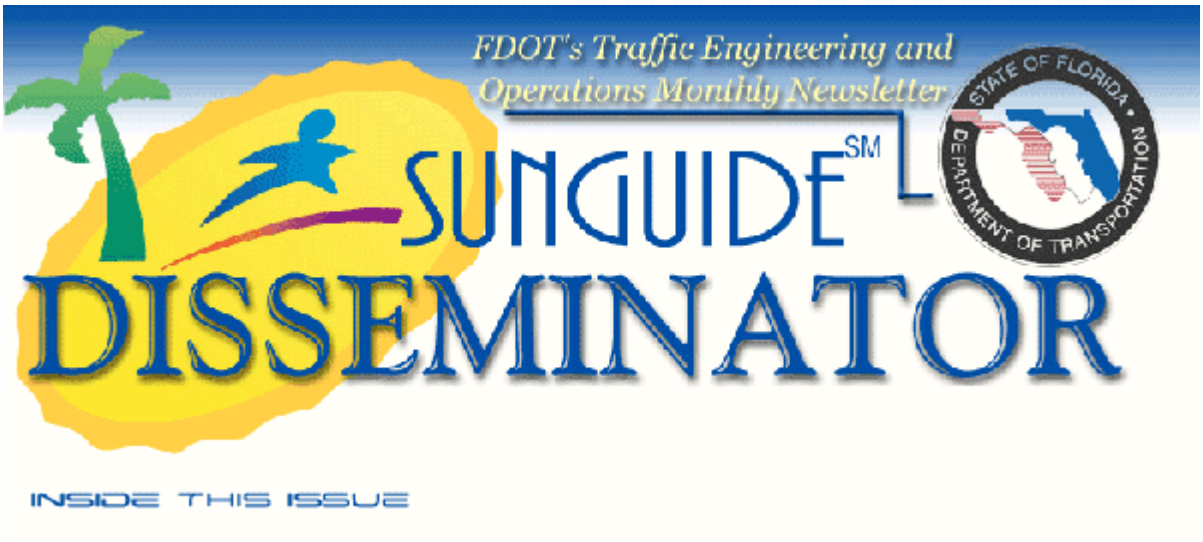

Traffic Management and the NFL!

Editorial Corner—ITS: The View From the Cruiser

FDOT Equipment Certification

Addressing the Responsibility of Cellular Phone Use and Traffic Safety

FDOT ITS Institution Issues Strategies/ Challenges

Announcements

ITS Florida—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

FDOT ITS Contacts

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April 2005 Edition

Link to Florida's Statewide ITS General Consultant

Traffic Management and the NFL!

Relief… Pride… Satisfaction… Fatigue… These are some of the words that come to mind when I reflect back on my experiences during the planning and execution of our traffic

management plan for the NFL's Super Bowl XXXIX. As many of you may have heard, the week of Super Bowl events (including the game) turned out to be a huge success for the City of Jacksonville. The pessimists were impressed; the optimists were elated; and the participants were enamored by the process Jacksonville used to pull off this colossal event. Let's just say that the 1.5 years spent planning this occasion paid huge dividends for all the stakeholders.

I won't delve into the boring details; however, I will provide some insight into what it took to accomplish the task. Jacksonville's initial Super Bowl task team meeting had about 40 participants. By the final months, this group had grown at least threefold and subcommittees were developed to aid in the progression of the meetings. FDOT's responsibilities included all state roads and the Interstate system. Cleaning roadways, fixing infrastructure, and traffic control planning for the onslaught of visitors was the focus of FDOT's team, thereby necessitating the need for over 30 internal Super Bowl preparation meetings during 2004. To my dismay, the District's ITS office was the "make or break" factor in the event since the last thing people would remember was the impact that traffic had getting to and from local Super Bowl functions.

During 2004, meticulous planning between airport personnel, the City Traffic Engineering and Sheriff's offices, fire and rescue, the emergency operations center, transportation authority, Florida Highway Patrol, and FDOT laid out a game plan that would make any transportation engineer envious. The particulars of these plans were something that we soon learned could not be achieved. Agency budgetary constraints, incomplete ITS projects, infrastructure deficiencies, hurricanes, and interagency project coordination were the key factors in our failure to accomplish a number of the objectives set forth by team members. Fortunately, everyone felt that we still had a strong Concept of Operations and Communication Plan to offset any challenges that may have been encountered throughout the week of Super Bowl XXXIX.

Some of the team goals that were not met include:

- A Smart Zone system for the airport,
- An ITS network link to FDOT's area maintenance offices,
- Connection to downtown closed-circuit television (CCTV) images generated by the Sheriff's Office,
- Deployment of portable ITS devices along the St. John's River south bank area, and
- The completion of the Phase III and Phase IV ITS projects along I-95.

Luckily, the team's endeavor succeeded because of a very effective transportation management center (TMC) operations contractor (SmartRoute Systems), a dedicated Road Rangers service patrol provider (Logistical Transportation), a single mode fiber optic communications link between a number of partnering agency facilities, dedicated staff in all partnering agencies, and a transportation game plan that would have given the New England Patriots coaching staff a run for their money.

During the week of the Super Bowl, a strategy was in place that called for:

- Increased Road Rangers service patrols,
- Increased roadway monitoring by FDOT and city staff,
- 24/7 operations coverage at FDOT's TMC and at the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) Regional Communications Center,

- Peak time FDOT staff coverage at the emergency operations center (EOC),
- Emergency phone listings for all team members, and
- Constant open communication lines with local news and information resources.

Even with all of this planning, there was still apprehension because the initial arrangement was dependant on the use of CCTV cameras, vehicle detection devices, and dynamic message signs along the entire urbanized section of I-95. Regrettably, thanks to Hurricanes Charlie, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne, FDOT's design/build teams could not complete installation of these Interstate projects in time for Super Bowl XXXIX. Six to eight weeks of emergency hurricane response and recovery efforts was just too much for them to overcome; thus they could not catch up on the project schedule.

So, what would occur the very first day on the scheduled arrival of 100,000 Super Bowl visitors? Of course, a tractor trailer would overturn at the I-10/I-95 interchange at noon! If you are not familiar with the Jacksonville area, this happens to be the one location where, I can assure you, each and every Super Bowl visitor would drive through or near during their travels in the Jacksonville area. The team immediately sprung into action to respond to this incident. SmartRoute caught the incident on a CCTV camera WHILE IT WAS OCCURING! They immediately began contacting FHP, the EOC, maintenance, Road Rangers, and the media. Within eight minutes, every key clearance team member was on sight to assist in opening up the closed lane, while the media had already begun to notify motorists via radio broadcasts or the noon hour television newscasts.

By 12:30 that afternoon, a plan of action was in place to unload damaged/loose cargo, raise the transport off its side, and tow it away by no later than 1:00 p.m. The first step was to determine the condition of the cargo, which, in this case, turned out to be car batteries… with acid! Of course, this required the attention of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, who affirmed that the cargo needed to be considered as hazardous material due to a few broken containers. This, in turn, called for them to utilize their own Hazardous Material Response team which happened to be a few hours away. In brief, the incident wasn't cleared until 7:30 that evening and resulted in traffic backups ranging in length from 5 to 12 miles on all major roadway systems within the City of Jacksonville. Not a good start to welcoming our visitors!!!

On a whole, we could accept kudos for accomplishing 95 percent of our task that day; however, no semblance of satisfaction could be gained from this seven hour clearance time. Thus, we vowed to make this the one and only incident that would impact the remainder of the weekend. By Tuesday morning, we awoke to discover that "HEY, this Super Bowl thing was a piece of cake!" As a matter of fact, the traffic conditions in the Jacksonville area were never better due to the patience and understanding of our local citizens (i.e. they locked their doors and became hermits for a few days).

As for the Super Bowl week experience, it was better than I could have ever imagined. It turned Jacksonville from a small town environment to a metropolis in a matter of days. The firework displays left New Englanders and Philadelphians in awe, with a number of comments from the visitors testifying that this show went unmatched in all of their travels. Pyrotechnics emerged from barges, atop buildings, and underneath the bridges, with variations in the displays each and every night to keep the fans coming. The amazing part was that the firework detonations reflecting from the office building windows and river expanded the display into a quasi four dimensional experience.

The day before Super Bowl XXXIX, I spent some time at the center span of the Acosta Bridge, viewing the bustle going on around both sides of the river. There were tens of thousands of visitors enjoying the events/booths, walking across the St. Johns along the Main Street Bridge, and absorbing the splendor of a beautiful day in the town we now proudly proclaim **Jacksonville**! As three military attack helicopters passed overhead and numerous blimps shadowed the horizon, I realized that this was the beginning of great things for this city. No longer would the citizens of this great metropolis consider themselves a second tier city! We were now in the "Big Leagues" and looked forward to the challenges that lay ahead as we take advantage of the worldwide exposure Super Bowl XXXIX created.

My heart raced as I thought the unimaginable… I would now actually have to "bust my hump" to keep the ITS momentum going for the region! Ironically, I embrace the challenge and expect this to be the beginning of an impressive ITS Program for the northeast Florida region, with the hope that our hard work will become a model for future deployments throughout the nation. Come the next Jacksonville Super Bowl, I not only want to stun the masses, I want to show them the economic prosperity that this area's ITS Program can create during the relocation of their business operations to Jacksonville. My belief is that Jacksonville can become the " Next Great City of the Southeast" with a little help from our friends at the Federal Highway Administration.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the stakeholders that made this such a valued experience. A thick skin and warm heart led to our disproving the pessimists and we look forward to doing it over again in the years to come.

This article was provided by Peter Vega, FDOT District 2. For more information, please contact Mr. Vega at (904) 630-5463 or email Peter.Vega@dot.state.fl.us.

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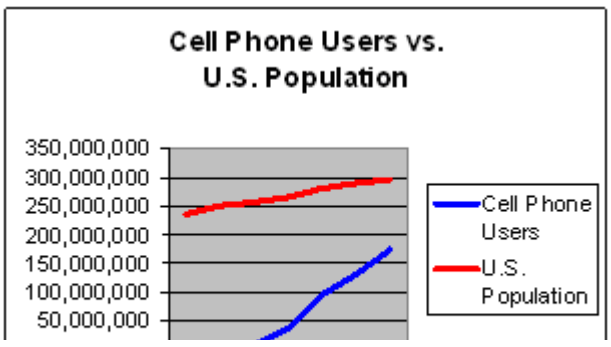
Return to top

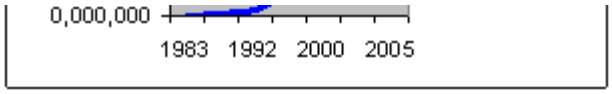
Addressing the Responsibility of Cellular Phone Use and Traffic Safety

Are you one of the 175 million cellular phone subscribers in the U.S.? If you are, according to the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA), you are among the 60 percent of the total population that now uses these phones (just five years ago, only one-third of the total population had cellular phones).



Note: Cell phone subscriber growth exceeds the national birth rate.

Cellular phones have come a long way from those big, clunky models that were more commonly used by traveling executives in the early 1980s. Cellular phones have now become a vital part of our everyday lives, and they have changed the way we all live and



interact with each other. But simply making calls is now not enough. Many of us now require our cellular phones to deliver more than just a voice connection. We want internet access, picture-taking ability, video, calendars, e-mail, music, and much more.

With cellular phone popularity reaching unbelievable heights, more and more drivers are now using their commute time, and other times on the road, to conduct business and personal matters. In this multi-tasking culture we live in today, it is not surprising that more and more people attempt to "optimize" their time in the vehicle by using cellular phones. The convenience and security benefits (such as aiding the national Amber Alert system) of cellular phones are indisputable. However, whether or not they pose a major driver safety threat is fast becoming a point of national discussion and concern. The time has come to determine if the convenience outweighs the hazards.

A Matter of Legislation… and Litigation

In September 2000, the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, Ohio, passed the first ordinance in the U.S. banning the use of hand-held cellular phones while driving. Since this time, only two other states (New York in 2001 and New Jersey in 2004) and the District of Columbia (assisted by AAA in drafting their 2004 ordinance) have passed laws prohibiting the use of cellular phones without hands-free capabilities while driving.

Seventeen other states have passed laws regarding cellular phone use while driving, but these are limited and, typically, involve non-use by school bus drivers and drivers under the age of 21. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that 45 countries currently ban hand-held cellular phones while driving. (Drivers in Germany and the United Kingdom can lose their insurance coverage if they are involved in a crash while talking on the phone).

The issue of legislation in the U.S. continues to be a growing national debate. For example, during the 2003 session, legislators in 42 states considered 116 separate bills related to driver use of cellular phones. Our own Senator Jim Sebesta, Chair of the Florida Senate Transportation Committee, has tried unsuccessfully for several years to get a statewide hands-free bill through the Florida legislature, and indicates he will probably try again this year.

New legal ground is now being examined to determine the ways companies will be responsible for their employees during events outside the traditional work hours and even outside the traditional work place. To avoid this risk, businesses are increasingly prohibiting their employees from using cellular phones while driving. Also, litigation is on the rise against those companies that continue to condone conducting business while driving. Several years ago, Smith Barney (the investment banking firm) paid $500,000 to settle a lawsuit brought by the family of a motorcyclist killed in Pennsylvania by one of its brokers who was talking on a cellular phone while driving. In October 2004 (in the case of Yoon v. Wagner), a Virginia jury awarded $2 million in damages to the family of a young girl who was killed by a driver using a cellular phone at the time of the crash. A suit was also filed against the driver's employer after it became evident through examination of cellular phone billing records that the driver was talking to a client. Finally, in a high-profile case, a former U.S. Congressman from Oklahoma recently agreed to a $2 million settlement in connection with a fatal car crash in which a cellular phone use was allegedly in use. The former lawmaker is also facing jail time over the district attorney's charge of negligent homicide.

Cause for Driver Distraction

Although many activities can divert a driver's attention, the use of cellular phones while driving has drawn national attention to the issue of driver distraction. According to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), driver distraction is a contributing cause of 20 to 30 percent of all motor vehicle crashes in the U.S. However, depending on what study you read, the use of cellular phones currently ranks only 5th to 8th on the scale of driver distraction activities (reading a map has generally been found to be the number one driver distraction). Consequently, great care is also being taken against creating even more driver distraction for today's driver as in-vehicle ITS (e.g., in-vehicle navigation systems), or *telematics*, are gradually being introduced and made available to the general public.

U.S. drivers talk approximately one billion minutes a day on their cellular phones, according to CTIA. Americans also spend more than 500 million hours in their cars each week. Now, be honest, are you also among the 85 percent of cellular phone subscribers that say they use them while driving? If you are, you might find the following information eye-opening.

According to the widely-quoted 1997 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, drivers who used cellular phones while driving were **FOUR** times more likely to crash than drivers not using cellular phones. More recently, research findings from the University of Utah, published in the winter 2004 issue of *Human Factors* journal, found that the reaction times of 18 to 25-year-old drivers using cellular phones become comparable to those of a 70-year-old driver. These same researchers also gained notoriety for another study in 2003, which revealed that motorists who talk on cellular phones while driving are more "impaired" than drunken drivers with blood alcohol levels exceeding 0.08 (Florida's legal limit).

Furthermore, hands-free kits for cellular phones in the car may **NOT** be the final answer. Recent studies have now proven that it's not just the physical use of the phone that's distracting, but the conversation itself. Researchers have found that a new phenomena known as *"*inattention blindness*"* directs the mind of the driver elsewhere during a cellular phone conversation even though the eyes may be looking out the windshield.

The *2004 Driver Distraction Report*, published by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, indicates that "less than one percent of the total crashes were caused by distracted drivers," and only 20 percent of these were attributed to talking/listening on a cellular phone. This could be somewhat misleading because the current crash reporting form

has no separate code for cellular phone usage as a contributing cause for distraction (it is noted only if it is self-reported or if the officer can clearly identify that a cellular phone was in use at the time of the crash).

Along with Florida, many other states (17 so far) are grappling with this particular issue of reporting accuracy. Clearly, we don't yet have the information to substantiate how cellular phone use while driving contributes to car crashes and fatalities, but that is only because we're not widely and accurately collecting it. According to the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, cellular phone-related car crashes are responsible for 1 in 20 of the annual highway deaths in the U.S. If that assessment was applied to Florida in 2003, that would mean 172 deaths were caused by cellular phone use while driving.

It has been stated that the recent decrease in auto crash deaths and injuries may be due in large part to improved seat belt usage, tougher DUI laws, and modern built-in automobile safety features. I contend that what we now know about the proliferation of cellular phone use has the potential to erase whatever positive impact the aforementioned safety measures have created. Further, once we are eventually able to accurately collect driver distraction data, as it specifically relates to cellular phone use, we will have no other choice than to immediately do something about it. Let's start doing something about this matter **NOW**.

What You Should Do

As transportation professionals responsible for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, we first need to become more knowledgeable in the matter of cellular phone use while driving. There are also several proactive actions we can take individually and collectively, as follows:

- Most importantly, practice common sense in the use of cellular phones while driving by personally adopting the *"*Drive Now—Talk Later*"* credo of the Advocates for Cell Phone Safety (www.drivenowchatlater.org).

- Urge your state and national representatives to make *cellular phone use while driving* a significant part of their legislative agenda in 2004.
- Stress driver education and awareness to your Community Traffic Safety Teams as part of the solution for driver distraction through local public service announcements and publication/distribution of free informational brochures.
- Collectively work toward improving the documentation and accuracy of crash data collection by adding a new separate category/code for cellular phone use as a contributing cause of crash.

Crash data reporting CANNOT continue to be a subjective decision on the part of the reporting officer. In order to assure individual responsibility for cellular phone use and traffic safety, detailed cellular phone billing records will have to be obtained and reviewed in order to achieve the necessary reporting accuracy. There is also no doubt that this will initially cause great controversy, but it is what will ultimately be necessary to address our individual responsibility for traffic safety.

This article was provided by Mike Pietrzyk, Transportation Solutions, Inc. For more information, please contact Mr. Pietrzyk at (813) 681-6881 or email mcptsi@tampabay.rr.com.

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Return to top

Florida ITS Institutional Issues Strategies/Challenges

Recently, at the request of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the FDOT ITS Section published a white paper discussing how it had successfully dealt with 'institutional issues' in establishing one of the preeminent ITS Programs in the country. FDOT employees, from both the Central and District offices, were interviewed during the production of this paper.

> ***Institutional Issues*** - *Those issues which encompass all of the challenges and obstacles that are not directly related to the equipment (or technology) necessary for the project.*

Successful FDOT Strategies to Overcome Institutional Issues

The original plan was to identify FDOT strategies used to overcome specific institutional issues faced within selected FDOT ITS projects. During the initial interviews, common themes began to emerge which were applicable across all projects (ITS and otherwise) and reached deeper into the organization.

The successful strategies for overcoming institutional issues in Florida can be categorized into five basic themes:

- Relationships,
- Honesty,
- Trust,

- Commitment, and
- Cooperation.

Positive Relationships Make a Difference

The success of the Florida ITS Program can, in part, be attributed to the positive relationship that has developed over time between the various Districts and the Central Office in Tallahassee. Today, Central Office personnel have developed positive relationships with District personnel. In the past, the Central Office was perceived to exhibit a dictatorial posture. Today, that posture has changed to more of a consultative role. This consultative role posture has resulted in the District personnel utilizing the Central Office to help them with many of their ITS deployment decisions.

Another of the strategies that Florida implemented was to conduct regular ITS Working Group Meetings. These meetings are held in comfortable settings and last approximately two days, requiring most attendees to stay overnight. These meetings provide an opportunity to develop relationships among members of the Florida ITS community.

Being Honest Can be Hard, But it Can be Healthy and Lead to Better Results

Honesty is another of the simple strategies to overcome institutional issues. One example is straightforward discussions between FDOT staff and consultants. When a consultant is not providing the services that are expected by FDOT, it is important for FDOT personnel to inform their consultant so the services can improve.

Trust Can be a Powerful Thing

Another successful strategy involves trust between the FDOT District and Central Offices and trust between the consultants and FDOT. Trust between the District and Central Offices was touched on in the discussion on relationships. The Central Office is also providing an atmosphere where each District can discuss questions and concerns on projects and consultant performance. These discussions help the Districts develop trust in their consultants to provide efficient cost-effective solutions.

Commitment Becomes Evident Quickly

Another successful strategy is commitment, but it is not always present. A common example is when a District chooses a consultant/vendor based on the firm's experience and the proposed project manager (PM). What sometimes occurs is the proposed PM is replaced by a different person after the contract is won. FDOT staff holds consultants/vendors accountable; if a firm has demonstrated a lack of commitment they will not be awarded future contracts.

Cooperation Demonstrates That ITS is Bigger Than Any One of Us

The fifth successful strategy is cooperation. A common thread revealed during the study was the recognition that ITS exceeds traditional boundaries. In years past, the various transportation agencies were concerned solely with the operation and management of their respective systems. ITS necessitates a new level of cooperation among transportation stakeholders. ITS has forced the transition from the modal mentality to the regional mentality.

Florida's Unsolved Institutional Issues

There are some institutional issues that are not so easily addressed. They involve politics, District equity, staff training, staff retention, and outreach and marketing.

Politics are a very real issue in governmental agencies. Philosophies can change and with those changes can come the reallocation of limited resources. A multi-year ITS deployment program may undergo leadership change and find that anticipated ITS funds are reallocated to other projects, until the next leadership change.

Florida is divided into seven FDOT Districts and Florida's Turnpike Enterprise. Each District has unique challenges and unique needs. Regardless of the challenge, each District needs resources to operate and manage their portion of the Florida transportation system. Because of the varying needs and sizes of each District, the funding splits for each District are sometimes misunderstood.

Deploying ITS technologies requires proficiency in many 'technical' skills. Also, successful ITS staff should be trained in 'softer' skills such as marketing, advertising, interpersonal communications, conflict resolution, etc. Quite often, proficiency in the 'soft' skills is underrated and can lead to a staff that is not fully equipped to manage the complexities that often accompany large scale ITS projects.

Staff retention is one of those 'silent killers' when it comes to successful ITS projects. Florida must deal with the realities of losing institutional knowledge.

Many ITS programs are technologically sound and provide cost-effective solutions, but go unused or distrusted. There is a concern that Florida could do a much better job of marketing the functionality and benefits of its ITS Program to the traveling public as well as to internal FDOT staff not directly involved in ITS projects.

Institutional issues can bring an ITS program to a halt. The best way to address those issues is to prevent them from happening in the first place. Although the Florida ITS Program has not conquered all of the institutional issues with which it is faced, it has been very successful in identifying the major issues and implementing strategies to overcome several of them. Many of these issues are not new, nor are they unique to Florida. ITS leaders that are able to learn from their past successes (and failures), build positive working relationships, strengthened by trust, honesty, commitment, and cooperation, that will continue to keep Florida's ITS Program one of the premiere programs in the country. With Florida's ITS Program successfully moving forward, it's just a matter of time before Florida's ITS personnel solve those other pesky institutional issues that still need to be overcome!

This article is condensed from the white paper titled, ***Florida ITS Institutional Issues Strategies/Challenges*** .]

This article was provided by Richard Easley and Sharon Easley, E-Squared Engineering. For more information, please contact Mr. Easley at (706) 858-5588 or email REasley@e-squared.org.

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Return to top

ITS Florida—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

(This article began with a review of the evolution of ITS and ITS Florida in the March 2005 issue of the *ITS Disseminator*.)

Our Values

The birth of ITS Florida and our early years in terms of events was described in the March 2005 issue of this newsletter, but what was our purpose? From the beginning, we aspired to be a forum for information exchange and outreach for our "new" industry. We would not be a playmaker or team-builder (unlike a few of our early sister chapters) to "get the bucks." We would not compete with IVHS America; rather we would be a grass roots supporter, funneling local views up to them, and disseminating their good works to our members. Like all volunteer organizations, we were not entirely effective in either of these, but over the years, a number of endeavors have grown and borne fruit, such as:

- Our early annual ITS Florida Forums were successful educational and networking events. We partnered with the Florida Section Institute of Transportation Engineers (FSITE) for all of these, and still do so today. This has been a great partnership for both organizations, avoiding the rigors of competition and divisiveness among our many overlapping members, while producing successful joint ventures.
- In 2000, ITS Florida joined with FSITE, FDOT, FHWA, and the University of Florida to co-host the millennium statewide transportation event, "Transpo2000–The Future is Now!" in Orlando, featuring every aspect of transportation, literally from earthworks to space. This was arguably the largest statewide transportation event ever in Florida up to that time (about 750 attendees), and certainly the most successful exhibition (104 exhibits, although our 1995 forum in Tallahassee had been a very well-attended exhibit as well, and gave us encouragement to do this in the future).

- Transpo2000 was intended to be a one-time event, but our exhibitors encouraged us –ITS Florida–to continue. So, again in partnership with FSITE, FDOT, and FHWA, we hosted "Transpo2002–Safety Under the Sun: Technology for Safe and Secure Transportation," an ITS/operations/planning-only conference in Orlando, attended by 488 and 54 exhibitors.

When we were planning for this (now) traditional biennial event, we selected Jacksonville for 2004. We were taken with much of the sports tradition of Jacksonville, with the world-class golf (and home of the PGA), Gator Bowl, Super Bowl XXXIX, and the annual Florida-Georgia game. The latter led to two significant decisions: 1) the conference title we chose was "Transpo2004: Border Wars–Building Bridges to Overcome Barriers," and 2) obviously, invite Georgia to co-sponsor. Thus our first truly southeast regional ITS *et al* event was co-

sponsored by ITS Florida and Georgia, Florida and Georgia Sections ITE, FDOT and GDOT, and FHWA (namely the two Divisions and the Southern Resource Center). About 500 attendees and 72 exhibitors declared Transpo2004 an unqualified success. We believe this was the largest ITS event in the nation outside of ITS America's Annual Meeting and Expositions and the ITS World Conferences (periodically held in this country). I was honored to be the general chairman, with the outstanding support of Phil Mann (City of Gainesville, representing FSITE) as program chair, Pete Vega (FDOT District 2) as promotions chair, Cheryl Freeman (Parsons Brinckerhoff and First Coast Chapter, FSITE) as the local arrangements committee chair, and a large group of dedicated volunteers who worked their tails off through four hurricanes and a tropical storm to pull it all together. But I digress–just wanted to thank these folks.

- In December 1998, under the leadership of FHWA's Grant Zammit, we formed the ITS Florida "Team of Champions" to promote ITS awareness and provide customized training. In March 2002, we renamed this effort the ITS Florida Professional Capacity Building (PCB) Program to be consistent with the national moniker for training activities. Under both names, ITS Florida has sponsored dozens of workshop, seminars, and "Lunch-and-Learn" forums in subjects ranging from public-private partnerships to fiber optics and the National ITS Architecture. Several thousands of Floridians have attended; indeed, the Web-based Lunch-and-Learn series (offered by PBS&J) has drawn audiences from other states and Canada.

- In August 2001, FDOT designated ITS Florida as its official Advisory Council, the first such designation in the nation. We have offered advice on training and other minor topics, but last year the Florida Transportation Commission (FTC) asked us to develop performance measures for FDOT's ITS Program. This project was so successful that the FTC charged FDOT with expanding it to include new data-collection efforts (which had previously not been allowable), an effort that is now underway using the same study team, albeit under direct FDOT oversight. In December of last year the FTC approached us again, this time to offer advice on co-location of multi-agency transportation management centers. This effort is underway.

- ITS Florida has also offered informal-to-formal advice and counsel to others, including former Senator Bob Graham, ITS America, the Federal Communications Commission (regarding the designation of 511 as the national traveler information number), and others.

- In 2002, ITS Florida initiated an Annual ITS Awareness event at the Capitol in Tallahassee. We have toned this down to simple one-on-one meetings with key legislators, which actually began last year.

- For several years we have been partnering with FDOT for joint ITS activities in conjunction with their ITS Working Group Meetings. Our Board of Directors regularly meets during this timeframe, as it did in March 2005.

- ITS Florida, under the leadership of Anne Brewer of FDOT District 5, is developing an "ITS Florida Tour" that will be a virtual tour of our major ITS facilities in the state, such as TMCs. If security concerns don't negate this, the system could also be a vehicle for arranging physical tours by visiting ITS professionals from around the state, nation, and world.

In short, we have been a very proactive organization in the areas of training, information exchange, networking, and, now increasingly, as a trusted advisor to state and other agencies.

Our (well, at least my) Vision

The state of our society is strong. We currently have the largest organizational membership in our 12 ¼-year history, at 112. We are recognized as a leading state chapter in the nation. We have a great partnership with our close collegial association (FSITE) and our prime mover and shaker, FDOT. But we need to expand our net to include more local agencies. Membership Chair, Mike Pietrzyk, is working to engage more local transportation agencies on a targeted regional basis. If you work for city or county transportation, get ready—Mike, or an ITS Florida colleague, will be in touch soon.

This is the same with the MPOs. We only have a few MPO members, although several have been quite active in the past. Of all local agencies, the MPOs hold the greatest power to deploy urban-based ITS on a scale that no others can. We need to enlist their full support, not just to toot the horn of ITS, but to reap the benefits of more effective traffic management and operations.

We have just come off the great success of Transpo2004, but more important is the fact that our tireless Program Committee, under the leadership of Phil Mann from the City of Gainesville, his track chairmen, and mostly the nearly 70 presenters, all prepared their program tracks or individual presentations amidst the onslaught of five major storms—Bonnie, Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne—that hit our shores, cities, and homes this past summer. It is a tremendous credit to our transportation profession that we absorbed this horrific set of blows (pardon the pun) and kept the transportation system running as well as it did. ITS had a key role in all this, but the story hasn't really been told. This sets the stage for where I see ITS Florida and our professional community going in the coming years. The transportation community needs to do three things:

1. Plan better for dealing with large-scale events of all kinds (including storms, fires, and special events),
2. Integrate our incident and emergency management resources better to cooperatively deal with these events, and
3. Deploy redundant systems that can keep agencies in touch, communicate with the public, and dispatch needed assistance in a timely manner.

ITS Florida can be a bully pulpit for planning for the future. As an example, the Florida Transportation Commission has again asked ITS Florida to advise on a crucial topic of the day—agency collocation in TMCs (that is FDOT, Florida Highway Patrol, and other traffic and incident managers working together in regional centers). It's a pipe dream to believe that this will happen everywhere, but an ITS community-wide examination of the pros, cons, and wherefores is an important and correct role for ITS Florida.

I have stated on several occasions that the proper future role for ITS America is to somewhat return to its roots and be the clearinghouse for, and advocate of, advancing technology applications in transportation. As a state chapter, we need not do research and development ourselves, but we need to stay abreast so we can inform our member organizations of coming opportunities to serve their travel customers.

We can do even more than we have in the past to assist in training our practitioners. I firmly believe that performance excellence in our growing number of TMCs and traffic incident management operations (including our wonderful Road Rangers), must be shored up with a system of professional "qualifications and accreditation." If construction inspectors and testers in highway construction need to have such formal "Qualifications" to test earth, aggregates, asphalt, and concrete; why not fiber splicers, TMC operators, and Road Rangers?

We should be the state's leading advocate for ITS—not for its namesake, but for the enlightened perspective it brings—namely traffic operations is the key mission of the transportation community. To accomplish this, we need to continually reach out to others in our transportation community, embrace and partner with the public safety community, bring decision makers on board with hard evidence of the values of intelligent/integrated/institutional transportation systems, and educate the public in safer transportation practices.

These are all practical activities that a mostly volunteer organization can guide and nurture, but cannot operate on a sustained basis (at least not without outside financial support), so our role is to examine the needs and formulate recommended actions by public agencies, private companies, academia, and effected associations.

In closing, I thank ITS Florida—particularly its member organizations that elected me, and my many colleagues statewide—for your trust. Working together, we can place Florida and Transpo squarely on the national map of transportation.

(This entire article, and a timeline history of ITS Florida, can be found on the ITS Florida Web site on the following page, where you will find links to the article and several commentaries from early ITS leaders: http://itsflorida.org/about_mission.php.)

This article was provided by Charles Wallace, ITS Florida. For more information, please contact Mr. Wallace at (352) 374-6635 or email WallaceC@pbworld.com.

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For more information on ITS Florida, please check the ITS Florida Web site at www.itsflorida.org or contact Diana Carsey, Executive Director, at (727) 409-5415 or email CarseyD@verizon.net.

If you wish to contribute an article to the *SunGuide Disseminator* on behalf of ITS Florida, please contact Erika Ridlehoover at (813) 376-0036, or email Erika.Ridlehoover@transcore.com.

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Return to top

Editorial Corner – ITS: The View From the Cruiser

Southbound on Interstate 5 near Seattle, one day many years ago, I noticed a construction crew digging a large hole on the side of the freeway. This was certainly something unusual, so my curiosity got the best of me. Parking my shiny, clean, hi-powered patrol car on the shoulder, I asked my first question—"What you doing?"

The contractor looked me over and decided he probably ought to fill me in—"A variable message sign."

"What's that?"

"It's a message board that can be operated from the department of transportation radio room so that they can display messages for motorists."

Wow—I sure came up with some ideas on the messages they could put up like:

"Drive 55 or we may lose federal funds," or

"Construction starts in ten years," or maybe

"Slow Men Working." (One of my favorites)

He smiled and said he didn't think that was the intent but, they wanted to get information to motorists about construction and emergencies affecting traffic. What a great concept.

That was my introduction to ITS in the late '70s. Of course it wasn't called ITS then, the traffic engineers called it freeway traffic management systems (FTMS) and that somehow changed to advanced traffic management systems (ATMS). Engineers love acronyms, don't they? Truth is, cops love acronyms and they also have codes, so they shouldn't throw rocks.

Florida admittedly got a late start with ITS. A lot of that is due to the great roads that were built to keep up with congestion until the past ten years or so. Other parts of the country have been gridlocked for 40 years and have been trying anything possible to alleviate the mess. Florida has benefited by learning by others' mistakes and has made some wise decisions.

What should ITS really do? From the front seat of a trooper's car or a fire rescue vehicle, the most important use is to protect responders at incident scenes. Everyone, including you, hates sudden surprises, and when unusual traffic congestion occurs due to incidents, there is a secondary crash waiting to happen. Variable message signs are a great tool for taking the surprise out of sudden braking due to backed up traffic from incidents.

So please do all the folks that respond to emergencies a favor. Continue to improve your system, get messages on dynamic message signs (DMS—the latest traffic engineer's acronym for a sign with messages on it) way upstream as quickly as you can. When in doubt about what to say, pick something quick and to the point. My favorite is "Emergency ahead---Be Prepared to Stop," Simple, but effective.

Look at the incidents with the cameras and keep motorist information accurate. Jump into seeing how fast you can verify incidents and get messages up keeping the public informed.

Take the next step, too and link the centers together for a more regional, and later a statewide, approach. Work to add the Florida Highway Patrol data system so every center can see what

they are responding to. Develop an informative accurate 511 system along with it, and you will have a system that will be a big source of pride for FDOT.

From what I have seen in my travels around Florida, you are quickly catching up with nearly every other program in the nation. Your efforts keep responders and motorists safer and better informed. As a frequent visitor to your state and as a motorist—***Thanks FDOT***.

This editorial was provided by John O'Laughlin, PB Farradyne. For more information, please contact Mr. O'Laughlin at (206) 382-5265 or email OLaughlin@pbworld.com.

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Return to top

FDOT Equipment Certification

The FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office, through the Traffic Engineering Research Laboratory (TERL), is responsible for approving all traffic control signal devices. Approved devices are kept on the FDOT Approved Products List (APL), a listing of devices that may be relied upon as meeting FDOT specifications, standards, or other criteria.

The APL is a means for the FDOT to meet *Florida Statute 316.0745, Uniform Signals and Devices*, which states, "All official traffic control signals or official traffic control devices purchased and installed in this state by any public body or official shall conform with the manual and specifications published by the Department of Transportation pursuant to subsection (2)."

More information on the FDOT APL may be viewed at www.dot.state.fl.us.TrafficOperations/TERL/APL.htm. Specific approved products in the FDOT APL may be searched at rite.eng.fsu.edu/iapl/page1.php.

For more information, please contact Carl Morse, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office, at (850) 414-4863 or email Carl. Morse@dot.state.fl.us.

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Return to top

Announcements

ITS America's 15th Annual Meeting and Exposition

FDOT will once again team up with ITS Florida to exhibit at ITS America's 15th Annual Meeting and Exposition in Phoenix, Arizona, from May 2-6, 2005.

FDOT and ITS Florida's exhibit will center around Florida's successes in ITS deployments and ITS Florida members, and it will provide an opportunity for visitors to speak with attending FDOT ITS representatives.

Stop by and visit—FDOT will be at Booth 413. For more information, please contact Pamela Haynes, FDOT ITS Section, at (850) 410-5632 or email Pamela.Haynes@dot.state.fl.us.

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ITS Canada's 8th Annual Conference

ITS Canada's 8th Annual Conference and General Meeting will be held on May 15-17, 2005, at the Loews Le Concorde Hotel in historic Quebec City, Quebec, Canada.

The general theme for the upcoming conference is "Time for Integration!" The state of Florida and the Government of Quebec signed a Memorandum of Understanding last year to pursue and enhance cooperation in the areas of Transportation, Science and Technology, Economic Development, and Tourism and Education. As part of this MOU, Florida and Quebec will share information on ITS issues. Elizabeth Birriel, ITS Program Manager, will be presenting the Florida ITS Program's achievements and future plans at this conference.

Stay tuned for more details!

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FDOT Project Short-listed for ITS America's Best of ITS Awards

FDOT has once again been short-listed by ITS America for an award under their Best of ITS Awards Program. The project selected was District 7's Advanced Traveler Information System for Tampa Bay. In particular, District 7's use of speed and travel time information collected by Mobility Technologies through the Federal Intelligent Transportation Infrastructure Program, informally know as the ITIP. The project was selected for the category dealing with Partnership Deployment-Public/Private Partnerships.

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Return to top

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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.

Return to top

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