FDOT's Monthly ITS News

SUNGUIDE®

DISSEMINATOR

Travel Time Alerts Provide Added Value for OOCEA Customers

The Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (OOCEA) has been a champion for the presentation of real-time, automated travel time messages on dynamic message signs (DMS) for the benefit of their customers since April 2006, when the OOCEA began to display real-time, automated travel time messages on their first DMSs. Between that time and June 2009, the OOCEA's DMS system has grown to a total of 36 signs, 35 of which display automated travel time messages by default on a continuous basis.

Even though the OOCEA presents relevant, real-time information to their customers, they had concerns that customers might overlook messages indicating abnormally high travel times until it was too late for them to take action. In order to evaluate whether their DMS travel time system was meeting customer needs, the OOCEA commissioned the University of Central Florida to study the impact of DMS on customer experience. This two-year study concluded in August 2008. From this study, the OOCEA learned that their customers preferred to receive alerts of abnormal travel times by means of a flashing DMS message.

In response to this insight, the OOCEA implemented a change to their travel time system to automatically flash abnormally high travel time messages on their signs, based upon deviations from historical travel time data. This feature alerts OOCEA customers, especially regular commuters who may see the DMS travel time messages as commonplace, of important travel time information which they may otherwise overlook. The feature works by comparing the current travel time to the historical median travel time based on the past six weeks. If the current travel time surpasses the median travel time multiplied by a certain threshold (usually 150 percent), the travel time alert is automatically posted. When signs are in alert mode, the first line of text on the sign changes from "Travel Time To" to "Travel Time Alert." The word *Alert* flashes, along with the abnormally high travel time. This draws immediate attention to the travel time in question, while explaining why the travel time is flashing. The OOCEA activated this feature on November 26, 2008, and it has been well received by their customers and staff.

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The OOCEA's flashing travel time alert feature is an example of a simple enhancement to an existing traffic management system that provides added value to the traveling public. In the current economic environment, agencies can look for creative improvements to current systems that don't require large capital expenditures. To do this successfully, agencies need to understand the needs and preferences of their customers through active engagement. OOCEA provides an example of how to accomplish this by identifying needs through a customer survey then making simple, targeted enhancements to an existing system to satisfy the need.

This article was provided by L.A. Griffin, OOCEA. For information, please contact Mr. Griffin at (407) 690-5000 or email to GriffinL@oocea.com.

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OOCEA Deploys SunGuide®

In October 2010, the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (OOCEA) launched the design of an ambitious intelligent transportation systems (ITS) project involving the deployment of over 350 traffic monitoring detectors across its 105 centerline miles of expressways. The OOCEA investigated various options for archiving and reporting traffic count data from these Wavetronix high-definition sensors and determined that SunGuide® software's traffic sensor subsystem (TSS) and archiving functionality was an excellent fit to their needs. SunGuide had the additional benefit of possessing a reliable dynamic message sign (DMS) control functionality to provide seemless integration with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five SunGuide system, whose operators monitor and post incident messages on the OOCEA's signs.

Upon acquiring approval from its Board of Directors in October 2010, the OOCEA worked with FDOT to deploy the SunGuide servers and software in a high-availability clustering environment. In its final configuration, SunGuide will be deployed across two sets of identical hardware in separate physical locations. Also, FDOT District Five will be able to remotely control the OOCEA's DMSs using its own SunGuide system via the center-to-center software. The OOCEA's existing travel time system, which has been providing travel time messages on their DMSs since May 2006 and will continue to calculate OOCEA travel times, is being modified to automatically push travel time messages to the SunGuide system.

The OOCEA views the traffic monitoring detector project as one of its most important ITS projects to date. The OOCEA will use the SunGuide system to provide real-time traffic data to key stakeholders and to provide archived traffic data for reporting and planning purposes. These statistics are so important that the OOCEA is proposing additional monitoring and reporting enhancements to SunGuide that they and all the FDOT Districts can use to better automate operations, maintenance, and make better use of available data, such as archiving vehicle classification data. The OOCEA is also planning additional reporting functionality that will combine real-time vehicle detector information with archived information.

Now is an exciting time for the OOCEA's ITS program and SunGuide is a key component. With the deployment of SunGuide, FDOT and the OOCEA have deepened their ITS partnership, forming an efficient, cohesive system that benefits both agencies.

This article was provided on behalf of the OOCEA by John Hope, PBS&J. For information, please contact Mr. Hope at (407) 806-4147 or email to JohnHope@pbsj.com.

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District Four Puts Video Wall Online

If you have seen the control room of the Florida Department of Transportation's District Four Broward Transportation Management Center, you may have joked to yourself that it looks a little like NASA. You can now view the same awesome array of traffic cameras online at SMARTSunGuide.com. District Four recently added a new feature using Cooliris software, which creates a virtual wall of images. Users can "surf" the wall by using the left and right arrows, and zoom in to particular images with a double click.

District Four added this feature to aid the media with traffic reports. With just a click, every camera in the District can be previewed. The images are current, but must be manually refreshed. This can be a great tool for finding breaking traffic conditions and it's a great substitute for those who'd like to visit the TMC control room in person, but cannot.

Building on the existing SMARTSunGuide.com travel times features, motorists can now calculate drive time to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Port Everglades, and Palm Beach International Airport. For frequent users, this feature can be saved for frequent checking and tied into SMART Alerts. The travel times are based on historical data collected over the last year and are meant as approximate times only. These times are also only for highway travel and to the entrance of the airport, not travel beyond the terminal areas.

District Four continues to expand features offered on its public web site as a service to local emergency responders and business partners.

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

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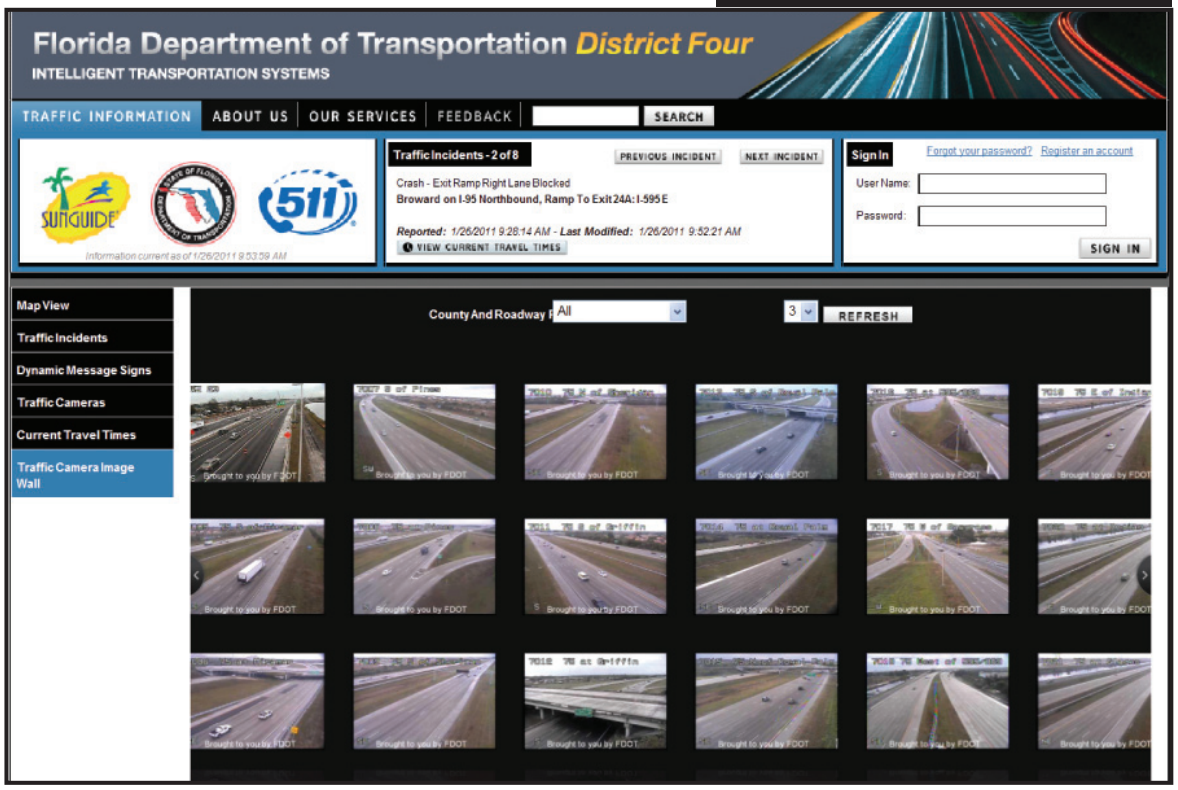
Check out what we've done! The traffic camera image wall is located at SMARTSunGuide.com under Traffic Information (upper left side). The airport and seaport calculator is located on the homepage's panel of features (lower left side).



Cooliris software allows SMARTSunGuide.com visitors to see all District Four's closed-circuit television camera images with a single click.

News From District Six

Travel Times to Miami International Airport Launched

Travel Time Message for Miami International Airport on I-195 in Miami-Dade County.

For the first time in South Florida, drivers traveling to Miami International Airport (MIA) are receiving accurate, up-to-the-minute travel-time information from around various points of the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) regional highway system.

The initiative launched in January 2011 as a result of a joint effort between FDOT District Six and Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) to help travelers make better informed driving decisions on their way to the airport. With MIA ranked first place for moving international freight and second place for international passengers among all U.S. airports, providing this information in real-time is as vital to the improvement of our local commerce and tourism industries as it is beneficial to the thousands of passengers and employees who visit the airport on a daily basis. To further enhance this effort, additional messages are also being displayed for NW 32 Avenue and State Road (SR) 924, a major MDX roadway used by the freight community traveling from the west-to-east portion of the county.

Local television reporter informs the public about the new travel time messages to the airport.

To ensure the accuracy of these estimated travel times, FDOT and MDX partnered with Florida International University's (FIU) School of Engineering to conduct an analytical study that compared the SunGuide® software's estimated travel times to those revealed by their own independent floating car study. After FIU's study concluded that SunGuide's travel times fell within their estimated range, the FDOT began displaying the messages on nine dynamic message signs (DMS) throughout Miami-Dade County. Six DMSs are currently displaying travel times for MIA from I-95 and I-195, and three DMSs for NW 32 Avenue and SR 924 from I-75 and SR 826. These messages, in combination with the 511 traveler information service, are helping motorists in their route planning and selection decisions. The addition of these messages serves to enhance the FDOT's ongoing effort to increase traveler information and brings the total number of travel time messages displayed to 38, covering more than 65 miles of highway throughout the county.

District Six Handles Barrage of Incidents During Jan. 7 Peak Time

It began just before the afternoon rush-hour on Friday, January 7.

The RISC program is one of the many FDOT resources helping decrease lane blockage duration times.

A transportation management center (TMC) operator used a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera to detect a crash at 3:04 p.m. near Miami Gardens Drive on southbound Interstate 95 (I-95). A tractor trailer lost control, hit the barrier wall on the highway, and jackknifed. The incident blocked three local lanes in the southbound direction as well as one northbound lane due to the ensuing crash debris.

Immediately, the operator began his coordination and public dissemination efforts. He notified Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and a Road Ranger of the event, and also posted the information on the dynamic message signs (DMS) and the Florida 511 traveler information service within three minutes of the incident's detection. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Four Broward Regional TMC was also notified once the operator realized traffic coming from across the county line would also be affected. And as soon as it became apparent that clearing the incident would require heavy-duty wreckers, the District Six TMC manager activated the rapid incident scene clearance (RISC) contractor, who arrived about 17 minutes after notification.

The incident initially blocked three left lanes, then two left lanes southbound, and lasted about two hours – a left lane northbound was also blocked for about an hour – as all first responders, including the District's RISC contractor, two FDOT incident response vehicle (IRV) operators, fire rescue, and the District's asset management contractor worked to restore the highway back to regular operating conditions.

An IRV operator works an I-95 incident.

Although this event wasn't exactly how operations staff hoped to begin the afternoon peak period, it turned out to be only a prelude of what the rest of the evening had in store.

Within the next four hours, seven more lane blockage events occurred back-to-back – four disabled vehicles and three crash-related events were detected along the already congested I-95 corridor. The events required all of the District's incident management resources for the efficient clearance and restoration of I-95's capacity.

Under the leadership of the TMC manager, who oversaw 95 Express operations throughout the busy evening, the incident management team leader, who supervised incident management efforts, and the intelligent transportation systems operations engineer, who provided general oversight and decision-making, the staff cleared out event-after-event with the help of Road Rangers, IRV, and coordination with FHP. The team also showed its preparedness by adjusting express lanes operations in a way that led to the 95 Express facility regaining free-flow conditions sooner rather than later.

It was one of the more hectic evening peak periods the District Six TMC operations team had faced since many of the ITS Program's newest resources and services were deployed (95 Express, ramp signaling, IRV, and RISC) in 2008 and 2009. But it was also an evening that made the TMC operations staff realize the value of the team's experience and preparedness, considering the fairly quick clearance of the nine total lane blockage events handled from 3 p.m. through 8 p.m. along the I-95 corridor in Miami-Dade County.

In 2008, before the RISC program existed and before IRV had officially operated for more than a month, District Six's severe incidents lasted an average of 314 minutes, with 244 of those minutes consisting of lane blockage time. But in 2010, with IRV, a full year of 95 Express operations, and six months of RISC operation, those numbers dropped dramatically. Severe incidents lasted only an average of 109 minutes, with 81 of those minutes consisting of lane blockage time – a 34 percent and 33 percent decrease, respectively. With the current 81-minute lane blockage average, the TMC is exceeding its goal of meeting the state's Open Road Policy of clearing lane blockages in 90 minutes or less.

Without the enhanced ITS technologies, additional resources, such as IRV and RISC, quality control, and continuous training of the TMC's operations staff the improvements made in District Six's handling of severe incidents may not have happened; and that evening of January 7 would have resulted in increased travel times and longer incident durations for South Florida motorists commuting on I-95.

Instead, the District Six ITS Program continues to find ways to keep moving forward by optimizing and enhancing all of its services, and proactively reaching toward the goal of providing safe, congestion-free travel on South Florida's roadways.

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.

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ITS Florida President's Letter

It is an honor to lead such a great organization and I am grateful for our members and the intelligent transportation systems (ITS) community for this opportunity. 2011 is going to be a great year and I encourage those of you that are still undecided whether or not to join, that this is your chance to take advantage of the largest ITS conference on the planet known as the ITS World Congress 2011. This conference will be held in Orlando from October 16-20, 2011. We have excellent opportunities planned to help our members promote their firm's capabilities and maximize the networking opportunities throughout the year. Many of our members are involved in various committees and there are still opportunities to get involved. Over the upcoming months, requests will be made for volunteers, so please participate if you can. New York City did a great job hosting in 2008, but we know we can do better.

This is still a difficult year for many of our members and there is a lot of uncertainly with the new governor and numerous changes in the Florida Legislature. One of our goals for this year will be to increase our legislative outreach activities to new legislators and reinforce the benefits of ITS and how it can help create jobs, stimulate the economy, and provide the greatest return on investment possible when compared to other transportation improvements. Jim Reynold and Anita Vandervalk, Past Presidents of ITS Florida, are leading this very important outreach. The support from Mark Reichert has been invaluable and I can't thank him enough. Please support their efforts in any way possible.

Consistent with our mission of advocating ITS deployments and offering training and guidance, we plan on increasing our focus on training. Under the guidance of Dale Cody and Dr. Mohammed Hadi, the Continuing Education Committee plans to offer many opportunities to increase our members' knowledge in emerging ITS topics and Florida Department of Transportation opportunities. Most of the events will be available as webinars at a very low cost to facilitate member participation.

A key initiative of our Member Services Committee will be to increase ITS Florida membership. Although ITS Florida is a very healthy organization, the number of members is down significantly from several years ago. ITS is an instrumental traffic management tool that has provided numerous benefits to managing traffic and reducing congestion. Many companies and organizations have been involved with the ITS industry in Florida that are not realizing the benefits of membership. Tahira Faquir and Carlton Urban will be leading this effort.

Besides the ITS World Congress, high-speed rail and an increasing emphasis on multi-modal travel will be a prominent topic in 2011. There are many ways to get involved and I encourage you to participate in any of the following committees, including:

- Outreach
- Events
- Member Services
- Continuing Education Committee
- Technical Solutions Sub-Committee

I look forward to meeting with as many of you as possible during the upcoming year. If you have any ideas or suggestions on how ITS Florida can serve you better, whether by making a presentation, providing valuable insight, or improving our services, please feel free to contact me directly. ITS Florida is a passion for me and I am proud to be involved at such an important time for our industry and state.

This article was provided by Jesus Martinez, ITS Florida President. For information, please contact Mr. Martinez at (305) 986-2596 or e-mail to JAMartinez@swri.org.

For more information on ITS Florida, please check the ITS Florida Web site 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: ITS—Now More Than Ever

While recently attending Transpo2010, I realized how fitting the conference slogan, "ITS – Now More than Ever," captured the opportunities presently existing for intelligent transportation systems (ITS). Yes, we are living in a time when the economic and political climates have brought significant challenge to managing transportation agencies and roadways throughout Florida. Our state and the entire nation face declining revenue streams from which to operate and maintain our transportation systems. While the economic situation is one that should eventually improve, and travel demands may begin increasing at some point soon, the recent trends place us in a situation of managing our systems more efficiently and with less resources.

In my opinion, the opportunity is greater than ever for the ITS industry to shine. The success of Transportation System Management & Operations (TSM&O) programs are directly linked to delivering ITS-based services to a broader group of customers, whether through existing platforms or linking multiple platforms through partnerships within a transportation agency, across agencies, and with the private sector. At the same time, the success of TSM&O programs are key to whether Florida's transportation agencies can better manage the travel demands of the future, and do so in a way that accomplishes our higher goals of safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness. In fact, ITS can be a big part of the solution to helping Florida rebound from the "Great Recession" and a future model of economic development for the rest of the nation.

How so, you ask? Florida has invested heavily in ITS infrastructure over the past two decades. In doing so, our state has created, through its regional transportation management centers (RTMCs), a wealth of infrastructure that monitors our roadways, collects and archives traffic data, and disseminates traffic conditions on a statewide basis. This ITS infrastructure and the communications network that the systems are comprised of represent a great asset for making a range of important decisions to Florida's future, such as:

- How to best plan for smart growth, which maximizes existing public highway infrastructure;
- How to protect public investments and efficiently manage the existing infrastructure;
- Where to consider and prioritize the implementation of value pricing / managed facilities, which will better serve the end customer, providing maximum travel throughput, providing travel choices, and developing a system of value pricing which encourages economic growth;
- How to better link different modes of transportation in providing decision-making quality data to residents and visitors via various travel information platforms, whether they be public or private-sector managed;
- How to best respond to emergencies of all kinds when they occur and minimize their impact upon the system; and
- Where technology partnerships can be best made between public and private sector to implement solutions in order to **save lives**, and make Florida a demonstration model and leading innovator for full-scale deployments nationally and internationally.

In their entirety, TSM&O and ITS can together meet a big challenge by providing the basis for the Florida Department of Transportation and local transportation agencies to be more efficient – by reinforcing what I characterize as *'the operations culture of the future – where transportation decisions are made in real-time from real-time performance data.'* In order to provide a transportation system that helps Florida become more economically competitive, attracting more residents and visitors, we must make transportation decisions to be responsive to those desired outcomes. The transportation industry as a whole must evolve to be a service-oriented culture, where we spend dollars in a way to maximize outcome and the customers are provided with reliable transportation options.

The past few years have already seen an expansion of customer-oriented programs, such as incident management programs, FL-511, SunPass® (electronic toll collection), and express/managed lanes. These programs improve mobility and safety, make travel more reliable, and, in the case of the last three years, provide premium service to a sub-set of the traveling public who decide to opt in. The incident management programs, further enhanced with Road Ranger coverage, rapid incident scene clearance, and new performance-based towing programs, are heavily reliant upon data collected at the RTMCs. In fact, without the decision quality data for dispatch and incident response, these above-mentioned programs would be far less successful in clearing incidents.

Where do we begin? In the simplest of terms, by finding ways to increase and broaden the value provided by ITS programs on a statewide basis. That is not a new concept for us working in operations, as we become challenged by seeing a problem repeat itself and affect our customers. I provide one example of how a TMC value can be harvested in this day of strained economic resources. Florida's Turnpike Enterprise (FTE) had to delay the schedule for a widening project programmed for the Veteran's Expressway in Tampa due to declining revenues. Several engineers and planners realized the delay would mean the recurring daily congestion pattern approaching the mainline toll plaza at Anderson would not have a near-term solution.

Receiving the daily RTMC congestion alerts from the SunGuide® software for the location reminded the group this congestion was not improving and challenged them to find a solution.

A multi-disciplined team, including members from Traffic Operations, Roadway Maintenance, Planning, and Production departments met to review the options for short-term improvements. The major improvement planned would have converted the mainline toll plaza into open road tolling, thereby providing the SunPass® traffic a nonstop path, without being trapped in an upstream traffic queue due to lack of SunPass® lane approach capacity. When the RTMC video was reviewed by the Turnpike, it revealed the possibility of a recurring pattern improving through a simple pavement restriping and signing change. Without having multiple days and camera views of this location, it would not have been as apparent that the simple fix made would be as effective in improving the traffic flow for the approach to the two SunPass dedicated lanes. The group conceptualized the change, received approval to use maintenance funds, and produced construction plans for the work at the Southbound Anderson Toll Plaza approach. In less than six months the project was completed from identification to completion, and SunPass customers are once again receiving a faster trip through this area.

In this case, FTE was a victim of SunPass popularity, but having an RTMC to monitor conditions in real-time helped find a solution that cost $50,000 versus waiting for the multi-million dollar project that has been rescheduled. ITS devices have also collected average speed and travel time data to report the success of this project. While there is still some recurring congestion, the RTMC can track the impact this small TSM&O improvement has made over time and report on the improved mobility and safety conditions. The above process is another example of TSM&O in action at Florida's Turnpike. Since then, a second similar location has been identified by the RTMC and plans are underway for another improvement.

TSM&O is a broad title placed to the many innovative technologies and methods that can help our systems sustain the next century of growth. Florida presents a perfect environment for these elements to thrive based on what we already have in ITS, and how desirable an environment our state presents for population expansion and quality of life.

This editorial was provided by John R. Easterling IV, Florida's Turnpike Enterprise. For information, please contact Mr. Easterling at (954) 934-1620 or email to John.Easterling@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

Time to Mark Your 2011 Calendar!

Time is flying and the 18th World Congress on Intelligent Transportation Systems in Orlando and ITS America's Annual Meeting & Exposition is approaching. Now is the time to mark your calendar and make preparations to participate in this exciting conference.

We hope you will get involved; help us showcase the best of ITS here in Florida.

To learn more please visit www.itsworldcongress.org.

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Central Office ITS General Consultant

The existing ITS General Consultant contract with PBS&J is scheduled to come to an end at the end of April 2011. To continue having access to an ITS General Consultant, FDOT has gone through a solicitation process and has reselected PBS&J to continue providing services to the ITS Program for another five year period. We anticipate having a signed contract in February.

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Good Luck Khue!

Please join us in wishing Khue Ngo good luck in his future pursuits as he leaves our office. Khue's last day with PBS&J was January 11, 2011; he is returning to Vietnam to pursue his career.

Many of us know and have worked with Khue as far back as 2002 in Traffic Operations and the Traffic Engineering and Research Lab. Khue worked under the FDOT ITS Program General Consultant contract since September 24, 2007. He supported a number of project efforts including:

- SunGuide® Software Project;
- Change Management Board (CMB) meeting support

Khue has always been a competent and hard-working professional and will be missed. Let's wish Khue well as he starts this new chapter in his life.

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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.

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