

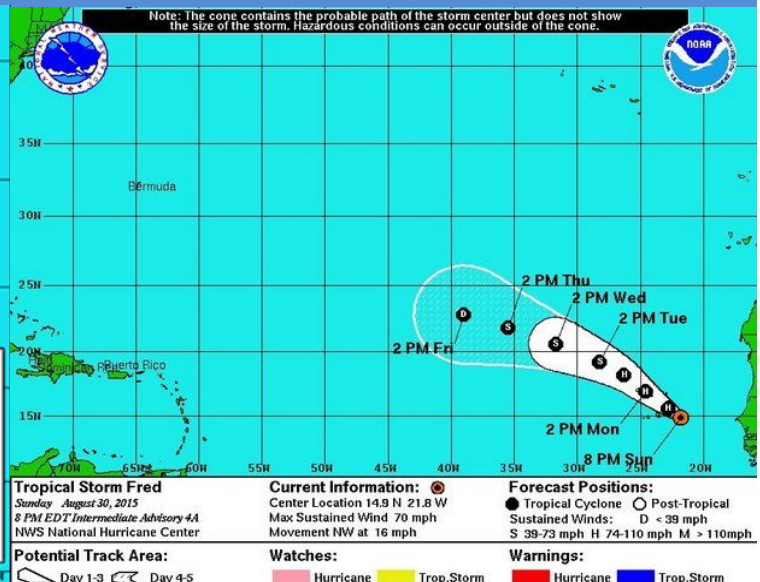
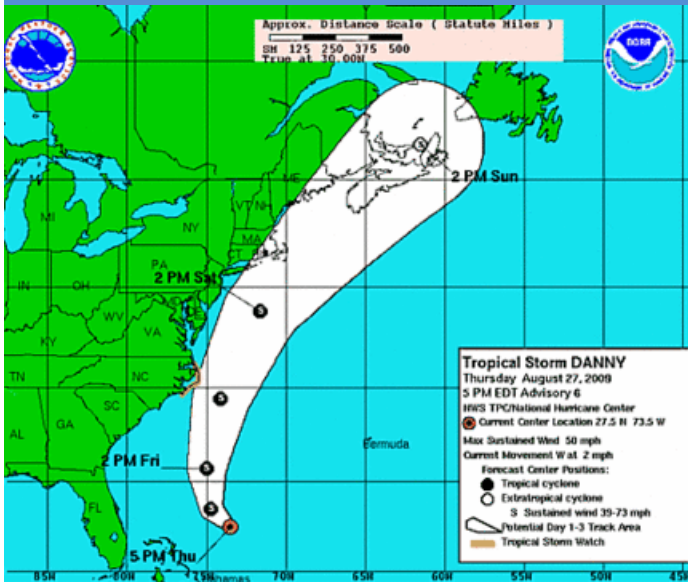


The typical active part of Hurricane Season has arrived, with 3 named storms in August.

Note: The cone contains the probable path of the storm center but does not show the size of the storm. Hazardous conditions can occur outside of the cone.



Erika went from a forecasted cone of Jacksonville, to a forecasted cone of the District 3 Panhandle. Luckily, she fizzled out!



Tropical Storm Danny was a non-event for North Florida, and the predictions are that Tropical Storm Fred may well intensify, but will not be a threat to the United States.



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

August was a month full of adventure and variety as ITS efforts shift direction under the Transportation System Management and Operations (TSM&O) program. Early this month it was announced that Central Office was realigning staff in the Traffic Operations Office. Elizabeth Birriel was the ITS Engineer but will now be in charge of the Traffic Engineering Research Lab (TERL). Fred Heery and Raj Ponnaluri are now in charge of the newly formed TSM&O program that has ITS as one of its components. They will also be involved in the growth of the arterial program that involves ITS and Traffic Signals. The objective is to continue with our ITS program on the Interstate system AND to expand the program onto the Arterial roadway system.

By week two the month began to steamroll as we held program coordination meetings with District Five and the City of Gainesville. These meetings were imperative to insure that all our systems were interoperable so that information could be shared and transitioning control would require minimal effort. The third week of August was the moment that we realized the new RTMC was nearing completion. Coordination meetings were held with the landscaper and the Operation's consoles began to be assembled. It was also the week that the Department's Second Annual Data Symposium was held in Orlando.

The purpose of this Symposium was for members of Florida's Transportation Industry to learn about all the data available through Department resources. It was a two-day event that involved expertise from within the State as well as other parts of the country. Was it boring? Absolutely!!! Was it worthwhile? Yes!!! Will there be any benefit from this Symposium?

You betcha bippy! I even had the opportunity to present at this conference and can confidently say that my partner and I nailed it. We presented on the Bluetooth data we were generating and the unfathomable value it could provide. When my last slide addressed the fact that this data went outside the Florida State line to other parts of the country it kind of left the audience shell-shocked. And when they learned how simple it really was to gather this data it became a "double-whammy!"

The key thing that I want to share from this Symposium is the warranted concern everyone has about system security. Last month I addressed the issues General Motors had with the hackers but the reality is that this will be part of our lives from here on out. Dr. Robert Heller from the Southwest Research Institute gave an excellent presentation on cyber-security and our vulnerabilities as we enter the world of connected and autonomous vehicles. I learned things like there are over 400 computers in the newer cars that communicate wirelessly within the vehicle. Some are fully secure while others are vulnerable and that's where Dr. Heller shared his concern because all a hacker needs is to find "entry" into the system to do their damage.

There are ways to prevent this from occurring, however it takes laws and money to insure that it's done. Auto Manufacturers need that competitive edge that oftentimes comes from lowering the cost of a vehicle to the last penny. Adding code and hardware to prevent hackers takes away their competitive advantage when it comes to pricing, therefore any shortcuts that can be taken will be considered. On the other hand, Congress has the ability to prevent this from happening by passing laws that require a minimum level of security in these systems.

This will allow the industry to level out the playing field so that all auto manufacturers work

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

off the same sheet of music. It will be up to them on how to meet these minimums while holding a competitive advantage.

Another great session was on big data and how we should handle it in the future. The presenter, David Lawson, talked about the evolution of data and how data bases had been set up in a set of rows and columns to generate information. The reality is that this approach has not changed since the early 1940's even though technology has developed exponentially over the past 70 years. At the onset, the folks working with data only dealt with kilobytes. In the 70's and 80's this data had grown to megabytes of information. In the 90's the amount of data generated reached the gigabyte level. This sounds like a pretty slow evolution when you consider the first ever computer was the size of a building while the laptop I write this article on is a hundred times more powerful.

So, when we first began to generate data in ITS we discovered the power of our system. Each day we were generating at least one gigabyte of data. As our system grew and vehicle detectors spread across the Interstate Roadway system we began to generate hundreds of gigabytes of data per day throughout the State. That's when I first heard the term terabyte and the value (or cost) of data storage. I finally realized that we were in the "Big Data" field when a professor at UF came up and said "whew, that was a lot of data you sent me. More than I'd ever seen in my entire career!" Folks, I only sent him one month's worth of data!

Big Data is here to stay and at this Symposium I heard a word that nearly knocked me to my knees – ZETABYTE! What in the hell is a Zetabyte!?! And how are we going to manage

this massive amount of information? The reason I mention this term is (recall the 400 computers in a car) that when connected vehicles arrive there will be massive amounts of data to manage and we've got a limited amount of time to prepare for this onset of information. In a nutshell, Mr. Lawson said that we've got to change the way we treat data and should begin to consider cognitive methods for handling this much information.

He explained that artificial intelligence has shown us that computers can be taught how to manage data, just as we were taught to learn. Instead of rows and columns we must develop a system that takes a question and seeks out the answer. Mr. Lawson used IBM's Watson as the example of what needs to be done. If you recall, Watson was the computer that blew away all Jeopardy contestants a few years ago. This computer was provided with a bunch of data and was shown how to "teach" itself to find the answer. Basically, when Watson was asked a question it searched through Zetabytes of data to find the answer. That is exactly what we will need to do once we start dealing with the data that will be generated by the next generation of cars.

Enough of the boring stuff. The final week of August was tied into wrapping up the final month of construction at the new RTMC. It looks amazing now that the carpet is on the floor, the consoles have been assembled, the HVAC system is operating and the LED lights now work. Over the next few weeks there will be testing, testing and more testing on all the various mechanical/electrical systems in the building. My hope is that minimal problems occur so that we can get everyone moved in and operating by the first week of October. Keep your fingers crossed.

Pete Vega, District 2
TSM&O Manager



NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER

SunGuide is the advanced traffic management system (ATMS) software that is used at the District 2 Traffic Management Center (TMC). SunGuide software offers a comprehensive set of tools to the TMC, including managing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) devices, automated incident detection, dissemination of information, incident timeline data and assisting with event management. In the Quarterly Report we discussed how the TMC has been getting prepared for the installation of SunGuide 6.1.

That time finally arrived the second week of August as District 2 was the first District to install the new version of SunGuide.

Beginning August 10th, Hector Iruegas and AJ Skillern from SwRI joined the District 2 Network Manager, Jason Summerfield, and the TMC Network Technician, Tanesha Sibley, to perform this installation. It will be critical for the RWIS devices and warning beacons along the I-75 Paynes Prairie Project. It also boasts report enhancements, wrong way driving features and video on desktop enhancements.

SunGuide 6.1 came with a number of bug fixes and new features, several of which were specifically requested by District 2. Various projects needing those features led to us asking to be the point deployment for the new version.

As anyone with software experience knows, no matter how well you prepare and perform validation and verification checks, there will be some bugs that creep through testing. With that in mind we had the software vendor, SwRI, on-site during the install so that they could help address any bugs or issues that we found immediately. Those bugs that could be immediately resolved will then be passed along to the next District when they do their installation of the new version of SunGuide, so that their experience is better from the very beginning.

The result of requesting to be the guinea pig, along with the efforts of the District 2 TMC Team and SwRI, will result in cost savings for the rest of the Districts as patches have already been developed and issues addressed.

For those of you who understand what Jason Summerfield is talking about more than 50% of the time, a SunGuide installation is a multi-step process. The Team has to first create a new configuration file and uninstall the old version of SunGuide that the TMC is operating. We performed this during mid-day when things were slow, since events could not be published to FL-ATIS or DMSs. We did use the District 3-Jax system to post FL-ATIS floodgates as needed. Vendor software could have been utilized to post to any DMS if an event occurred, but no events required such action. The next step in the process is to run the new SunGuide installer and database upgrade scripts. The last major step is to start the new SunGuide services. After that was accomplished, the Operators were set loose to make sure that things were working as expected, and to start shouting out any immediate issues that they found. SwRI and the District 2 Team worked quickly to resolve most of the issues on site.

Kudos for a job well done to the District 2 TMC and SwRI team for a successful installation of SunGuide 6.1! If you have been in the Gainesville area of late you can see the I-75 ITS deployment is close to going to testing. Brian Ritchson from FDOT's Traffic Engineering and Operations Office trained the District 2 TMC staff on SunGuide 6.1 and the new features that they will utilize. Big things are coming so stay tuned for more updates as that ITS Deployment goes live and those new SunGuide features are put to use.

Josh Reichert
3 ITS/TMC Program Manager



NORTH FLORIDA TPO

I am going to discuss the progress of the new RTMC in this section since none of this would have ever occurred without the generosity and partnership that the North Florida TPO provided District Two and FHP. As mentioned previously, the carpet is down and the consoles are up. Next on the list is completing the installation of fixtures in the bathroom, painting the walls in the offices, installing the doors, completing the hook-up for the security system and finishing up the landscape around the property. It sort of made me reflect back 13 years ago when I had my home built in south Jacksonville, only to a much lesser extent! This facility is nearly 10 times larger than my home and much more ornate on the outside. We've probably got 30 different varieties of trees and vegetation going onto the property and the only one I am familiar with is Confederate Jasmine.

Many of you may recall the onset of this project but were not made aware of the challenges that the NFTPO, FHP and I faced along the way. We all kept a stiff upper lip while working in partnership with the contractor, architect and Department of Management Services. At any point we could have turned on each other, pointed fingers and thrown a tantrum over some of the problems we faced. Instead, we realized we were in this together through "thick and thin" with that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow awaiting us. That being said, I will admit that I did go into a tirade at one meeting in February after hearing some bad news from the contractor. In a sense, I was play acting to try and stress the importance of a successful project. Looking back I think it worked because the contractor PM said he never wanted to hear me go off the deep end again.

When you enter the facility you will be greeted by the NFTPO receptionist, Ginny, in the waiting area. To your right will be the Board Room and

straight ahead the water fountain and bathrooms. Once you are cleared by Ginny you will enter secured doors to your left that leads you through the NFTPO hallway to staff offices. Each office is designed with a purpose with a staff coordination area to your right at the end of this hallway. This is where you will go right and down a hallway to the facility's conference room that has a large window looking onto the RTMC Operations floor. This is the clearance room for anyone permitted to enter the RTMC area since CJIS (Criminal Information Justice System) clearance is required from here on out.

Someone from the RTMC will lead you through a set of double security doors into a hallway with RTMC support services offices on your left. As you make your way down the hallway you will pass the RTMC restrooms, lockers and printer space on your right while noticing the staff entryway on your left. At the end of this hallway you will walk by the "Quiet Room" that was designed for staff to de-stress after dealing with a difficult situation (i.e. fatality on the roadway). At the end of this hallway you will turn right, walk about twenty feet and then enter the double doors leading onto the RTMC floor. I guarantee that when you enter this area you will be dumbfounded by the enormity of the space.

There are thirty-two consoles facing you and a large video wall behind you. Across the way you will see the offices for the RTMC Operations staff that supervise the personnel on the floor.

The tour will take you around the floor to the various quads that will handle a section of our territory. You will then be taken to the double door that leads to the staff break room. For all



NORTH FLORIDA TPO continued

of you smokers, we will allow you to take a quick smoke break on the back patio before we complete the rest of the tour.

The next part of the tour is to head back towards the quiet room. Prior to reaching that hallway we will turn right into another hallway to show you the state of the art data center and testing room. We will then step outside to show you the generator that will power the entire facility when we lose service from JEA. I am pretty certain that at this point everyone will need a rest since we have to retrace our steps back to where Ginny is located.

We recently took District Five staff on a tour to show them the ins and outs, plus the reasons for our design. They are in the process of building a new RTMC as well and wanted to get some ideas from our project. The one comment I kept hearing is “this is different” from all the other RTMCs. My reply was that “we took the worst from what we learned from them and tried to make it better.” Let’s just hope my vision was right or I may be calling you for a job reference in about a year.

Pete Vega, District 2
TSM&O Manager

CONSTRUCTION

The contractor has installed all of the ITS devices and structures on the Phase 9 Project (I-295 from the south I-95 interchange to Atlantic Boulevard). They are currently working on completing the installation of power services and the remainder of conduit. Next month they are expecting to begin installing the fiber optic cable and completing the installation of all device cabinets. This project is expected to be completed in early November with the devices ready for use by Thanksgiving.

Crews have continued to install fiber optic conduit, pull boxes and splice vaults along the southbound shoulder of I-95 in St. Johns County from the CR 210 rest area going south to US 1 near Flagler County. Once completed with these activities, the contractor will begin installing the fiber optic cable in the conduit, pull boxes, and splice vaults. The final step of this project will be to test all of the fiber optic cable once installation is completed. The contractor has stated that they hope to be completed with this project by the end of September.

The ITS Project on I-75 and US 441 in the areas of Payne’s Prairie is nearing completion. The contractor has completed all of the device handover testing and the Systems Manager is in the process of final integration and testing of the devices. Work still remains to be completed by the contractor, but the devices should be ready for use in mid-September.

Craig Carnes
Metric Engineering





MAINTENANCE

Maintenance crews have been extremely busy this month. Not only are they chasing down lightning damage on a daily basis, but they have also been helping us get the new RTMC building completed. Crews have been installing miles of Cat 5 communications cables within the building. These cables run from the FDOT and FHP server rooms out to the offices and the TMC Operations floor for the future consoles. Crews have also been working to install a new 144 strand fiber optic cable from the nearest master hub communications building along I-95 to the new RTMC. This fiber optic cable will provide for all existing ITS device operations and local agency coordination and data sharing as well as future growth.

We also installed a new type of CCTV camera this month, which is being tested on a trial basis. The CCTV camera is made by GovComm and is similar to other cameras we use, but has an ultra-low illumination capability which reportedly provides better picture quality in low light conditions. The screenshots below show the quality of the image on a sunny day and during a recent rain storm. To this point our TMC Operations staff is extremely happy with the picture quality and functionality of the device.



Kevin Jackson
ITS Field Specialist

ROAD RANGER UPDATE

The First Coast Road Ranger Program is on a mission to provide free highway assistance services to reduce delay and improve safety for the motoring public and responders. Since the program's commencement in 2000, the Road Rangers have made over 5.2 million service assists and are continuing to do so on a daily basis. The Road Rangers play a crucial role in Incident Management for the Florida Department of Transportation, TIM Teams and our motorists traveling on our roadways.

The Road Rangers held their monthly safety meeting this month on Wednesday, August 5, 2015 at 11:30 AM at the FDOT Urban Office. During these meetings, the Road Rangers are able to provide their experience and learn from one another and a presentation is usually given to remind the Rangers why they need to be alert on the roadways and not become complacent. In this particular meeting, the



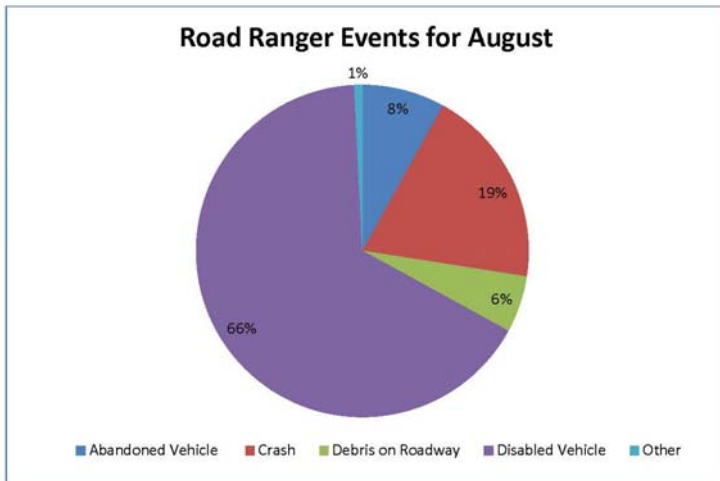
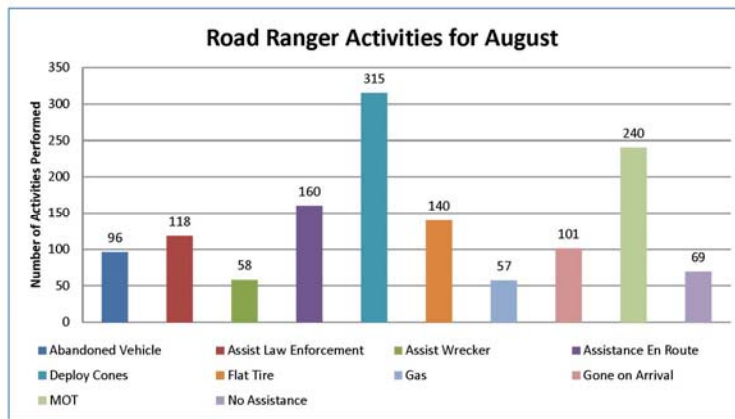
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ROAD RANGER UPDATE continued

Road Rangers had a productive discussion about reaction times on our roadways, especially with all the storms that we have been having around our evening rush hour times here in District 2.

The charts below illustrate the event types and activities that the Road Rangers have performed and responded to so far for the month of August through the 20th. Our Road Rangers have been working extremely hard to help keep our roadways clear as we can see from the charts below. They have helped motorists with numerous activities ranging from abandoned vehicles and assisting law enforcement to providing assistance for stranded motorists. They have also helped close to 600 disabled vehicles so far in the month of August and we look forward to seeing them on our roadways ready to help.





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

We are very fortunate that District 2 has not had any RISC incidents for the month of August. Our RISC Contractors remain alert and ready to respond if needed in any event. Our RISC program encompasses nine counties and covers major incidents along our interstates which include I-75, I-10, I-95, I-295, SR 9A and J. Turner Butler Boulevard. We are very grateful for the RISC Team and the hard work they have done to stay prepared in case of an incident.

**ALACHUA BRADFORD TRAFFIC
INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE**

The Alachua-Bradford TIM Team held its bi-monthly meeting on **August 12, 2015** at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office – 5301 N.E. 39th Avenue at 10:00 A.M. The TIM Team welcomed all participating members and reminded everyone that these meetings have a great impact on TEAM morale and TEAM building. All members participate to learn from one another to create a safer roadway for motorists and incident responders to travel on.

Mr. Josh Reichert presented updates starting with the upgraded version of the SunGuide system. He stated that one of the outputs of the new system will be 511 and that there is still a plan to upgrade 511 to a more user-friendly system. Mr. Pete Vega then took over and informed the group about several ITS projects occurring in the area. He stated that the Paynes Prairie project is set to be completed by mid-September and should be integrated into the Smartraffic TMC by October.

The group also welcomed Mr. Emmanuel Posadas as the new Traffic Engineer in Gainesville. Emmanuel joins the TEAM from the City of Boca Raton where he served as the Traffic Operations Engineer for several years. Welcome Emmanuel!



We greatly appreciate the effort that all of the TIM members have been showing. We were extremely pleased with the number of TIM agencies that showed up. They were well represented at the TIM meeting. Each group gave updates on how incident management is being handled from their perspective and it was a great discussion amongst the group. The TEAM also performed their annual FHWA TIM Team assessment as a means to monitor progress within the TIM Team and also highlight areas that need to be improved upon.

If anyone is interested in the SHRP2 Incident Management Training Course please contact Craig Carnes at ccarnes@metriceng.com or Misha Gonzales at (904) 260-1567/melder@metriceng.com. Craig is more than willing to have a flexible schedule to work with any agencies' schedules; including nights and weekends to make sure the course is available for groups of ten or more trainees.



ALACHUA BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE continued

The next Alachua-Bradford Traffic Incident Management Team meeting will be held **October 14, 2015** at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office – 5301 N.E. 39th Ave., Gainesville. We look forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting.

FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The First Coast TIM Team will hold its next bi-monthly meeting on **September 15, 2015** at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center, 2198 Edison Avenue at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendar to attend this meeting. Your attendance is important to the continued success of the TEAM.

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 2015.

Donna Danson
District 2 ITS Program Manager

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

It seems like EVERY SINGLE DAY, around 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM the skies just open up and wreak havoc upon us here in District 2. One minute it is all sunny and the next when it is time to head home all of a sudden it looks like a monsoon is outside daring us to leave the office. After looking at the forecast for the next couple of weeks, it does not look like it is going to get any better, especially with schools starting back next week here in Duval County. This pattern seems to have affected our roadways with higher than average Incident Clearance duration times, Roadway Clearance duration times and Open Roads duration times.

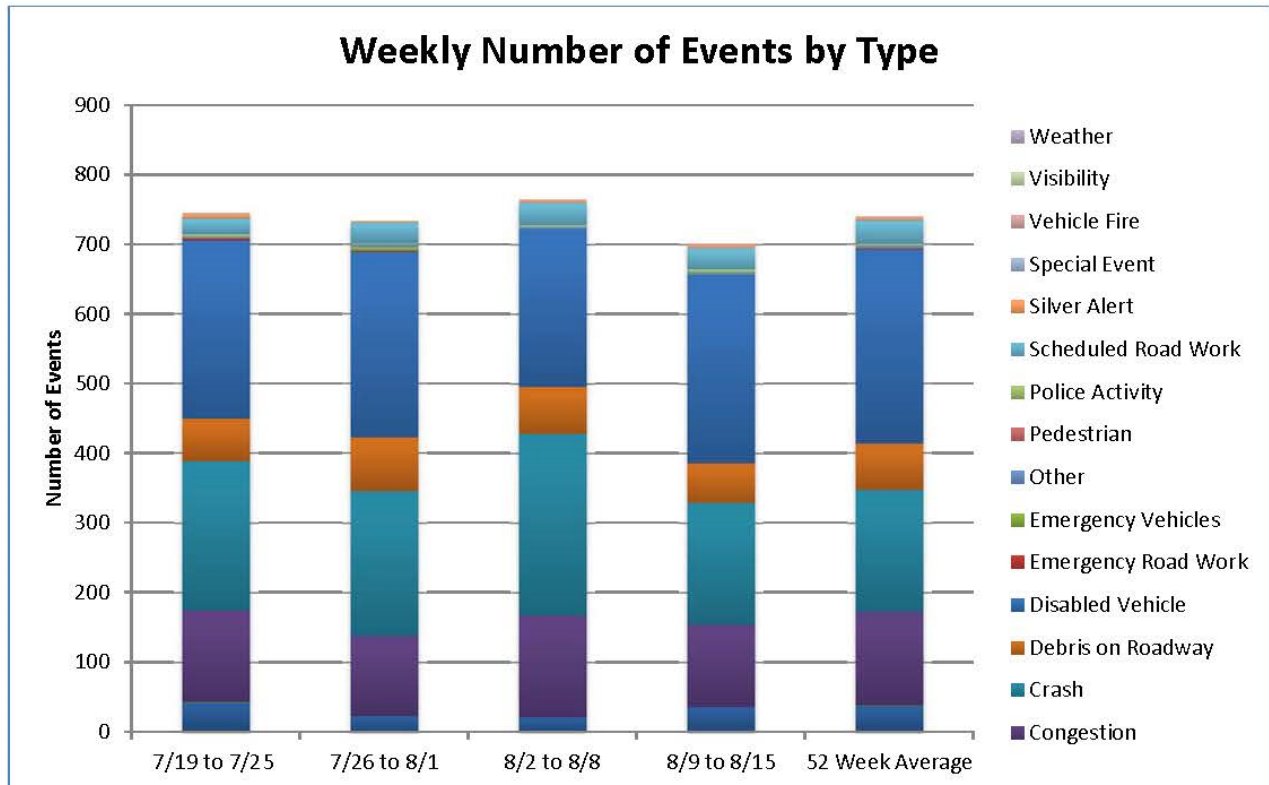
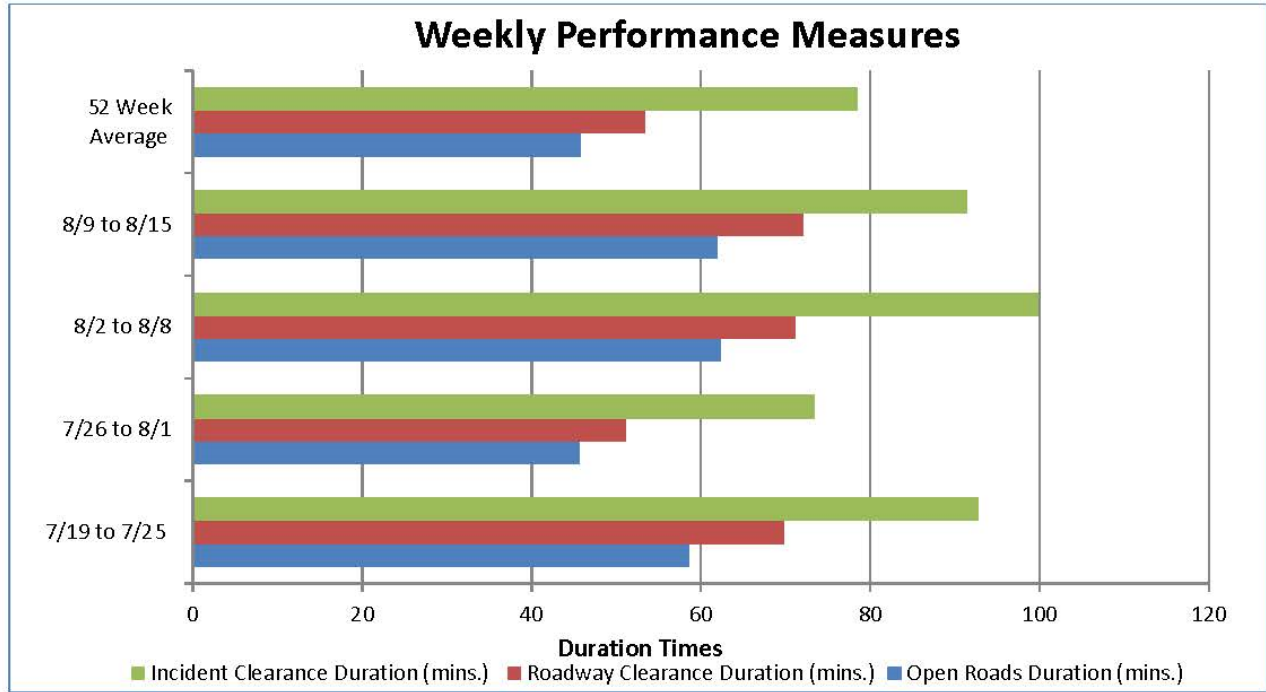
For the past month we have also had higher than average crash numbers and debris in the area with an average of 214 crashes per week and 66 listed debris events per week. Along with the crashes, there has also been heavy congestion, especially during rush hour. Our roadways just seem to become a mess with heavier than normal traffic patterns around rush hour time with over 1,021 congestion events in the past month. Our motorists have been keeping our Road Rangers on their toes with work based on the constant demand we see on our roadways and have been doing a great job at it.

Even though our clearance times were higher than our typical average, we have still been under our goals with our Incident Clearance duration average at 89 minutes and our Roadway Clearance duration average at 57 minutes.

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



PERFORMANCE MEASURES continued





OPERATIONS

From January 2011 to August 14th I had the pleasure of having Michael Harper under my employ. He was brought on as a Level 1 TMC Operator, but as a result of his skill level we quickly added additional responsibilities to him and he has worked his way up to a Level 5 Operator and in October 2014 to Supervisor. I have spent thousands of hours supervising and working alongside Michael and during that time I have gained a solid grasp of his work ethic, dedication, morals, love of family and his professional love....accounting. I am thankful that people like Michael like accounting because I know I do not.

Michael worked at the District 2 (Northeast Florida) Transportation Management Center for Metric Engineering during his time with me. His technical knowledge, as well as organizational and communication skills, helped him spearhead various aspects of District 2 Operations where he assisted with training new hires and ultimately worked his way up from Operator to Supervisor. Michael worked in a high stress environment which required him to coordinate multi-agency response to accidents throughout 18 Counties. He was required to input information gathered from cameras, probe data and law enforcement agencies into a unique software program called Sunguide. Information required in Sunguide included responder information, vehicle information, handling of Road Rangers and other pertinent event data. That data was then published to the 511 phone and website for motorists to call for real-time traffic information. Michael also had to deal with all of my random requests and tasks, the whole time with a smile (at least when I could see him). He carried that positive vibe that brought people in and the work ethic to keep them there.

Michael quickly established himself within our organization as a hard-working go-getter always looking for a challenge. He rapidly became a key

member of our staff showing a high level of responsibility, self motivation, communication and knowledge in order to succeed. Michael not only succeeded but he excelled. He grasped new concepts quickly and brought innovative solutions to operations and specialized projects. For a person who hates to use the chat room, doesn't know what LOL means and still kills trees a day printing things on paper I will miss Michael's innovative side!

During our down time, we had many conversations regarding his goals professionally and his desire to work within the Accounting field. He spoke with passion and knowledge about the topics and I got to see firsthand the attributes that I know would benefit any firm. I knew his two week notice was coming someday, I was sad that it came so soon.

Despite the fact that Michael Harper is greatly missed here at the Transportation Management Center I am excited about the next chapter in his life. The TMC remains in good hands and we all know that traffic stops for no man. I look forward to the next Newsletter when I can introduce Michael's replacement.

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.

**“Know Before You Go!
Use 511 and stay safe.”**

**Ryan Crist
TMC Manager**



MARKETING

Soaring temps and threatening clouds couldn't stop our 511 marketing team from participating in this year's "Back to School Extravaganza" at The Teacher Supply Depot. We arrived just before the crack of dawn only to find that over two hundred teachers were already there waiting for us! Every year at the expo it's first-come-first-serve. Teachers arrive in the wee hours of the morning carrying tote bags that would make Santa envious. The rules are simple. 1) Take only what you can carry out and 2) NO "wheeled carts." Other than that, it's a battle of "brawn versus brains" as local educators jockey for position in line.

Several years ago, the staff at the Teacher Supply Depot got smart and started issuing numbers, much like the ones you'd find at the Publix deli counter. The numbers secure a teacher's spot in line. Once they get their numbers, they're free to roam and chat with the vendors. Before they can even gain access to the *inside* of the Teacher Supply Depot, they've already started loading their bags with promotional items from vendors like us. Our team handed out 511 bag clips, auto adapters and padded eyeglass cases. Want to know which one made the biggest splash? The padded eyeglass cases. The teachers all agreed they'd come in handy when they were trying to hide their cell phones from their students. Sneaky! (*I can use mine, but don't let me catch you using yours!*)

Be sure to check out our photo gallery from the event at the end of the newsletter.

Also this past month, we spent a little time with our colleagues from WOKV News Talk Radio. We did what we called a "house to house" visit. First, they came over to the Transportation Management Center where we walked them through a typical step-by-step tutorial of how

incidents get posted to the 511 system. The following day, we joined them inside the WOKV studios where we listened in on live broadcasts from the very talented Traffic Team as well as Morning Show Host, Rich Jones. They even walked us through a typical "newsroom" setup, complete with breaking news feeds, as Rich and his fellow staff members worked around-the-clock to cover the Lonzie Barton Missing Child case.



WOKV Studios

All I can say is, it certainly has been an eventful month. And now, we turn with watchful eyes to the south and east as things begin to stir up in The Tropics. Let's hope August goes out like a lamb, and not like a lion. As we coast into September, let's of course remember our Hurricane Kits, but let's also remember to include 511 in our travel plans. (intentional or not) You can always dial 5-1-1, visit www.FL511.com or download one of our free 511 Traffic Apps available for Apple and Android devices. Know Before You Go and Keep Moving!

Sherri Byrd
Marketing Manager



SPOTLIGHT ON...VIKTOR KHARCHENKO

In the early 1980s when young Americans were being taught to fear the Soviet Union, the Russian government was busy making sure its own citizens lived in fear as well. Here in America, school age students practiced air raid drills by hiding beneath their desks. In Russia, school age students rushed home just to see if their loved ones would still be waiting for them.

Viktor Kharchenko, a Feedback Operator for District Two's Transportation Management Center, remembers what it was like to live in fear as a ten year old boy growing up in the former Communist run Kiev, Ukraine. "Back then there was no Ukraine. There was no Belarus. Russia controlled everything with an iron military fist," says Victor, (who decided to replace the "k" in his name with a "c" when he and his family immigrated to America). "People would disappear in the middle of the night, 2 or 3am, just for saying the name of their country out loud."

While Victor and his parents wouldn't get their coveted immigration papers until 1980, his grandparents received theirs in 1975 and quickly fled to Israel. Victor knew he'd most likely never see them again. But it was a risk all families were willing to take back then. The trade off those papers afforded meant freedom...freedom to work, dream and live out your days in peace.

They waited five long years, but in 1980, outfitted with only a small suitcase and the clothes on their backs, Victor and his family set out by train for what was then known as Czechoslovakia. Once they arrived, they were shepherded into a long line with other dazed immigrants. Chaos and confusion broke out when officials at the front of the line began confiscating all the Visa paperwork, then abruptly handing passports back to the



immigrants. Some of the immigrants started crying. Others fainted. Amidst all the chaos and confusion, an officer finally stepped into the crowd to quiet them. "You don't need your paperwork anymore. Only your passport. It's okay now. You're free! You are free," he told them. After hearing this, cheers erupted up and down the line. "Then instead of fainting, people started jumping for joy," Victor recalls. "They were so happy that they were finally free!"

But Victor's journey was not over. He and his family spent one month in Czechoslovakia and another six months in Italy before being allowed to cross the Atlantic. "We landed in New York on January 17, 1980 dressed in 2-3



SPOTLIGHT ON...VIKTOR KHARCHENKO
continued

shirts. It was cold in Italy, and it was still pretty cold in New York, so that was okay, but once we arrived in Florida we were shocked,” Victor says, laughing at the memory. “There’s a picture of our group that was taken by the local newspaper. We were standing there in our coats and jackets, but there were these people behind us in the background wearing shorts! It was so hot.”

Not speaking a word of English, Victor was enrolled in the Jacksonville Jewish Center on Crown Point Road where he was placed in the 3rd grade. “We learned English while playing football and chase and soccer with the other neighborhood kids,” says Victor, who years later would walk across the stage at Wolfson High School, fully bilingual, to receive his high school diploma.

When asked how it felt to leave his homeland and enter this strange new world, Victor states, “We were happy because we were all together. I was a kid. I didn’t care. I had my mom and my dad. That’s all that mattered.”

If you ever want to hear more of Victor’s story, grab a cup of coffee and pull up a chair. You’ll find Victor most Thursdays at the Feedback Operations desk inside the Transportation Management Center. Victor’s very passionate about life. He loves to read and go to the beach. And he also loves to talk about the 10 year old boy who once left everything behind, stepping into uncharted waters, to pursue the American dream.

While his parents were indeed happy with their newfound freedom, the transition was much harder on them. Victor’s mom, a former

Registered Nurse, had to take up work in a clothing warehouse, working long hours on an assembly line. Victor’s dad found odd jobs as a mechanic, roofer, painter and ultimately as a welder. Victor’s father passed away in 1987. Victor’s mother currently lives with Victor, his wife, Angelina, and their two daughters, Christian (9) and Taylor (7).

Victor’s grandfather, who was awarded the equivalent of the distinguished American Purple Heart Award for his heroic efforts in World War II, lived out the rest of his days with Victor’s grandmother in Israel. Victor and his parents were fortunate enough to fly to Israel three times to visit his grandparents and cousins before his grandparents passed away.

As you can see below, Victor and his family had a long journey to finally reach their dream.





Photo Gallery



Teachers braved long lines at the “Back to School” event at the Teacher Supply Depot to try to augment the supplies needed for their classrooms, thus minimizing their “out-of-pocket” costs.



Just so you don't forget him, our “own” Michael Harper. Best of luck in your new endeavors!!!

Recently, during National Public Safety Communicator’s Week, Tallahassee Regional Communications Center (TRCC) were honored with a cake (below) as one of our important District 2 partners. What a nice thank you note from them to us!





Photo Gallery- RTMC Progress



The beginning



The roof is coming along!



Above, the work consoles have been installed, with a close up at right.



**Traffic Incident Management
2015 Meeting Schedule**

First Coast TIM Team

FDOT Urban Office Training Center
2198 Edison Avenue, Jacksonville
904.360.5400

September 15, 2015 November 17, 2015

Alachua/Bradford TIM Team

FDOT Gainesville Operations Office
5301 NE 39th Avenue, Gainesville
352.381.4300

October 14, 2015 December 9, 2015

FDOT DISTRICT 2 ITS STAFF



**Peter Vega, District 2
Transportation System Management & Operations
Program Manager
904.360.5463**

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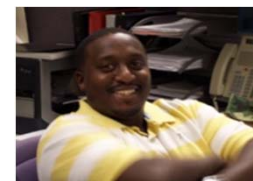
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