FDOT's Monthly ITS News

SUNGUIDE®

DISSEMINATOR

FDOT Severe Incident Response Vehicle Pilot Program Now in Palm Beach County

The Severe Incident Response Vehicle (SIRV) program provides Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) presence on the scene of major incidents. SIRV team members assist all responding agencies in communication, coordination, and cooperation while safely reopening the roadway as quickly as possible to meet the 90-minute goal of the State of Florida's "Open Roads" Policy. On Tuesday, July 6, the SIRV program began weekday patrols on a portion of I-95 between West Palm Beach and Boca Raton as part of an expanded coverage plan. The intention is to lay the groundwork for a permanent Palm Beach SIRV program that will begin in the coming months.

The Severe Incident Response Vehicle (SIRV) program is now in Palm Beach County. SIRV will be based at the Boynton Beach Fire Rescue Station No 5 / Emergency Operations Center.

The FDOT District Four Palm Beach Transportation Management Center will dispatch the morning and afternoon rush hour patrols (6 – 9 a.m. and 4 – 7 p.m.). The patrol zone will encompass I-95 between Southern Boulevard/SR80/US98 (Exit 68) and Hillsboro Boulevard/SR810 (Exit 42) along with a portion of Southern Boulevard between Military Trail and Dixie Highway/US 1 in West Palm Beach.

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SIRV trucks are outfitted with traffic management equipment, such as cones, signs, spill absorbent, roadway repair supplies, and flares to be used for maintenance of traffic to ensure the safety of everyone on scene. To educate the first responders, FDOT will conduct SIRV outreach and program reviews with the various police, fire/emergency medical services, and dispatch centers along the I-95 corridor under the leadership of FDOT Project Manager Guy Francese.

"Even in the pilot stage, the response has been very positive. As the project continues the communication, coordination, and cooperation will only get better and we will really begin to see the benefits of SIRV," said Mr. Francese. "Benefits are not only in terms of time and cost savings for our partner agencies, but also in quicker and safer incident clearance for the traveling public in Palm Beach County."

During off-peak hours, SIRV performs quality of service audits and vehicle inspections for the FDOT Road Ranger Service Patrol Program. SIRV also participates in the bi-monthly Broward County and Palm Beach County Traffic Incident Management meetings. This pilot program is part of the existing SIRV contract currently operating on I-75, I-95, and I-595 in Broward County.

For more information on the SIRV program, go to www.SMARTSunGuide.com/SIRV.aspx.

This article was provided by Guy Francese, FDOT District Four. For information, please contact Mr. Francese at (954) 847-2785 or email to Gaetano.Francese@dot.state.fl.us.

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Inrix, Inc., A New Source of Data

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has been considering the use of innovative technologies to fill gaps in our data collection effort. Two non-traditional technologies were explored that could be used to develop travel times. Development of travel times would assist transportation management center (TMC) operators in managing facilities within their Districts. The devices used to develop travel times were the license plate reader system and the toll transponder reader system; however, implementation of these systems would require deployment of infrastructure. Not only would there be a cost to deploy this infrastructure, there would also be a maintenance burden as well. License plate readers and toll transponder readers are proven technologies and certainly have their place, but may not be practical over long distances of rural highways. The FDOT was looking for a quick-to-implement data collection system that did not require infrastructure deployment to provide information over long stretches of roadway.

There are a number of other information providers that don't require the deployment of infrastructure to provide data to fill the gaps in the FDOT's data coverage. These providers take advantage of information provided by commercial fleet global positioning system (GPS) and/or GPS-enabled phones, or the location capabilities inherent with cellular phone systems. The cell phone-based systems require deployment of servers to collect information from the cellular systems, but they do not need equipment placed in the field adjacent to the roadway.

INRIX is one provider that utilizes GPS information to provide travel time and speeds. Based on testing conducted by the FDOT regarding the accuracy of data provided by INRIX as well as their contract with the I-95 Corridor Coalition, the FDOT brought INRIX on board to provide data on two rural facilities that will probably not be instrumented by the FDOT in the foreseeable future. INRIX is under contract with the I-95 Corridor Coalition to provide travel time information to their member states. Since FDOT is a member of the I-95 Corridor Coalition, we sought and received permission to used the I-95 Corridor Coalition's contract as an alternate contracting method.

INRIX will provide information on all of I-10 and the northern portion of I-75. The primary use of this data will be to provide assistance to TMC operators in providing information to Florida's 511 systems, and the fl511.com website. FDOT will integrate the raw data collected and provided by INRIX into the SunGuide® software and provide it as travel time information through the 511 system. This will give drivers information regarding travel times on approximately 500 miles of facilities not currently instrumented by the FDOT's 511 system.

In addition, the INRIX contract provides access to their website where TMC operators can view a graphic representation of traffic flow in four speed ranges based on a percentage of the speed limit. This will assist TMC operators to discover and/or verify events (incidents) in areas where the FDOT did not previously have a means of collecting information. More importantly, the INRIX information can provide some insight to TMC operators when events have been cleared and flow has been restored to normal levels.

INRIX is funded for one year and will provide the FDOT with a good test of the system under production mode. We look forward to being able to analyze how effective this data is at the end of the year. Very preliminary results seem to be positive, but INRIX has just begun providing information.

This article was provided by Gene Glotzbach, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office. For more information, please contact Mr. Glotzbach at (850) 410-5616 or email to Gene.Glotzbach@dot.state.fl.us.

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OMCC—Making Our Roadways Safer

The Florida Department of Transportation, Office of Motor Carrier Compliance (OMCC) has a unique job within the state of Florida—they serve as Florida's primary law enforcement organization under the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program. Their goal is to reduce the number and severity of crashes and hazardous materials incidents involving commercial motor vehicles. OMCC is a statewide, fully certified, state accredited agency with a staff of 480 members, including 258 sworn law enforcement officers, 170 non-sworn inspectors, and 52 support staff.

One way that the OMCC ensures that commercial motor vehicles are compliant with state and federal laws is through commercial vehicle inspections. In 2009, the OMCC performed over 102,000 inspections and issued over 20,000 traffic citations. Recently, I had the opportunity to observe the OMCC officers at work during a detail called The 2010 Grad Night Safety Blitz. This safety blitz is unique in that it focuses on the inspection of motor coaches. All of us have seen these vehicles running up and down the road transporting school children on field trips, tour groups to their destination, or other large groups to and from their destinations.

During the four-day period of this detail, the OMCC officers completed 436 driver/vehicle examination reports. These officers are truly amazing and thorough in their job. They checked everything on these motor coaches—the proper registration, driver credentials, working emergency exits, visual chassis inspections, etc.

But what was truly amazing was watching the use of the OMCC's new Performance-Based Brake Testing (PBBT) system. The PBBT system is a device that can assess the braking capability of a vehicle through a quantitative measure of both individual brake and overall vehicle performance in a controlled test. The primary benefit of PBBT, to both the enforcement and the motor carrier communities, is that it

provides an objective, consistent, and standard measure of the as-is braking performance of a vehicle. PBBT can be used to assess braking capability—irrespective of brake type (disk or drum), energy supply (air, hydraulic, electric, or spring), or application method (s-cam, wedge, piston, spring, or lever and cable). What is truly unique about the OMCC-operated PBBT, is that it is totally portable. One officer can deploy the PBBT on a trailer-mounted unit on the roadside with no assistance. The unit has a self-contained power system that controls hydraulic jacks for self-deployment.

During this detail, there were two carriers placed out-of-service due to inadequate braking. This is very important to note because these carriers are transporting very precious cargo—our family and friends. So the next time you see an OMCC officer on the side of the road or at a weigh station remember how important his job is; that he's carrying out an FDOT-wide mission—to provide a safe transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity, and preserves the quality of our environment and communities.

This article was provided by Paul Clark, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office. For more information, please contact Mr. Clark at (850) 410-5607 or email to Paul.Clark@dot.state.fl.us.

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District Six Traffic Camera Images Now Available in Near-Full Motion Video!

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Six Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Office, in partnership with TrafficLand, one of the market leaders for traffic video aggregation, is now making all of its traffic camera images available for public view and use.

The 511 traveler information system currently provides snapshots of the District's camera images on its website at www.FL511.com. This new initiative will make all District Six traffic cameras in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties available in near-full motion video through TrafficLand's website and District Six's ITS website, www.SunGuide.org.

This achievement was made possible thanks to the coordination and effort between the District Six and TrafficLand staff. The project took about six months to complete, as District Six worked to create a new network specifically for media sharing at its SunGuide® Transportation Management Center (TMC). The new network not only allows the District to easily share its traffic camera images with TrafficLand, but with any other media organizations wishing to form similar partnerships with the District in the future.

TrafficLand will also provide District Six with a back feed of their streaming videos for easy implementation in to any project website, such as www.826-836.com (for the SR 826/SR 836 Interchange Reconstruction project) and www.PortOfMiamiTunnel.com (for the Port of Miami Tunnel project). This results in reduced communications costs and a decreased deployment time for video sharing on these project websites. This achievement will help other FDOT personnel as well, since the videos may be used as an everyday tool for work on maintenance, construction, and traffic operations activities.

This initiative is part of District Six's mission to maximize its resources and increase the efficiency of the regional transportation system. With the cameras now available publicly, the FDOT is further empowering motorists to make better choices about which routes to use before embarking on their destination. The FDOT hopes to continue fulfilling this mission by providing more enhancements and resources to motorists in the near future.

This article was provided by Javier Rodriguez, FDOT District Six. For information, please contact Mr. Rodriguez at (305) 470-5341 or email to Javier.Rodriguez2@dot.state.fl.us.

Editors Note: The FDOT executed a contract with IBI Group to improve the website to provide the public with near-real-time video. This video upgrade should be available early next year. The website currently provides mainly snapshots as noted in the article as well as a limited number of live video feeds.

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Save MONEY by Joining ITS Florida!

It's true—by joining the Intelligent Transportation Society of Florida (ITSFL) now, you can save money in the following ways:

- ITSFL's membership dues are pro-rated for a year. This means you can join ITSFL now for half the annual rate.
- ITSFL members save $50 on their registration to Transpo2010. If four people from a company are planning to attend Transpo2010, you will save enough on your Transpo2010 registration to pay for your 2010 ITSFL dues.
- Early registration rates for Transpo2010 end on August 31, 2010, so now is the best time to join and register.

Are you catching a theme? Right! You should plan on attending Transpo2010 (and join ITSFL). Transpo 2010 is being held at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort and Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach from December 12 to 15. This major event will provide informative technical presentations, lively discussion, training, on-site tours of Jacksonville area intelligent transportation systems (ITS) facilities and a state-of-the-art technology exhibition.

2010 Transpo™
ITS: NOW MORE THAN EVER

The theme of Transpo2010 is "ITS—Now More than Ever." The technical program presentations begin Monday morning and run through Wednesday afternoon. Sessions in the three technical tracks will focus on the "now" of intelligent transportation, showcasing current projects and demonstrating how to do more with cost efficient ITS solutions which maximize roadway and transit capacity. Technical sessions will also explore the "more" of ITS, focusing on solutions that reach far beyond standard deployments. Planning the "ever" of ITS will examine long-range planning solutions for transportation, and societal and industry trends.

President and CEO of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, Scott F. Belcher, will address the gathering. Scott speaks nationwide to raise awareness of the value of ITS among consumers, legislators, and the media, and to seek increased federal funding of ITS initiatives. He will showcase ITS initiatives that are moving our nation's transportation network to a new level of enhanced safety, reduced traffic congestion, and decreased fuel consumption.

Other major speakers include Jeff Lindley from the Federal Highway Administration, Secretary Kopelousos from the Florida Department of Transportation, and representatives from the Georgia Department of Transportation. This is the place to find out everything that's happening in ITS in Florida, Georgia, and the nation! Register now to save at www.itstranspo.org.

This article was provided by Jay Calhoun, The VANUS Group of Gannett Fleming. For information, please contact Mr. Calhoun at (813) 831-8870 or email to jcalhoun@gfnet.com.

For more information on ITS Florida, please check the ITS Florida website at www.itsflorida.org or contact Sandy Beck, Chapter Administrator, at itsflorida@itsflorida.org. If you wish to contribute an article to the SunGuide Disseminator on behalf of ITS Florida, please email Mary Hamill at MaryKHamill@global-5.com.

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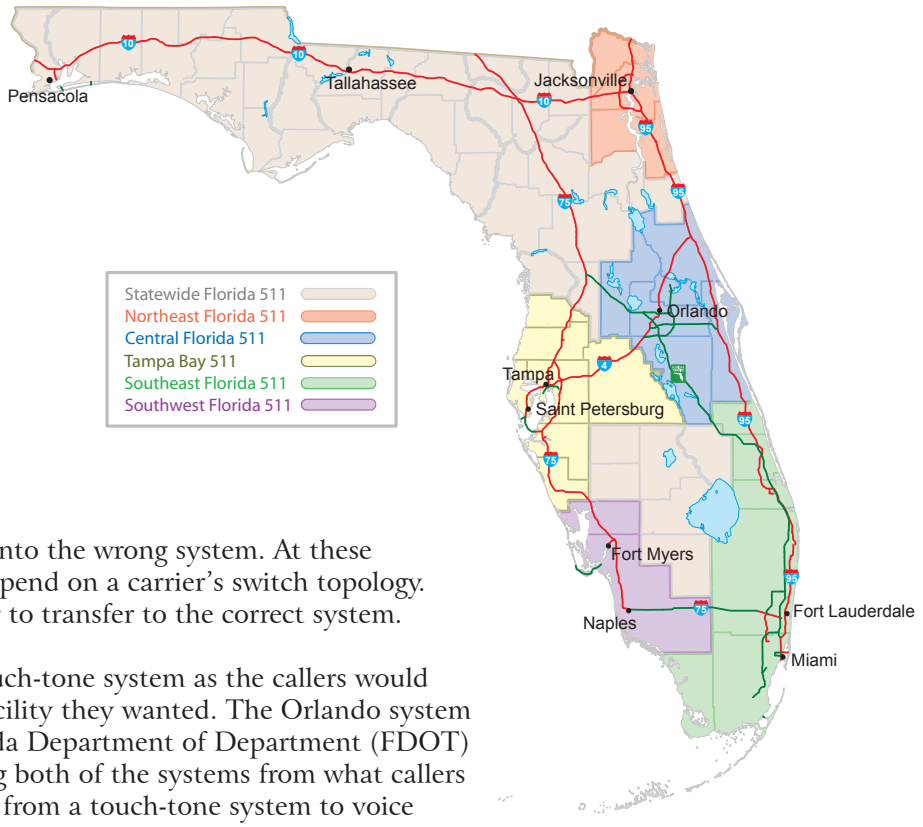
Editorial Corner—A Retrospective View of 511

Looking back at the beginnings of the 511phone number in Florida, it is easy to demonstrate how affective this number was for the dissemination of traveler information. The Southeast Florida traveler information system started out as a ten-digit number. You can provide a helpful way to remember that number by coming up with a slogan, such as "Call 1 (800) TRAFFIC." This will improve the use of the number, but it still can't match the benefit of using the three digit 511 number. When Southeast Florida switched to 511 from their ten-digit number, the monthly calls tripled from 15,000 per month to 45,000 per month. Over the years as people got used to the three-digit number, the call counts peaked out at over 300,000 calls per month.

As other regions of the state came on line with the 511 phone number, the yearly call count total grew to over 5 million calls. The Orlando (Central Florida) region was actually the first system to implement 511, but Southeast Florida was the first region in the state to provide traveler information over the phone—Orlando beat out Southeast Florida by a month. The final 511 statewide system architecture was comprised of five regional systems and a statewide system to cover areas in the state that were not within the regional systems. Tampa Bay, Jacksonville, and Southwest Florida were the additional regional systems added to Orlando and Southeast Florida, completing the regional system architecture. The regional approach worked reasonably well, but callers near the division between two regional systems could get into the wrong system. At these divisions, where your call would end up would depend on a carrier's switch topology. This problem was corrected by allowing the caller to transfer to the correct system.



The Southeast Florida system started out as a touch-tone system as the callers would request information by utilizing a code for the facility they wanted. The Orlando system provided information on primarily I-4. The Florida Department of Department (FDOT) improved both systems, which ended up changing both of the systems from what callers were used to. The Southeast Florida system went from a touch-tone system to voice activated and Orlando added additional roadways and functionality. With these changes we found out that people are resistive to change. The FDOT received a lot of feedback requesting that the FDOT return the system to the pre-change state. However, over time, callers got used to the changes in the system and the negative feedback stopped.

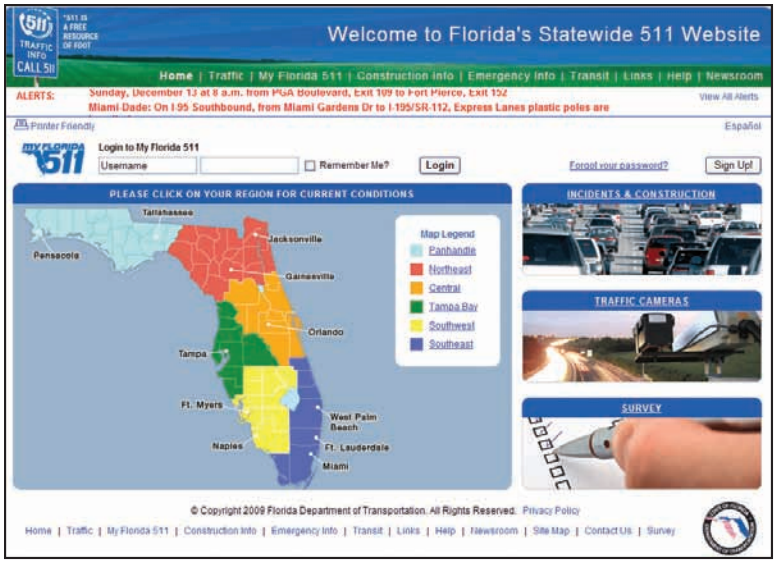
As funding for the regional systems began to run out, the FDOT launched the Next Generation system. The Next Generation system was truly a statewide system regarding the dissemination of information, but retained the regional approach in respect to data collection—each District was responsible for collecting data to feed into the system. The Next Generation system provided only one phone system and one website; while with the regional systems, each region had its own phone system offering its own blend of information and each had its own website with its unique look and feel.

There was not any consistency throughout the state—the Next Generation system established that consistency.

Since the Next Generation system is a statewide system, the issue of getting into the wrong system when at a system division went away. The Next Generation system also offered a Spanish option statewide as opposed to only the Southeast Florida regional system offering Spanish as an option.

When the Next Generation system launched, the FDOT received a lot of negative feedback, which was expected. FDOT knew to expect similar feedback to that received by Southeast Florida and Orlando when they made changes to their regional

systems. We looked at the feedback, no matter how critical it was, as useful and made a number of changes to the Next Generation system. The primary complaint was that the new Next Generation system did not understand the caller. What we were finding out was that the caller, being used to how the regional systems worked, tried to utilize the same commands and shortcuts in the new Next Generation system. The commands and shortcuts from the old system would not necessarily work in the new system, but the caller perceived this as a recognition issue. Based on feedback, we learned and made modifications to the new Next Generation system to better emulate the regional systems.



The FDOT continues to look for ways to improve the Next Generation system. Even though we may not like what we hear from the feedback, it is beneficial and a catalyst for making improvements. Based on what we have heard for callers over the first year of operation, we have made significant improvements to the Next Generation system to provide a better experience to the caller. The FDOT does receive positive feedback from callers and because of improvements in the system, the positive feedback now exceeds the negative feedback. We know we're headed in the right direction when positive feedback exceeds the negative.

This editorial was provided by Gene Glotzbach, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office. For more information, please contact Mr. Glotzbach at (850) 410-5616 or email to Gene.Glotzbach@dot.state.fl.us.

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Inside the TERL

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has a goal to assure that only a safe and uniform traffic control system is implemented in the state of Florida. The Traffic Engineering Research Lab (TERL) plays a part in obtaining this goal by satisfying Florida Statute 316.0745 - Uniform Signals & Devices. Below is a look Inside the TERL at activities that help accomplish our goal.

The primary mission of the TERL is to maintain an Approved Product List (APL) of devices that have been tested and verified to meet FDOT requirements. Establishing and maintaining the APL encompasses a broad variety of activities. These activities include:

- The review of manufacturer quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) programs, and comprehensive product evaluation and testing,
- The initial development and continuous improvement of all traffic control system product specifications,
- Maintenance and technical operations of the systems used for testing (including the design, installation, and operation of a small-scale transportation management center [TMC]) as well as the installation and integration of field devices around the TERL facility and various remote testing locations.

The primary goal of these efforts is to ensure that products sold and deployed on transportation projects in Florida are safe and reliable, are of good quality, and perform as required.

The TERL welcomes and encourages any comments and feedback regarding products listed on the APL. Is there a product you would like to have placed on the APL? Are you a maintaining agency in Florida that would like to sponsor a project to evaluate a new product; would you like to share your experiences with a product (good or bad) with us? If so, we want to hear from you.

This article was provided by Jeff Morgan and Trey Tillander, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office - TERL. For more information, please contact Mr. Morgan at (850) 921-7354 or email Jeffrey.Morgan@dot.state.fl.us.

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Announcements

Effective August 02, 2010, David Chang, PE, PTOE, PMP will assume the duties of Program Manager for the Florida Statewide ITS General Consultant project in Tallahassee. As FDOT's ITS General Consultant, PBS&J supports all facets of the state's ITS program including program planning, traffic management center software development, statewide traveler information, systems engineering management planning, specifications, product evaluation, deployment, integration, maintenance, and outreach.

David has continuously served the Florida Statewide ITS GC program since the project began in 2001. Since that time, David has garnered not only the trust of his staff and clients in Tallahassee, but is known throughout the state for his leadership and commitment to advancing the ITS program. David has brought project management best practices to his assignments through PMI tools and has consistently invested personal time and energy into his professional development.

David will succeed Paul Watson in this leadership role. Paul has faithfully led this program since 2002, where he has instilled a strong ethic of performance across his team. Paul recognized and encouraged David's leadership potential, and is due much credit for helping David take this next step. Paul will continue to support the project as a part time advisor as he moves closer to the next stage in his life journey, a well deserved retirement after more than 40 years of service to the industry.

Please continue to support David, as you always have as he steps into his new role. Congratulations David on this next step of your journey and best wishes to Paul on the next chapter of his life!

FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Mission and Vision Statements

Mission:

Provide leadership and serve as a catalyst in becoming the national leader in mobility.

Vision:

Provide support and expertise in the application of Traffic Engineering principles and practices to improve safety and mobility.

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