysis of the historical data would allow us to predict what areas of North Florida roads are saturated with traffic, thereby justifying the need for additional capacity. From a bicycle/pedestrian safety perspective this data would allow our team the opportunity to provide educated recommendations on potential solutions at locations that show a propensity for conflicts with vehicles. Currently, Florida is number one in the nation for bicyclist and pedestrian fatality rates with Jacksonville ranking third in the State.

The first step to address the issue is collecting massive amounts of data, which was addressed previously in this article. The next step is to get this data to the Educational institutions who can provide a lot of bang for the buck when crunching the numbers.

Fortunately, our office recently completed the interconnection of network fiber to UNF, thus Dr. Ahuja should be able to play with this data by the summer of 2017. Once Dr. Ahuja's team has time to decipher the data being collected our region can assess the problem areas that need targeted projects. This is where the excitement begins for our team.

In 2003, the North Florida region formed an ITS Coalition that contained 80 members. At the onset the goal was to prepare for the future while addressing existing needs. This Coalition created an ITS Master plan that helped build the

infrastructure we have today. The next step is to take a "Smart Cities" approach that will build on this effort, hence we have decided to rebrand our name so that we fall in line with this terminology. The hope is that this will bring a breath of fresh air to our team that dwindled to only about 20 active members. Over time we lost partners in the health, warehousing and shipping industry (to name a few) who could not immediately reap the benefits. Now that we have established a robust system our goal is to bring them back into the fold so that we can address their needs.

This is currently just a wild guess but I believe the new name will be the North Florida Smart Cities Team. My goal is to revitalize the membership by not only bringing back those lost from the previous team but also to begin including private enterprise in the coordination efforts. The reality is that the private industry are not only our customers but also the experts on the needs of the community. Likewise, this group has a lot of talent that has gone untapped due to the approach that was previously taken. The fortunate thing for us is that they are ready and willing to assist, based on discussions I had while attending past Chamber of Commerce meetings and trade shows.

If we can gain some traction, the goal is to utilize this revitalized group to go after Federal Funding while targeting the needs in our area. First on the agenda will be to determine how we can reduce events involving bicyclists and pedestrians. Next on



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

the list will be to come up with solutions that improve the quality of life for the citizens of North Florida. Likewise, we need to find a way to balance the needs of the freight industry that is quickly becoming one of the largest markets in the region. My goal is that by this time next year I can discuss projects built off of this effort. Please keep your fingers crossed.

**NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS
PROJECT MANAGER**

On February 22nd, at the FDOT Gainesville Operations auditorium, 29 eager individuals attended the Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) training. The SHRP2's National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training program was developed by first responders for first responders, with the objective that nationally, responders acquire a common set of core competencies for traffic incident management. The safety of responders and motorists, quick response, and effective communications at traffic incident scenes are the main focus of the training.

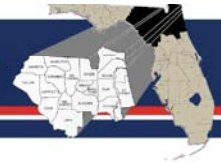
SHRP2's National Incident Management Responder Training brings together police, firefighters, FDOT, towing companies, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and other incident responders to engage in interactive, hands-on incident resolution exercises. Learning to coordinate response activities and optimize operations in the classroom is vital to responding effectively in the field and to building a unified practice on incident management.

This four-hour training covers a variety of topics such as defining Traffic Incident Management (TIM), TIM fundamentals and Terminology, Notification and Scene Size-Up, Safe Vehicle Positioning, Scene Safety, Command Responsibilities, Traffic Management, Special Circumstances and Clearance and Termination. After this training is completed your employees will be well versed in Traffic Incident Management.

Agencies have noticed, after taking the training, several improvements. Improved incident response and clearance times, resulting in fewer secondary crashes from the original incident and less exposure for first responders and drivers during scene clearance. Shorter traffic delays, increased travel time reliability, decreased fuel consumption and reduction in freight delays.

You may be asking yourself "How can I get this training for my agency?" I have your answer. We offer the training for FREE. We can come to your agency and teach the training or set up a training in your area for several agencies to attend. There are attendance requirements, but if you have attendees we will come. Contact Craig Carnes at CCarnes@metriceng.com or deedee.johnson@dot.state.fl.us if you would like more information about this training or are interested in attending a session in your area.

**Dee Dee Johnson
District 2 ITS Operations
Project Manager**



NORTH FLORIDA TPO

The other day I received a butt chewing from a member of the NFTPO. Elizabeth De Jesus came up and told me I needed to lighten up because I was “too mean!” When I inquired about this comment she said that rumor has it I am a slave driver with my employees and was very insensitive. I broke out laughing when she finished so she asked me what was so funny. I had to inform her that she’d been played by my staff at the RTMC because they probably thought she could easily be sold by these rumors. I told her that the reality was my bunny, Buffy, keeps me level headed or I could have turned into that so called ogre.

Over the years I rarely had much business dealings with Elizabeth so I was kind of worried that she believed some of the things she had heard. Hopefully, that is about to change as we try to tackle the challenge of Bike/Ped issues in the North Florida region. I will have to rely on Elizabeth’s expertise and extensive list of contacts for our effort to be a successful venture. The last thing I needed for her to believe was that my temperament would be a factor during our efforts.

I can tell she was excited when I mentioned the types of technology that would assist in getting bicyclist and pedestrian counts. This is much needed data for her group to determine potential deficiencies in our system when it comes to

conflicts between their customers and motorists. Likewise, I mentioned that we could possibly build Smart Phone apps with alert systems to try and avoid some of the most common causes of these accidents. The reality is that the technology already exists that could help in lowering the numbers. The only thing missing is the data since this information will help us focus our efforts first on the problem locations.

Once we have initiated this effort I hope that Elizabeth realizes she’d been the victim of a cruel joke by some of my staff. The reality is that I may play the tyrant but they know better while trying to take their production to the next level. I will admit that each of them have felt my wrath a time or two, but the reality is that many of them have worked with me for several years so this should be expected on occasion. Usually, it’s a quick discussion on my expectations and how they haven’t been met, then end of discussion. I have yet to encounter the need to revisit the issue once I’ve made my point, since such an occurrence is rare. Let’s just hope Elizabeth never gets to see my “Wrath of Kahn face!”

**Pete Vega, District 2
TSM&O Manager**

North Florida
Transportation Planning Organization

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MAINTENANCE

The ITS Maintenance department was extremely busy this month, continuing the recent trend of having more work than time. With our normal tasks and the addition of many special projects the entire group has been non-stop this past month. As we prepare for the acceptance of ongoing projects and the devices and infrastructure they are installing we are working closely to ensure that the Operations side can have a smooth transition and continue to keep the device downtime to a minimum.

The FDOT staff attended 100% walk-throughs on two local ITS projects and is preparing to take the maintenance over on those areas. This includes I-95 in Saint Johns County where we have now connected fiber physically to our neighbors in District 5. The project also installed CCTV cameras, DMS, and MVDS along the corridor. With the addition of these devices we now have the ability to more effectively monitor and manage traffic through the southern portion of District 2 on I-95. As for the other project, the fiber optic cable installation project has been accepted by FDOT construction on I-75 from Archer Road (SR 24) to the Georgia State Line.

Traffic Control Devices on top of their normal Maintenance duties has been working on many of the work orders to enhance and expand our system. This work includes working on procurement of material and trying to get the utility companies to locate their facilities to expand our fiber network to the Gainesville Construction Office. They also assisted with a project to make a connection from the Southside Connector to Merrill Road for signal interconnect. They have also continued preparations for the expansion of the Video Wall within the RTMC dispatch room as well.

Metric Engineering has been assisting in the tracking and maintenance of FDOT owned inventory as well as assisting with the creation and tracking of required property management reports. These property management reports must be created for every device FDOT purchases and must be updated when it is moved, or put into surplus. They have also been assisting with creating as-built plans for the special projects that we are currently doing. These tasks, although repetitive and tedious, are a vital part of what we are trying to do in the big picture of providing better service to the Operations staff.

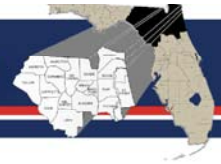
Also, the ITS Maintenance staff would like to welcome Mr. Alex Varela to the TSM&O/ITS team and wish him well as he gets ready to be deployed to defend our great nation. We look forward to working more with you when you return in December 2017.

Matt Harbert
ITS Maintenance Manager

CONSTRUCTION

The I-95 St. Johns County ITS Project has completed all work activities and testing. The contractor is working on the final as-built documentation and the CEI is working on project closeout documentation. This project will be final accepted in March and will finish early and on budget.

The SR 16/US 1 Fiber Optic Cable Project has also completed construction activities and testing. The contractor has completed all



CONSTRUCTION continued

required project documentation and the CEI is working on project closeout documentation. This project has been final accepted and was completed on time and on budget.

The I-75 Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project has also completed construction activities and testing. The contractor has completed all required project documentation and the CEI is working on project closeout documentation. This project has been final accepted and was completed on time and on budget.

The I-75 ITS Device Installation Project is installing ITS devices within the project limits of the fiber optic installation project detailed above and will use the fiber optic cable to communicate back to the Gainesville Smartraffic TMC. TMC operations personnel will control the devices and view CCTV camera images from both the Smartraffic TMC and the North Florida RTMC. The contractor is currently installing ITS device poles and DMS foundations. This project is scheduled for completion in early 2018.

The Contractor for the I-10 Fiber Installation Project continued to install conduits, pull boxes and splice vaults on the western end of the project. The CEI has noted that the Contractor has been working at a good pace and is currently slightly ahead of schedule. This project is scheduled for completion in early 2018.

ROAD RANGER UPDATE

FDOT's District 2 Service Patrol, known as the First Coast Road Rangers, is a free service of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and its partners. The program was initially used for the management of vehicle incidents in construction zones but has since expanded to respond to incidents of all types and has become one of the most effective elements of the Department's incident management program. The Road Rangers provide a direct service to motorists by quickly clearing travel lanes of minor incidents and assisting motorists.

The concept includes a variety of services such as providing fuel, assisting with tire changes, other types of minor emergency repairs and providing short term maintenance of traffic. The Road Rangers are placed along portions of all major interstate corridors in District 2 such as I-295, I-95, I-10 and SR-202.

This program provides many great benefits to the District such as reducing accidents, reducing incident duration times by assisting Law Enforcement and other incident responders, assisting disabled or stranded motorists and removing road debris.

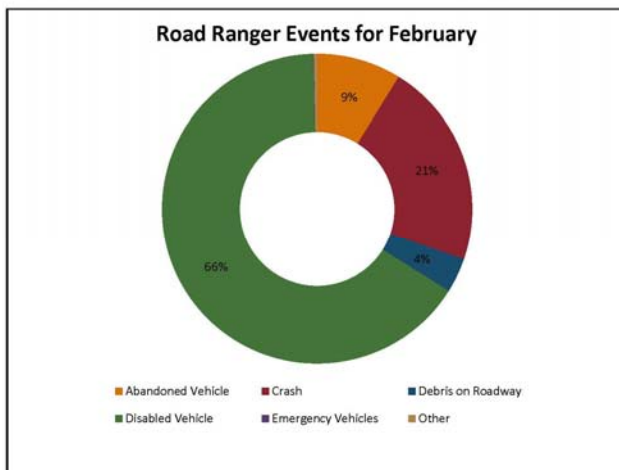
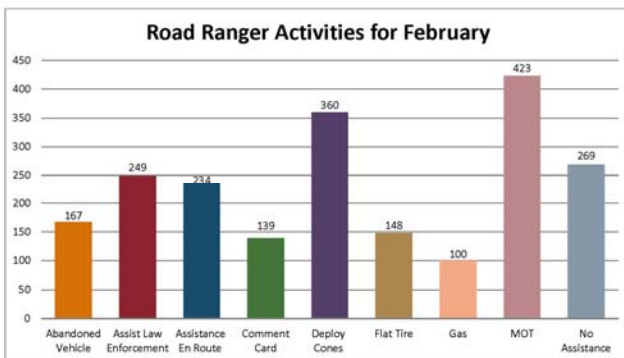
The Road Rangers held their monthly safety meeting at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center at 11:30 A.M. on February 1, 2017. Mr. Cody Parham welcomed all of the Rangers to the meeting and reminded the group that these meetings are held to improve performance, review lessons learned and to promote safety. Mr. Parham stressed the importance of always being aware when out on the roadways assisting motorists by



ROAD RANGER UPDATE continued

keeping their heads on a swivel. The Rangers are extremely exposed out on our interstates and the main goal is to keep everyone alive and safe.

In the activities charts below, the Road Ranger event types for the month of February are highlighted to show the variety of services that they provide as well as the different kinds of reported events. As we can see, the Road Rangers have been very busy by responding to approximately 1,240 events so far in the month of February and providing over 2,600 services during these events.



Dee Dee Johnson
District 2 ITS Operations
Project Manager

RISC – RAPID INCIDENT SCENE CLEARANCE - UPDATE

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in conjunction with the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) created the Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) program to support Florida’s Open Roads Policy and established a 90-minute goal for the clearance of motor vehicle incidents on Florida’s roadways. The RISC program strives to quickly secure and restore highway facilities for public use and has proven itself to be a major component of Florida’s Traffic Incident Management TEAM. Our RISC program encompasses nine counties and assists with major incidents along our interstates. RISC has not been activated in the month of February so far, but District 2 is fortunate to have our current RISC TEAM.

ALACHUA BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The Alachua-Bradford Traffic Incident Management Team held its bi-monthly meeting at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office – 5301 N.E. 39th Ave., Gainesville at 10:00 A.M. Ms. Dee Dee Johnson opened the meeting and welcomed all of the TIM members and also reminded everyone that through these meetings the TEAM strives to improve communication, coordination, cooperation and collaboration between all of the TIM partners.

Mr. Craig Carnes kicked off the meeting updates with the status of several ongoing projects in the area. He began with the I-10 project which includes the installation of fiber from US 90 in Tallahassee to Jacksonville. This project is estimated to be completed by Summer 2017. Mr. Carnes also elaborated on the ongoing effort between FDOT and ITS Maintenance for more fiber to be placed on

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ALACHUA BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE
continued

State Road 24 to the maintenance buildings for added connectivity for the RTMC. Mr. Ryan Crist also added that the Florida Regional Arterial Management (FRAME) Project is underway and will take place on I-75, CR 441 and into Marion County, to help with signal timings and help overall improvement as well. He also informed the TEAM that 511 will soon be able to go live on social platforms throughout varying counties as well.

Mr. Steve Scanlan gave the group an overview of the construction updates. He stated that the NW 23rd Avenue construction project to the Alachua County line is currently underway and has an estimated completion date of Spring 2017. He also noted that there are currently 3 resurfacing projects which can possibly have an impact on traffic over the several upcoming weeks.

We are currently in the process of updating the TIM Team meeting process and strongly encourage all TIM members to send in suggestions for agency topics to be discussed during the meeting. All ideas are welcomed and can be emailed to Dee Dee Johnson at DeeDee.Johnson@dot.state.fl.us.

The next Alachua-Bradford Traffic Incident Management Team meeting will be held on **April 12, 2017** at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office – 5301 N.E. 39th Ave., Gainesville at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendars to attend this meeting. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to send someone else who could represent your agency. We look forward to seeing you there!

FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The next First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team meeting is scheduled for **March 21, 2017** at the Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC) – 980 N Jefferson St., Jacksonville, Florida at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendars to attend this meeting as each agency’s participation is important for the good of the group. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to send someone else who could represent your agency. We thank you for your participation.

PLEASE NOTE: If anyone is interested in the SHRP2 Incident Management Training Course, please contact Craig Carnes at ccarnes@metriceng.com or Misha Gonzales at melder@metriceng.com /904-260-1567. Craig is available to work with any agencies’ schedule; including nights and weekends to make sure the course is available for groups of ten or more trainees.

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.

TEAM VISION:
Through cooperation, communication and training the Teams intend to reduce incident scene clearance times by 10% each year through 2017.

Dee Dee Johnson
District 2 ITS Operations
Project Manager



OPERATIONS

Tollmageddon! The I-295 Express Lanes are coming and Duval County is curious and possibly furious. Why are these big city tactics coming to Jacksonville? Keep them in Miami! Tolls coming back when in March 1988 Duval County voted to get rid of them by agreeing to a sales tax increase? What happened to that half-cent sales tax we approved alongside Bush and Dukakis for the Republican and Democratic parties? Secretary Prasad lead this charge back in 2011 and the time for Express Lanes is near. The gas tax is not sustaining roadway construction while more fuel efficient, and alternative fuel source, vehicles are not bridging the gap between the increased amount of cars and the gas tax revenue generated. If we want the road, FDOT is going to have to look at tolling any new capacity or widening projects as a solution.

Jacksonville is growing and we are no longer the little big city as you enter Florida. More people and industries are moving to our beautiful First Coast and that growth is evident while traveling our roadways, and for the TMC, monitoring those roadways. With the economy bouncing back the roadways are trying to keep up. Express Lanes are one approach that FDOT is utilizing to combat growth while being fiscally responsible. The Express Lanes will not reduce the current number of general use lanes but will be in addition to them. The Express Lanes are dynamically tolled to ensure travel time reliability which also benefits the general use lanes. That means, even without hitting the tolls your commute will benefit through that new stretch of roadway.

Phase 1 is along Interstate I-295 from I-95 South to the Buckman Bridge which began in October 2014 with the construction of noise walls along the corridor. The work should be completed by the end of this year. These Express Lanes will

provide motorists with a choice. No one is forced to use them. There will be no toll booths and the pricing will change based on traffic flow to maintain reliability. Don't forget to purchase your SunPass as that is the only way to use the Express Lanes. You pay the half-cent sales tax and don't want to use them? That is fine. You won't lose any lanes and you too will still benefit from them with a smoother commute. You are running late to an appointment and need to get there in time? Pay that 75 cent (prices will vary) toll to get in the Express Lanes to queue jump. Express Lanes are a tool where all parties win.



Above: Planned Duval County Express Lanes
Below: Phase 1 Express Lanes



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OPERATIONS continued



Above: FDOT District 6 (Miami) Express Lanes

As I ran to Miami in January the TMC remained busy. While I was off overdosing on Express Lanes and Cuban food the TMC managed almost 4,000 events. Of those events over 1,400 were crashes, 1,608 had some type of lane blocked and 952 had a duration greater than 90 minutes. The Road Rangers were just as busy arriving at 1,723 events and averaged a hair over 3 activities performed at each stop. Route 205 which covers I-95 from San Marco to OSA had the most stops with almost 20% more stops than any other route. With the Overland and the 95/SR-202 job in his area that isn't entirely surprising.

Remember to use 511 and get your SunPass (available locally at Publix, CVS, Walgreens, AAA Auto Club) for the Express Lanes.

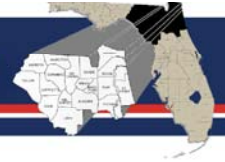
511: Connect. Know. Go.

**Ryan Crist
RMTC Manager**

MARKETING

We've been fortunate enough in recent weeks to expand our 511 outreach in Jacksonville's corporate arena, leaving a much bigger footprint than ever before. We've joined forces with The Bailey Group, a leading provider of insurance and financial planning services. They're located right down the road from us in St. Augustine and they specialize in conducting health and wellness fairs throughout Northeast Florida. Some of the highlights of this past month include visits to Availity, which was launched as a joint venture between Florida Blue and Humana in the early 2000s, as well as Enhanced Recovery Corporation, a debt collection agency headquartered in Jacksonville. (don't hold that against them) Their employees are super nice and spend hour upon hour stuck in traffic just like the rest of us. The employees at their Orange Park location battle traffic on the Buckman Bridge, Blanding Blvd. and US 17, while their counterparts across town fight traffic on Butler, the East Beltway and I-95! Can someone shout an *amen* while we pass around the 511 app!

At the very end of January, we made a return visit to an old friend, Deutsche Bank on Jacksonville's southside. In just four hours, we spoke to 257 commuters who visited our 511 booth. I'd call that a win! Some of the employees we chatted with still had our old app on their smartphones, so we set them up with our brand new 511 app. We left at the end of the day on a very positive note. If we can help just one motorist arrive back home safe and sound and in a timely fashion, we know we've done our jobs. Imagine the feeling when we can multiply that by 257!



MARKETING

Next month, we'll be making an inaugural visit to The Stellar Group's Health Fair. Stellar is a Design Build firm focusing on construction, mechanical and engineering solutions in the food services industry. I've never visited their campus, but The Jacksonville Business Journal ranked them "Second Largest General Contractor in Northeast Florida" by area revenue in 2014. We're bringing our "A game" to this one. Wait, we always do that! From debt collectors to designers, our core message is always the same. "Connect. Know. Go." We hope you'll also remember to include 511 in your travel plans. You can dial 5-1-1, visit www.FL511.com or download one of our free 511 Traffic Apps available for Apple and Android. When it comes to the most up-to-date traffic information, we've got you covered!

**Sherri Byrd
Marketing Manager**



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Well we can officially say that we are fully into the swing of 2017 and our incident TEAM has been busier than ever with close to 4,000 events over the past four weeks. Our TEAMS have been putting in extra effort and manpower to help make our roads safer day by day.

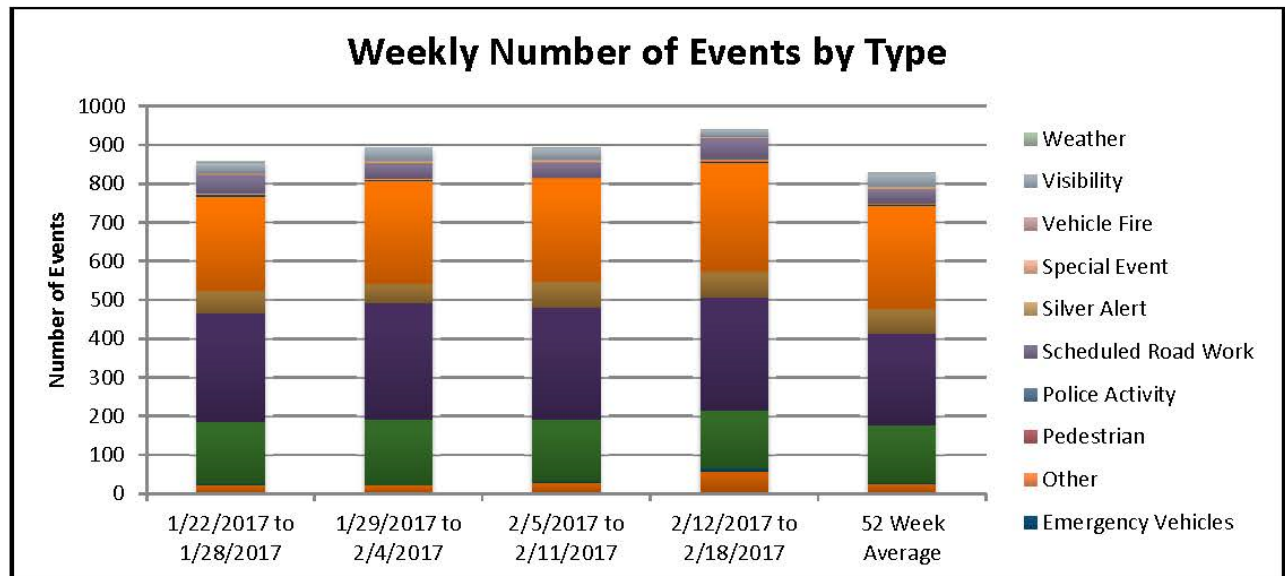
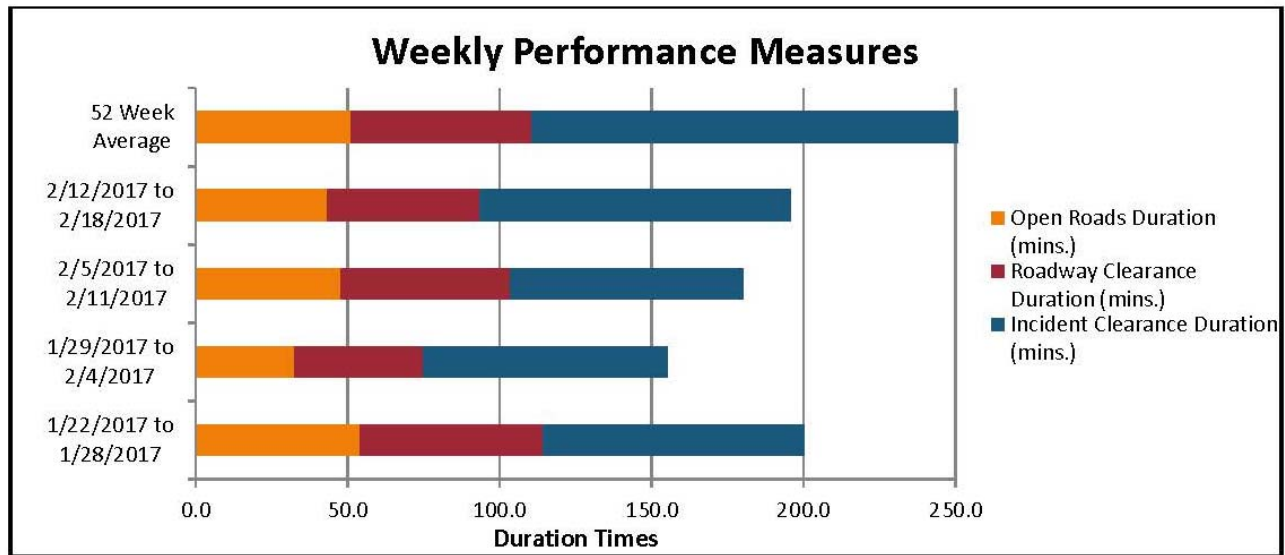
In the charts provided following, we can see that there has been a 19 percent increase in abandoned vehicles on the roadways when compared to the yearly average. After winding down from the holidays we can see our roadways slowly going back to their regular pattern as there was a 6 percent difference in the number of congestion events over the past four weeks as compared to the yearly average. We also saw an overall 19% increase in crash events.

The average clearance duration times for the past 12 months have stayed well under the goal duration times as we can see in the charts below. District 2 has averaged approximately 51 minutes for our Open Roads Duration time and 86 minutes for our roadway clearance duration time in the month of February which meets the open roads goal of 90 minutes. The following charts show the Performance Measures for the Open Roads, Roadway Clearance, Incident Clearance durations and events for the past five weeks.

**Sherrell Lall
Metric Engineering**



PERFORMANCE MEASURES continued





SPOTLIGHT ON...ALEX VARELA

Talk about your upbringing – where were you born / raised?

I am 1st generation American. My family emigrated from Cuba to Miami, FL where I was born and raised. My birthday is June 24th 1985 (my favorite kind of cake is Vanilla or German Chocolate but I'm an equal opportunity dessert lover). I was born in the Chinese Year of the OX and I'm a Cancer. I am not into horoscopes but they provide the occasional laugh.

Where did you go to college and what did you study?

I attended Florida International University (Not a famous school but it does have the 4th highest enrollment in the country) and my major was Civil Engineering with a concentration in Environmental and Traffic Engineering. I also have a minor in Math.

Early Career and/or brief job history: (prior to coming to FDOT)

Well my first job was Starbucks and yes I was a barista (Coffee Master) and still know the tricks of the trade. After that, I worked for a small traffic-engineering firm. I graduated and decided to move to Charleston, SC where I had a brief stint working at a drug-testing lab (interesting work but probably would not want to do that again). I worked for SCDOT for about 5 years (construction for 2 years and then got into traffic ops for close to 3 years). In 2012, I commissioned with the US Air Force, I am currently a weekend warrior with the 560 RED HORSE SQUADRON at Joint Base Charleston, SC, and my rank is Captain.

Job description - your current role in Transportation:

My current role is in Traffic Operations working in the studies group. I joined the team in May 2015 and my future job will be the ITS Operations Manager at the NFRTMC.

What is the most difficult (Transportation) project you have worked on to date?

I would not say I have had a difficult project. I will elaborate with that. I have had difficult people/groups to deal with that would not accept the outcome of a report or study. With that being said, sometimes people just want to yell irately and vent. They typically feel better afterwards. So I will add part-time Traffic Engineering Psychiatry as a past job for these requestors but advice is 5 cents...Kudos to you if you get the reference.





SPOTLIGHT ON...ALEX VARELA
continued

The most rewarding project? And why?

There have been few cases where I felt I really made a difference. I attended a PTA Meeting in Charleston for SCDOT because they wanted a signal at their school but we could not grant them a signal and I started out as a “punching bag” to the PTA members but I revel under pressure and in front of groups. I was able to compose the group and get them engaged in what I was selling which was an alternative way of exiting the school that would benefit all parties. Everyone left satisfied and I actually received multiple thank you letters in the mail. The other case was in Julington Creek. I wanted to put up delineators and I was told it was not going to do anything and it was a waste. I said they would greatly improve efficiency. Maintenance reluctantly installed the delineators and almost overnight the intersection started to perform exceptionally and with increased efficiency. I have received emails with praise from motorists and fellow cohorts.

What is the biggest change you foresee happening in the Transportation industry in the next 10 years?

Flying cars? Maybe that is wishful thinking. Realistically, it will probably be increased volumes of autonomous/connected vehicles on the road and cameras covering almost every mile of roadway.

Do you have any funny stories relating to your career?

I once arrived late into a meeting about a specific project so I did not receive the introductions. I was speaking frankly about the reservations I had about taking away a lane on a bridge to make it an exclusive bike lane. I felt there was going to be a heavy negative impact

to motorists. I mentioned that if the politicians and especially the mayor had half a brain and were not so concerned with their political agenda they could see that it was a bad decision to move forward. Well the room went quiet because the Mayor was in the room. He just looked at me and I apologized. They later decided to do a trial run of the bike lanes and it FAILED MISERABLY. There is actually an article in the post and courier about how badly it failed... did I mention it FAILED. MASSIVE FAILURE... ok I'm good. I'll let bygones be bygones...FAILED... sorry needed to get that last one in there.

What's the best advice anyone's ever given you?

Never become complacent with your skill level. There is always room to improve!

Do you have a favorite quote??

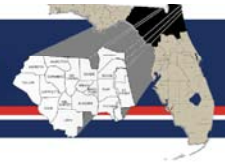
All I Really Need To know I Learned in Kindergarten- Robert Fulghum (title of a short story, attached to this if you care to read).

“People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.” Richard Grenier

Any job related awards or special recognition you've received?

I was Company Grade Officer of the quarter for the Air Force. I have received a few emails and thank you letters for work I have completed in traffic operations. I got a Be the Difference award. I also won the spelling bee in kindergarten with the word “Couch”.

Describe a 'defining moment' in your career or personal life. My defining moment was definitely obtaining my Professional Engineering



SPOTLIGHT ON...ALEX VARELA
Continued

License but it traces back to when I was 5 years old and we went on a family trip to Walt Disney World. We were at the park late at night to see the Electric Light Parade and I was in complete awe of how magical and fantastic it all was. I asked my dad who makes those. He said engineers. I told him that is what I want to be when I grow up and 20 years later I graduated and a few years after that I got my P.E.

Best job ever / worst job ever... or both?

Worst job would be zookeeper tending to animals' bodily functions. I have never done this but this seems like a terrible job. Oh, you mean *my* worst job... I do not think I had a worst job but if I had to pick one, I think it would be the drug testing facility. There are many odd things that you have to do sometimes when it deals with drug testing. The best job so far has been working here for FDOT! That is until I retire and become a part-time forklift operator for Lowes or Home Depot (seems fun and low stress).

Tell us a little about your family.

My family is 100 percent Cuban. My maternal grandparents moved to the U.S. in 1968 when my mom was 7 years old, and my paternal grandparents moved to the U.S. in 1960 when my father was 1 year old. My sister and I are first generation Americans. I met my wife in Charleston. Her name is Josylynn. I got married on January 8th 2016 through the court house and then we had a ceremony for friends and family on October 14th, 2016... Yes, my wife wants to celebrate both anniversaries... should have seen this one coming. She has a son (Kyle) from a prior marriage and he is a very energetic, highly intelligent, compassionate, sometimes stubborn 7 year old with the personality of a teenager and that makes up our little household of three. We

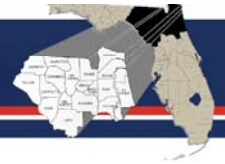
also have a dog, Bruzer. He is a Yorkie, but not tough despite his name, and a tabby house cat named Luigi.

You've just been gifted with 48 hours of uninterrupted freedom, what would you choose to do and why?

I think I would play my instruments (I'm probably super rusty at this point) and start exploring all the different restaurants I can go to in 48 hours using TV Food Maps as my reference. I LOVE FOOD.

I am passionate for trivia, board games, food and traveling. Charleston is a fantastic city and if you ever want travel trips for Charleston or any other city I have lived in or visited, I give the best tips for an exceptional trip that will not disappoint.





SPOTLIGHT ON...ALEX VARELA
continued

All I Really Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten
By Robert Fulghum

1. Share everything.
2. Play fair.
3. Don't hit people.
4. Put things back where you found them.
5. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS.
6. Don't take things that are not yours.
7. Say you are SORRY when you HURT somebody.
8. Wash your hands before you eat.
9. Flush.
10. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
11. Live a balanced life - learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work everyday some.
12. Take a nap every afternoon.
13. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.
14. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.
15. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.
16. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first words you learned - the biggest word of all – "LOOK."

PHOTO GALLERY



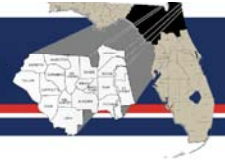
One of our road rangers on-the-job



Alachua-Bradford TIM Team Meeting



511 on the road at Deutsche Bank



Traffic Incident Management 2017 Meeting Schedule

First Coast TIM Team
Regional Transportation Management Center
980 N. Jefferson St., Jacksonville, FL
904.903.2000
March 21, 2017
May 16, 2017 July 18, 2017
September 19, 2017 November 21, 2017

Alachua/Bradford TIM Team
FDOT Gainesville Operations Office
5301 NE 39th Avenue, Gainesville
352.381.4300
April 12, 2017
June 14, 2017 August 9, 2017
October 11, 2017 December 13, 2017

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