



**Above: Traffic during the school year;  
Below: What it feels like when school ends for the summer**





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

The first week of May was very interesting as I went down to Miami for the 15<sup>th</sup> International Managed Lanes Conference. It appeared that the main objective of this event was to develop some Express Lanes standards, discuss enforcement policies and share lessons learned from deployments throughout the country. There were attendees from the Atlantic Coast, Southeast, Mid-West and Pacific Coast regions who spoke at several of the sessions about their individual experiences. It was very interesting to listen to the issues in Los Angeles and the challenges they are encountering while trying to expand their Express Lanes. Likewise, Atlanta is having some growing pains of their own as they try to deploy a system that meets the needs of local commuters while dealing with Interstate travelers who are unfamiliar with their configuration. Of course, District Six shared their most recent predicaments as the system in Miami expands further north into Broward County.

The first meeting I attended was an FDOT session to discuss performance measures. It was a very colorful discussion as the group learned that there is a desire by FHWA to increase the minimum target for average speed on the Express and General Purpose Lanes to 50 MPH. Currently, District Six is ecstatic that it can achieve an average speed of 45 MPH during peak hours, however they felt this new goal was nearly impossible due to the popularity and increased usage of Express Lanes. The reality is that they consistently maintain a rate of \$10.50 for the seven-mile stretch and can easily charge a minimum of up to \$14.50 with no impact to volumes. This folks is the **highest** toll rate per mile in the entire country, yet motorists

are willing to pay even more. I was told by a confidential source that an internal study showed motorists were willing to pay up to a break point of \$18.00 for this seven-mile stretch.

I will now digress and share my experiences with the Miami Express Lanes. I have traveled down to South Florida four times over the past five years to obtain information from District Six staff on how to manage, operate and maintain the Express Lanes. My initial trip five years ago was an extremely harrowing experience since at the end of the tolled section you have to move across five lanes of traffic within a very short distance to take the Dolphin Expressway to the District Six RTMC. I survived while making it across but was truly shocked that I didn't get side swiped or rear ended trying to make this exit. During one of my succeeding visits I was not so fortunate while getting stuck in congestion near this exit. My only option was to go down two exits where I got off and returned onto I-95 northbound so that I could reach the Dolphin Expressway exit.

This latest trip was even more interesting since I had five years of District Six knowledge under my belt, with my latest trip down being this past January. During that visit I was shown their method for handling Express Lanes during a major accident within the delineated area. Their latest operational approach is to totally close the Express Lanes during these types of accidents in an effort to focus on clearing the accident site quickly. It was a very interesting approach since they were sacrificing revenue for short periods of time in order to insure a quality service. I kept this in mind while



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

heading down there earlier this month and knew that I had to expect the unexpected in South Florida.

I reached Broward County in South Florida at around 3 PM and encountered a sheet of rain that slowed traffic to 20 MPH. Knowing this would make the last 60 miles of my trip an extremely bad experience I immediately went into traffic management mode by calling 511, paying close attention to the Dynamic Message Signs and tuning into a radio station that provided traffic information every ten minutes. The information provided on 511 mostly dealt with northbound traffic. The Dynamic Message Signs focused on travel times to the nearest exits. However, the radio mentioned an accident on the northern end of the Express Lanes that had all lanes blocked. It was time to focus as I made my way into North Miami since I'd learned that these Express Lanes accidents can get cleared up pretty quickly.

As I got closer to the Express Lanes entrance I noticed that they were not closed, hence I assumed the accident had been cleared. Just to be cautious I kept my speedometer at just below the posted speed limit but was extremely intimidated by the cars zipping by me at much higher rates of speed. About halfway down traffic came to a stop and I saw congestion as far as the eye could see. The Express Lanes and General Purpose lanes were now fully congested, with speeds at less than 10 MPH. Once I saw the flashing lights I realized the Express Lanes were fully closed due to an accident and followed the natives as we drove over the delineators to get into the General Purpose lanes. The confusing part was that the Express Lanes were not officially closed, no

advanced information was on the Dynamic Message Signs and there were no signs of incident responders until we reached the accident.

A few miles down there was an opportunity to reenter the Express Lanes. I did notice the signs saying Express Lanes closed, however there were other dynamic rate signs saying the normal toll rate would apply. At that point of my journey I felt it was time to trust my instincts so I got back into the Express Lanes since there was no MOT set-up to fully close the system. As I continued along there were a couple of DMS that said right-lane closed in the Express Lanes. When I was nearing the end of the system there were the flashing lights again but traffic was slowly making its way along the inside lane. Once I got past this incident it was smooth sailing as I made my way to the final destination.

The next day I spoke with colleagues in District Six to share my experiences from the day before. Their response (with a smile) was "What! You drove over our delineators!?!". They said the reality was that the heavy rains caused mayhem in the RTMC, some of their cameras had gone down due to lightning so they were working blind and it was just "one of those days." During my four day stay in Miami there were multiple crashes that caused the closure of these Express Lanes, thereby making me wonder just how well our North Florida system will work. Some of the differences are that we will have less traffic density, much larger shoulders for traffic to pull off during accidents and much shorter periods where these Express Lanes will be needed. My

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

biggest concern will be the similar situation we will have to the Dolphin Expressway whereby motorists exiting the Express Lanes will have a very short distance from which to merge over onto the I-95 ramp.

In conclusion, this trip provided a number of things to keep in mind as we near the opening of the North Florida Express Lanes. Come next Summer it will be our turn to experience the joys of this system and the lessons learned at this conference will come in very handy as the RTMC staff adjusts to a totally new way of thinking

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

**NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS  
ENGINEER**

Memorial Day is here which means Summer is here. Summer is a period in ITS where you can play catch up some. The school buses are off of the interstate, recurring congestion eases up and life slows down.....a little.

Memorial Day captures that beautifully. It is a chance to avoid traffic and technology by being with family and friends. There is no better thing in the world than heating up the grill, swimming in a pool and catching up with people you care about. It sure beats traffic.

The best way to beat traffic on Memorial Day is.... beef. Say, a nice charcoal-grilled steak. You want to play with the big boys and turn off that propane. Growing up in Bradfordville, just

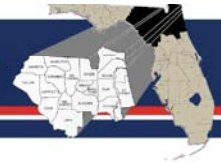
outside of Tallahassee, grilling the perfect steak was something of pride. You had to earn that set of tongs. No one wanted Uncle Robert's NFL-approved, Worcestershire-soaked, hockey puck steaks, this is the South! If you are not the guy allowed to touch the tongs this Memorial Day, then let me help you earn them and a new hole punch in your man-card in a few easy steps.

It all starts with what you do BEFORE you grill. Talk to your butcher; DO NOT just grab a random packaged steak from the BEEF refrigerated section. AMATEUR! You know the guy who wears the white coat that says butcher? He knows what he is doing. Even better if he cuts it from the cooler for you. Publix does this people. So does your local meat store, which you should really check out some time. Styrofoam and plastic wrap are great, but not for picking out a steak (if you must, look for a deep red color and lots of even marbling). 1 ½ inch thick Bone-in Ribeye is my choice. Get your beef bone-in whenever possible!

Are you ready to cook? NOT YET!

Get that grill hot as your Memorial Day firecrackers. Get it up to 450-500 degrees and maintain that heat for at least 15 minutes with the lid closed. You need that grate hot too! You are probably wondering how to get your charcoal grill cooking that hot. For one, stay away from Kingsford charcoal! Leave that to the hippies grilling veggie burgers in the park. Get compressed wood, or lump charcoal. And don't be stingy on how much you throw down on the grill. We're cooking nice steaks here, not hot

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**NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER continued**

dogs. Use a chimney or electric charcoal starter to get things going hot and quick, and stay away from lighter fluid. It's poison, plus we don't want our steak tasting like it is infused with nuclear waste.

Your steak needs to sit out, covered, at room temperature for 20-30 minutes, or the time it takes you to drink one beer or glass of wine. This will help with even cooking. Use that time to season the steak liberally with coarse black pepper and kosher sea salt. We're talking Bernie Sanders liberal; you need more salt and pepper than you think. This is steak! Don't play it light. When you season, you want an even coat on the steak so hold your hand around eye level to season it. It looks cool, your coat will be even, and your guests will think you are the new Bobby Flay. Right before heading out to the grill, lightly brush that beautiful steak with peanut oil. It prevents sticking, gives a nice nutty flavor and has a higher smoke point than olive oil or vegetable oil.

NOW it is time to grab your tongs, thermometer and bring that cutting board out to the grill. You only want to flip once. You are only allowed to eat a nice steak medium-rare. This means cooking it for 4-5 minutes with the lid closed, then flip and repeat. Whatever you do, do not use a fork or any device that pokes the steak. The last time Uncle Robert did that, he got a pair of tongs to the head and hasn't been allowed to grill since. The internal temperature of the steak should be 135 degrees when it is ready. Yes, that means use your thermometer. If it is not there yet, pull the steak away from the fire and let it cook until it is up to temperature (lid still closed). Tent the steak with tin foil and let it rest for 10 minutes so the juices can redistribute. DO

NOT cut it during this period! While the steak is resting I take that time to touch the top with some butter and lemon zest. That pairs beautifully with the steak's richness.

The most important thing, since we are avoiding traffic: have your beer or wine ready. You are the grill master! People should bring that to you...if you are good enough. Uncle Robert was handed nothing; but you, you earned that deliciously refreshing ice cold beer. Summer is here. These tips are great any time of year but enjoy them soon, and remember those and their families that gave sacrifices so that we could live in such a beautiful country where we can enjoy such luxuries as steak, beer, friends, family, liberty, and happiness! Drive safe when you have to hit the road or the water. Happy Summer!

*Special thanks to the culinary expertise of Chef Ryan Crist*

**Josh Reichert  
ITS/TMC Program Manager**





**NORTH FLORIDA TPO**

It's been six months since we've been under the same roof as the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (NFTPO) and it's been a heck of a ride! One of the benefits is the community exposure we've gotten from this arrangement. It seems like our staff is providing two RTMC tours per week to accommodate guests meeting at the NFTPO Board room with an increasing demand for follow-up visits. Likewise, the local media has really taken to this facility and the NFTPO's Marci Larson has done a fantastic job of tooting the horn for us. At times it can seem overwhelming due to the daily demands of operating our infrastructure, however every one of our staff realizes the benefits of getting this exposure.

Just the other day we had the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce conduct their meeting in the NFTPO Board room. After they were done with the meeting it was time to give a tour of the RTMC. In the group was former Jacksonville Mayor Peyton who is now President of Gate Petroleum, former Jacksonville Sheriff Nat Glover and several other CEO's of major business establishments in the City. About 30 of the attendees were given a tour of the RTMC and our team received tons of compliments from each of them. As they were finishing up the tour I decided to thank the RTMC operations staff for being very accommodating one more time. Then I mentioned that the cumulative annual income of the group in that tour was around 40 million dollars. You would not believe how quickly the RTMC operators' jaws dropped when they realized who just came through our door.

One visitor even took the time to speak with Josh and I about the possibility of having our team visit with his staff at Florida Blue to explain the benefits of the ITS program. I believe he was the

President of Florida Blue and he was really interested in what we could do to benefit his employees. The reality is that many of these individuals will play a huge role in the expansion of our ITS program since their companies are the financial driving force for the Jacksonville community. It would be a "win-win" situation for us if we could utilize this opportunity to get the word out to the big employers in the community, thereby allowing us to improve the redistribution of traffic during roadway events.

Another bit of exposure that is forthcoming due to the NFTPO will be at the ITS America Annual meeting being held the week of June 12<sup>th</sup>. Our team submitted the North Florida Regional Transportation Management Center project for an annual award based on the technologies and concepts used at the facility. We recently received word that this project was selected as one of the finalists, so keep your fingers crossed since I feel we have an excellent chance of winning. Ironically, it will be competing with our I-75 visibility deployment project that was also selected as a finalist. I guess District Two's odds are much better for walking away with the trophy. That is unless another Express Lanes project is submitted!

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





**CONSTRUCTION**

The I-95 St. Johns County ITS Device Installation Project is installing Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras, Microwave Vehicle Detection System (MVDS), and associated infrastructure on I-95 from the CR 210 Rest Area going south to the Flagler County Line. This month the contractor has continued with the installation of pull boxes, splice vaults and device poles. This project is scheduled for completion early next year.

Construction is ahead of schedule on the 87 mile ITS fiber optic cable project on I-75 which spans from SR 24 in Gainesville, north to the Florida/Georgia state line. All conduit has been installed and pull box installation continued throughout the month. This project is installing the fiber optic cable which will be used by the upcoming I-75 ITS Device Project discussed below. This project is scheduled to be completed early next year.

The SR 16 project has a Notice To Proceed in late July. This project will be installing fiber optic cable from FDOT’s fiber backbone at the I-95/SR 16 Interchange down SR 16 to the St. Johns County Public Works facility. After making this connection the fiber will continue east on SR 16 to US 1 and then go South on US 1, making its way to the City of St. Augustine. These fiber connections will allow FDOT, St. Johns County Signals, and the City of St. Augustine to share traffic data and videos to enhance traffic coordination within the area.

Upcoming ITS Projects include:

- I-10 Fiber Installation Project – Installation of fiber optic conduit, cable and infrastructure from Jacksonville to Tallahassee.
- I-75 ITS Device Project – Installation of DMSs, CCTV cameras, MVDSs, and associated infrastructure, which will communicate back to the Gainesville TMC via the fiber installed on the I-75 fiber optic cable project described above.

**Kevin Jackson**  
**ITS Construction Liaison**

**MAINTENANCE**

The ITS Maintenance Group has been busy this month. FDOT has been coordinating with the City of Jacksonville to assist them with getting some of their fiber links operational to be able to communicate with all of their devices and optimize redundancy on their network. FDOT has also been working with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority and City of Jacksonville on the fiber connections to Jacksonville Fire Rescue and JTA, which was discussed in last month’s newsletter. Finally, FDOT personnel performed a final walk through for the I-10 Project at Lane Avenue to determine any issues that needed to be corrected before Final Acceptance of the Project.



**MAINTENANCE continued**

Traffic Control Devices (TCD) has been working on the FLIR CCTV cameras, which were recently installed on I-75 and US 441 under the Gainesville Visibility Project. These thermal imaging cameras have been having significant issues and both TCD and FDOT are now working with the main FLIR office in Spain to try to resolve the issues. TCD crews were also busy proofing conduits throughout the RTMC for the upcoming installation of a CCTV security system to be installed both inside and outside of the RTMC. Once conduit proofing was completed, crews installed the communications and power cabling for the system. When not performing the above tasks, TCD personnel were changing out field switches on the I-295 West Beltway from the Buckman Bridge going north to I-10 and performing preventive maintenance. Next month, TCD will be replacing the analog CCTV cameras on the Dames Point Bridge with newer digital CCTV cameras and also they will be changing out the batteries in the bridge wind sensors which have reached their projected end of life.

Metric Engineering has also been assisting ITS Maintenance by providing support for inventory tracking and procurement. Metric also served as the System Manager for the Phase 9 Project, which was turned over to FDOT for maintenance this month. Next month, Metric personnel will continue to assist with inventory and procurement as well as assisting with the supervision of the MOT and work efforts for the analog to digital CCTV camera change outs on the Dames Point Bridge and the replacement of bridge wind sensor batteries.

**Matt Harbert**  
**ITS Maintenance Manager**

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

The warmer weather has finally arrived and as usual, it brought along several inches of rainfall that contributed to an increase in events here in District 2. From the charts following, we can see that there has been an increase by approximately 15% across the board on all event types such as congestion, crashes, debris and disabled vehicles so far in the month of May.

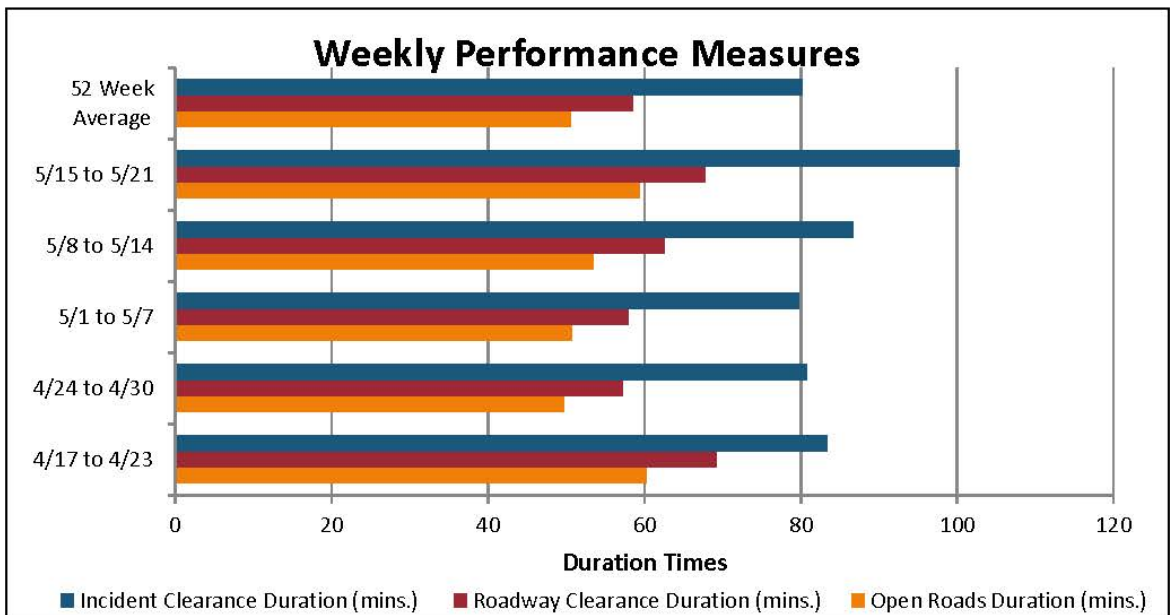
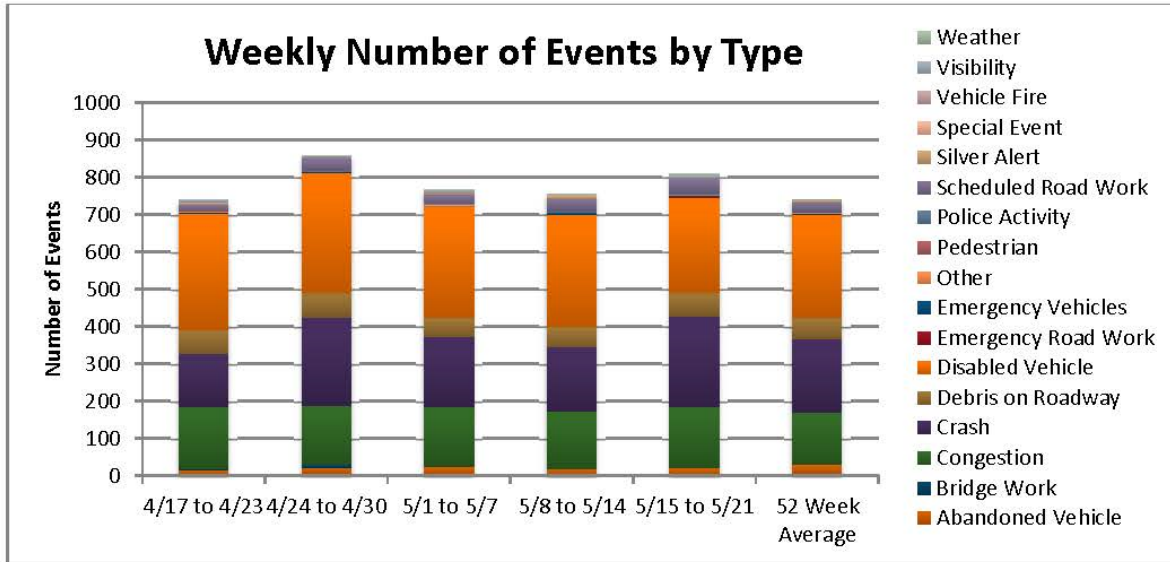
Our incident duration times have also been affected this month due to several incidents in which RISC was called such as overturned semi-trucks and overturned dump trucks on I-295 and I-10 respectively. The average clearance duration for the past 12 months has stayed well under the goal duration times due to the great TEAM that we have here in District 2 with our Road Ranger services as well as our partnerships. SunGuide reports that the weekly average open roads duration so far in May is only about 50.6 minutes as compared to the open roads goal of 90 minutes. This is attributed to how efficient our TIM Team is performing, especially when it comes to events on our interstates.

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





**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**



**Sherrell Lall  
Metric Engineering**



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

The Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) program was designed to support Florida’s Open Roads Policy and establishes a 90-minute goal for the clearance of motor vehicle incidents on Florida’s roadways. RISC was developed for the purpose of quickly securing and restoring highway facilities for public use and is a major component of Florida’s Traffic Incident Management strategy. Our RISC program encompasses nine counties and covers major incidents along our interstates.

RISC was activated on May 12, 2016 when a dump truck overturned; spilling sand onto both the northbound and southbound lanes of I-295 just before 10:00 A.M. near the Beach Boulevard exit. The incident occurred after an unknown vehicle changed from the right lane to the left lane, cutting in front of the dump truck. The driver of the truck swerved to the left to avoid colliding with the unknown vehicle, but lost control. One of the drivers was trapped underneath the truck and had to be extricated. Walt’s Wrecker Service responded to the incident and Life Flight was also called to the scene.

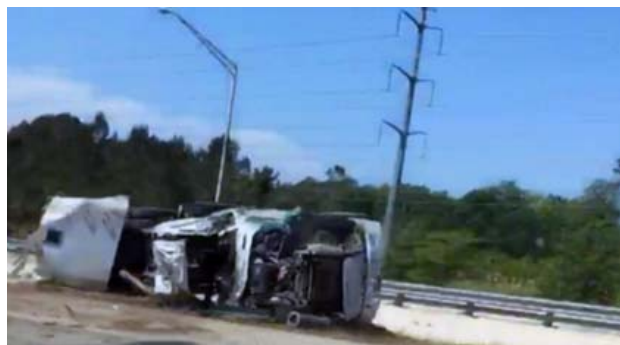


Photo courtesy of News4Jax

The crash was eventually cleared and all lanes reopened about 12:45 P.M. Overall the incident took approximately 3 hours to clear as we can see from the table below which depicts the responding agencies and their approximate on scene time.

Agency	Arrival	Departure	On Scene Time
Road Rangers	9:58 AM	10:50 AM	0:52:00
JSO	10:06 AM	12:36 PM	2:30:00
EMS	10:06 AM	11:17 AM	1:11:00
Fire Department	10:06 AM	11:17 AM	1:11:00
Hazmat	10:43 AM	11:17 AM	0:34:00
Maintenance Asset Mgr.	10:43 AM	12:39 PM	1:56:00
FHP	10:43 AM	12:39 PM	1:56:00
Wrecker Driver	11:19 AM	12:35 PM	1:16:00
RISC	11:19 AM	12:35 PM	1:16:00

**ROAD RANGER UPDATE**

The Road Rangers kicked off the month of May by holding their monthly Road Ranger Safety Meeting at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center at 11:30 A.M. on May 5, 2016.

Mr. Cody Parham opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and reminded the Rangers that these meetings are held to help everyone follow proper procedures and, in turn, potentially help save lives. Mr. Parham spent the majority of the meeting holding a passionate discussion on the importance of setting up proper MOT while at an incident scene. He reviewed several different pictures of MOT scenes with the TEAM while they had the opportunity to review each scene and evaluate what was done correctly and which incident scene needed improvement.

The Road Rangers also noted that there has been a significant increase in travel for the month of May and that they have been helping many more stranded motorists who are in

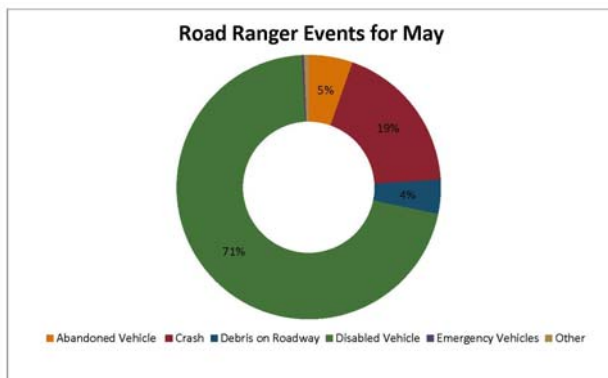
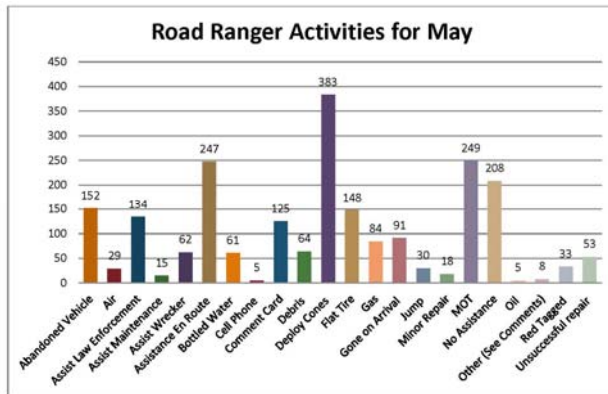


**ROAD RANGER UPDATE continued**

need of gas. There have been close to 2,500 incidents so far in the Month of May and approximately 3% of those incidents were gas related. The Rangers have also provided many other services such as helping with flat tires and assisting with roadway debris. From the activities chart below I highlighted the Road Ranger events that were higher this month compared to last month around this same time. As we can see, mostly all of the services provided by the Road Rangers had a significant spike and in some cases doubled. The charts below illustrate the Road Ranger activities for the month of May as well as the different types of reported events.

**FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE**

The First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team meeting held its bi-monthly meeting at the North Florida Regional Transportation Management Center (NFRMTC) – 980 N. Jefferson Street on May 17, 2016 at 10:00 A.M. Mr. Josh Reichert kicked off the TIM meeting by welcoming all of the members and reminded the group that the purpose of the TIM Team meeting is to continuously reduce incident scene clearance times and improve our roadway safety by coming together as a TEAM, sharing ideas and learning from our actions out on the roadways. He encouraged the TEAM members to be vocal and express any concerns that they may have so that the TEAM can address it as a whole.



The TEAM then proceeded with the Overland Bridge Project Update given by Mr. Bill Kays. Mr. Kays informed the group that there will be a significant traffic switch in the southbound lanes which will last at least four months due to a new ramp and intersection being constructed for the Philips exit. He also gave a heartfelt thanks to the Road Rangers for the wonderful job that they have been doing especially in the Overland Bridge project limits. He was very pleased with the fact that the Rangers have been extremely alert in the area to help clear any obstructions, which could hinder traffic conditions on the interstate. Due to the topic at hand, Mr. Ron Tittle then jumped right in and updated the group on several construction projects in the area. He noted that [www.NFLroads.com](http://www.NFLroads.com) has the entire list of approved lane closures on their website if anyone has any concerns about a particular road.



**FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE continued**

The TEAM then moved on to the Emergency Operations Update where Mr. Ed Ward mentioned how useful the 511 application has been for him. He stated that he was able to avoid several congestion events due to the 511 app being accurate and giving him instantaneous, usable information. During this hurricane season, the Emergency Operations Center has predicted twelve main storms, five hurricanes and two major hurricanes.

Mr. Reichert then jumped right in to the ITS/511 updates where he informed the group that the 511 Statewide System Update is in progress and will be completed in September 2016. Some of the updates include new software as well as information being available for arterials. The TEAM then reviewed the performance measures of several significant incidents that occurred over the past several months and had a healthy discussion on how we can improve as a TEAM.

**PLEASE NOTE: If anyone is interested in the SHRP2 Incident Management Training Course, please contact Craig Carnes at [ccarnes@metriceng.com](mailto:ccarnes@metriceng.com) or Misha Gonzales at [melder@metriceng.com](mailto: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.**

The next First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team meeting will be held on **July 18, 2016** at the North Florida Regional Transportation Management Center (NFRTMC), 980 N. Jefferson St at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendars to attend this meeting.

**ALACHUA BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE**

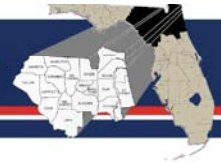
The next Alachua-Bradford Traffic Incident Management Team meeting is scheduled for **June 8, 2016** at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office – 5301 N.E. 39th Ave., Gainesville at 10:00 A.M. Please mark your calendars to attend this meeting. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

**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.*



**OPERATIONS**

Back in August 2012 Metric Engineering began managing the District 2 RTMC Operations Contract. Part of that Contract required a Certification Program that ensured properly trained employees are working each position. For the Road Ranger Dispatcher Module part of that is doing a Ride Along with the Road Ranger. We felt it was important to understand what the Road Ranger is dealing with on the ground and how each side works together. This is a symbiotic relationship that really thrives when each side knows each other's duties, challenges and limitations. FDOT recently implemented a change in policy that states during the Road Ranger's SHRP2 Training they sit alongside the TMC Road Ranger Dispatcher.

The feedback has been extremely positive. With Donna Danson, who oversaw the Road Ranger Contract retiring, I have been helping Josh Reichert out by absorbing some of Donna's tasks until a replacement is hired. One of those duties was handling Ride Alongs with the Road Rangers performing a version of Quality Control (QC). As I waited for Road Ranger 204, Rick Tripp, to pick me up it dawned on me that it probably has been 7 years since I did a Ride Along. Not to mention that during that time it was in a different role. I went in with an open mind and looked for ways to not only perform QC on how the Road Ranger was performing but also how I can improve Operations.

The Ride Alongs have reminded me just how important the Road Rangers are to the TMC and vice versa. Detailed, clear and concise information allows the Road Rangers to get to the scene quickly and as a result they are more prepared for what they are about to encounter. Their safety and the motorist's safety are critical.

As Rick and I pulled up to a crash on 295E NB approaching the north end interchange I saw just

how important each side was. With the sign board up and cones out Rick and I went up to check with the motorist and FHP to see what was going on. We were on the wrong side of a hill crest and cars were coming up quick. We radioed the TMC who could not find us on camera. We ended up being in a blind spot so Rick was able to provide detailed information on our location and the scene. This information was used by the TMC to coordinate with Broad Spectrum to expedite response and post a DMS to warn motorists. Once the 295E NB Main Street DMS went up you could see the cars start to slow down as they approached and fewer cars were coming up the right lane. Motorists, Law Enforcement, the Road Ranger and I were all in a safer incident management work zone. Safer, expedited response and quick clearance are just a few benefits of what the TMC/ Road Ranger relationship brings to Northeast Florida on a daily basis.





**OPERATIONS continued**

During my Ride Along with Road Ranger 203, Matt Hammock, we had beneficial discussions on Operations and how to improve things for both sides. Matt provided feedback on the Smartphone Application for Road Rangers (SPARR) issues he was encountering and possible improvements. The SPARR has not gone through major renovations in years and in App years that is decades! We also talked about safety procedures and how Road Rangers can utilize the TMC more to improve their safety as well as some items the Dispatcher can do to help prior to arrival.

I took away a lot from riding along with Matt and Rick and I will continue to take small things from each ride to help improve operations for both the TMC and Road Rangers. I responded to only 9 events with those 2 Road Rangers but the TMC was a lot busier than that in April! Rick, Matt and the Road Rangers were busy working 1,653 events out of the 3,159 events the TMC managed. More than half of those events had some type of lane blockage and DMS were utilized to inform motorists on almost 1,500 events. Crashes took a dip this month with the TMC working under 700 throughout the 18 counties. Rick and Matt love helping people but don't let that person be you.

***Remember to Know Before You Go:  
Use 511!***

**Ryan Crist  
RTMC Manager**

**MARKETING**

The end of the school year is rapidly approaching, and that means area high schools are trying to squeeze in those last minute Health and Safety Fairs before the final bell rings. Just a couple of weeks ago we found ourselves smack dab in the middle of Orange Park High's gymnasium (home of the Raiders) for their end of the year extravaganza. So many eager young students are either on the verge of getting their Driver's Licenses, or have just gotten their licenses, and are learning the ins and outs of highway etiquette. As a side note, our 511 information is included in the Florida Driver's Handbook (page 10) as a possible test question for future driving candidates.

<http://www.flhsmv.gov/handbooks/englishdriverhandbook.pdf>

I'm finding it interesting, though, as I poll today's teens that a number of them have zero interest in driving. Zero! The typical answers I hear in response to this are: a) *I'm too lazy to study for the exam.* b) *Traffic scares me! I'm afraid of driving in it.* c) *My older sister/brother/friend takes me everywhere. Why do I need to learn how to drive?*

Being the mother of two teens who were chomping at the bit to get behind the wheel of a car, and having once been a teen myself who wanted nothing more than the freedom an automobile provided, this somewhat floors me. It also concerns me. See, until Jacksonville either adopts a more comprehensive mass transportation system, or autonomous vehicles invade Florida, these teens (soon-to-be-adults) are eventually going to find themselves stranded, having difficulty getting from Point A to Point B.



**MARKETING continued**

On the opposite side of the coin, I was equally impressed to find a large number of teens who knew quite a bit about our 511 system *and* were readily embracing the whole driving experience. I should also point out that at these events we stress safety first and foremost... “Know Before You Go” and never ever text, call, surf the web, etc while driving. That goes for adults, too!

In addition to our school outreach, we also played host to a joint media day with THE PLAYERS at our beautiful new Regional Transportation Management Center back on May 9th. Before watching their favorite golfers *drive* the ball to the green, motorists first had to *drive* themselves to the tournament. This has proven to be more difficult in recent years, given the increased popularity of the tournament. Local fans have even been encouraged to bike, walk or carpool to the tournament whenever possible. In addition to all the TV and radio exposure 511 received through our joint media event, our 511 information was also displayed on a giant message board inside THE PLAYERS championship golf course at the famous 17<sup>th</sup> hole!

While the weather at THE PLAYERS was picture perfect, we’re already wrapping our minds around the fact that hurricane season is upon us. Next month, we’ll attend Hurricane Preparedness Expos at Fidelity National Financial and Tote Maritime (formerly Sea Star Line). As always, remember to batten down the hatches...er,

I mean, to check 511 and “Know before You Go!” Call 5-1-1, visit [www.FL511.com](http://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





**SPOTLIGHT ON...RACHEL CRISLER**

**If you would, sort of set the stage for us. Where did you go to school and what did you study?**

I attended Florida State University. I started out as a Biology major and then realized that math was not my best friend, so I switched after my first semester to Environmental Studies.

**What is your current role in Transportation?**

I am currently an Operator at the TMC. I have been there for about 3 and a half years. I have worked the range of positions from Feedback to working as the overnight operator for 2 years.

**Can you recall a particularly difficult or challenging day on the job?**

There was one day a couple of years ago that I was working at the DOT building and Ashley Zirkle was opposite of me at the FHP building. We worked 2 back to back RISC events for overturned semis on I-75 in Alachua County. On top of that, there were numerous other crashes in D2 because it was raining. Add to that having to dispatch the Road Rangers here in Jacksonville because Ashley was covering the RISC events. I think that was one of the most stressful days that I have had working here. It definitely took a lot of focus and concentration to keep all of the alerts straight and matched to their correct events!

**What's the most interesting traffic debacle you've witnessed to date? Something so "outside of the box" you couldn't wait to get home and tell your friends.**

One day I was working as Lead Operator, we had a crash over in the Panhandle. There was an overturned semi carrying like 40,000 pounds of walnuts. Needless to say, there were nuts everywhere and the whole direction of I-10 was closed for like 9 hours.

**I understand that when you're not monitoring traffic, you're chasing pint size humans. Tell us about your part-time job with the school system.**

I work with the Extended Day after school program at Waterleaf Elementary. I have been there since the school opened in 2011. My current role is to man the desk and call for children when their parents come to pick them up. I also help tie shoes and provide magical ice when someone falls down and gets hurt. In the past I have also been in charge of a group of students and helped them with their homework and reading assignments.

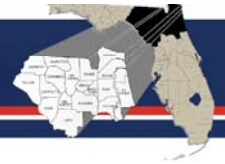
**Recently, your family suffered a great loss. For those who aren't familiar with your story, can you tell us about your father's illness and when he was diagnosed?**

We found out last July that my dad was diagnosed with liver cancer. He had been admitted to the hospital back to back for dehydration and low potassium. The doctors decided to do some testing and came back with his diagnosis. He underwent chemo and radiation. The radiation helped shrink the spot on his back some but it only worked for a little while before the cancer spread in his liver and to his hip. He passed on April 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Your mom, Kathaleen Crisler, is a long time employee of FDOT. (the two of you even worked in the same building at one point) How has this recent tragedy brought your family closer together?**

Both of my parents have worked at the FDOT. My dad retired in 2011 after working for over 30 years. Before we moved to our new RTMC building, my mom and I both worked at the DOT building. We even used to eat lunch together on days we were both there. I am fortunate enough that all of my supervisors at





**SPOTLIGHT ON...RACHEL CRISLER**  
**continued**

Metric have worked with me and allowed me to take the time off that I needed so that I could be there for my dad's last few days and for the time after he passed to help my mom with anything that she needed. Getting used to my dad not being there is still a new thing. My sister and I have both stepped up to help my mom and be there as support for her. It is definitely an adjustment for everyone. My mom is a strong woman, so I know that we will make it through.

**I know your father was a big influence in your life, and even though emotions are still raw for you, your mom and your sister, can you tell us the one thing you'll miss most about him?**

I'll miss having him around for all of the little things. I'll miss the rivalries during football season and watching television together. And I'll miss getting to ask him to change the oil in my car. Of course I'll miss him for all of the big milestones in my life, but I will miss the day to day things most of all.

**Do you have a favorite quote? Something that inspires you?**

As silly as it sounds, I like all of the clichéd sayings. My favorite is "Everything happens for a reason". Whenever things aren't going like I'd like them to, I remind myself that maybe it was supposed to happen that way so that something else or something better can happen.

**And finally, how do you like to relax and unwind when you're not at work?**

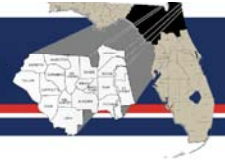
When I'm not working, I like to spend time with my family and spoiling my niece. I also love spending time with my boyfriend. I love being

out in the sunshine and enjoying the relaxing moments that I have with my busy schedule. One of my favorite pastimes is following the Florida State football team and attending games whenever I can.



Above: Rachel & her beloved Dad;  
Below, The quintessential Rachel





Traffic Incident Management  
2016 Meeting Schedule

**First Coast TIM Team**

FDOT Urban Office Training Center  
2198 Edison Avenue, Jacksonville  
904.360.5400

**July 19 2016**

September 20, 2016      November 17, 2016

**Alachua/Bradford TIM Team**

FDOT Gainesville Operations Office  
5301 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Gainesville  
352.381.4300

**June 8, 2016**

October 12, 2016

August 10, 2016

December 14, 2016

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