

SunGuide Software

User’s Group

Meeting Minutes

**Date: October 10, 2019**

**Time: 2:30 3:30 EST**

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| Agenda: |  |
| Topic | **Led By:** |
| 4760 – Not Auto-Merging Scheduled Messages2640 – Change to/from Daylight Saving Time Results in Incorrect Intervals and Sorting1590 – Update USER Table to use CEASED\_USE (or similar historical data)4561 – Nearest Camera for SPARR Created Events | Tucker BrownTucker BrownTucker BrownTucker Brown |

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| Attendees: |  |
| Robbie Brown, D1Ray Mikol, D1Justin Merritt, D1Alain Capucci, D1Tanesha Sibley, D2Jason Summerfield, D2Aven Morgan, D3Kevin Mehaffy, D3David O ‘Roark, D3John McFadden, COTDee McTague, D4Jacques Dupuy, D4Jay Williams, D5Shannon Watterson, D5Eddie Grant, D5 | Sheryl Bradley, D5John Hope, CFXMark Laird, D6Jared Roso, D7Brent Poole, CFXBryan Homayouni, CFXWang Lee, MDXTucker Brown, SwRIChristine Shafik, COMark Dunthorn, COJennifer Rich, CONelson Melendez, COAlex Brum, COFrances Ijeoma, COKarthik Devarakonda, CO |

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| Discussion: |  |

**Item 1: 4760 – Not Auto-Merging Scheduled Messages**

**Tucker Brown:** When a message is a top priority on the queue and the sign is set to auto-merge, it will only attempt to merge the next message in the queue. It will not continue down the queue looking for additional messages that may be merged. It is still the same auto-merging functionality of how they are merged but it changes the way it looks for messages in the queue to auto-merge with. Any questions?

I know that District Five and CFX are interested in this. Would anyone else use this?

**Justin Merritt:** When you have an auto-merge set, is there a way to exclude travel time?

**Tucker Brown:** Travel time is what auto-merges right now. What is in the system is a concept of a primary message and a concept of a secondary message. In order to auto-merge you need one primary and anything that merges has to be set as a secondary. Every message whether it is from a response plan or a manual message is set as a primary and the only thing in the system that is set as a secondary is travel time. If you are not merging travel time there is no real reason to have auto-merge.

**Justin Merritt:** Okay.

**John Hope:** We were curious, how are the other districts merging and what are you merging when it comes to DMS?

**Justin Merritt:** We would typically merge a primary and a secondary event unless there is a special closure or something. If we had an event down the road where a bridge is closed, we would merge that with any active incident.

**John Hope:** Is there any reason why you don’t merge with travel times?

**Justin Merritt:** Robbie can give his opinion but our main reason is if you are in an incident the travel time might not accurately reflect the travel time. We mainly focus on what is ahead in the incident.

**Robbie Brown:** That is basically it. We also run a two-panel message for lane blocking/lane closure in addition to travel time.

**John Hope:** Based on the MUTCD standards the two-panel is standard but you can go to a three-panel. I think we run three max. One thing it does when it is auto-merging is that you can split apart your two-page travel time so if you do have an incident it only takes up one of the pages. Ultimately the auto-merged message would only have two pages. Are there any other Districts that would use this?

**Tucker Brown:** I think everyone has said what they wanted to with that issue. We will move to the next one.

**Item 2: 2640 – Change to/from Daylight Saving Time Results in Incorrect Intervals and Sorting**

**Tucker Brown:** So, there are two issues we are encountering here, the underlying issue is that timestamps in the database are not stored at UTC or with time zone information. When it reads it back into the system it reads it and assumes it is the local time zone. There are a couple of problems that can occur from this. One is the daylight savings time messes up some of the calculations so that is only once a year when we fall back. The other is if you have a District like District Three that is in two different time zones. When running reports on events in two different time zones, it defaults to where the installation applies.

The proposed enhancements here is to do an overhaul of the timestamps in the system and make everything have time zone information associated with it. That way you can always pick up an event and know exactly what time it happened and receive accurate information. As far as reports go, you can do local time zones in the reports. I will mention that if you are a third party running reports this might affect you and how you read in the timestamps. When we roll this out you should check the timestamps to make sure you are getting the correct timestamps. If all of your stuff is in the same time zone then this won’t affect you.

**District Three:** We support this.

**Tucker Brown:** I would imagine you would be highly supportive.

**John Hope:** Are you going to update all of the reports as well?

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, but I hope we will be able to read them in and it will display them. I am hoping there is not a lot to do here. But confirming that the reports still work is part of this enhancement.

**John Hope:** There are timestamps in every single report. So, you will be touching everyone.

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, but the way Crystal reads in that timestamp is that it reads it in as local if no timestamp is displayed and reads it in with the time zone information, if available. There might not be any report modifications needed, depending on how smart Crystal is at reading that.

**John Hope:** As far as Center-to-Center goes, isn’t the schema specifying the local time?

**Tucker Brown:** I was looking at it this morning and when looking at TSS links there are two timestamps. One contains time zone information and the other does not. There is a concept of time zone in some of those but it would be standard with all of them. It would impact C2C, FLATIS and anyone reading those. This is a large enhancement. The changes themselves are mostly easy since we are just changing the way the timestamp is stored. Most of these are programmatic interfaces so it will read it and be able to handle it.

**John Hope:** If we were to query the database, we would have to know that all of those are in UTC and not in local time and we would need to convert it?

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, there will be time zone information with it. So, it would be UTC plus or minus whatever the time zone information is. While looking at it you can tell it is UTC due to the format.

**Mark Laird:** Would the times be stored as strings in the database still?

**Tucker Brown:** Correct. They will be date values in the database but yes, they will be strings.

**Mark Laird:** If the native date value is the database then it makes it simple to do the calculations. A lot of the stuff in the database are still strings, right?

**Tucker Brown:** I would have to go check in the database what they are stored at. Whether it’s dates or strings, it should be readable.

**Mark Laird:** I think the date times use a local reference SQL Server. I don’t think the date times themselves are universal.

**John Hope:** I think it is a great idea long term, I was just bringing up all these questions because it is not as simple as it might seem.

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, this will touch every part of the system. I can’t think of a subsystem that does not use a timestamp of some kind. If there is nothing more on that one, we will move to the next one.

**Item 3: 1590 – Update User table to use CEASED\_USE (or similar historical data)**

**Tucker Brown:** Right now, when you remove a user from the system, they are permanently deleted. This enhancement is to keep the users in the database, but mark them as ceased. This will allow people to keep a record of who was once in the system. This brings up one small problem since the user names are unique across this, you could never create another user with the same name. I have seen some Districts have characteristics on the end of the user name since the two have the same initials. The other side of this is opening up the authority to run reports based on user names and including those in the reports. The reports to run for particular users would have to be identified but opening up the ability to run reports by users would be available.

**John Hope:** Couldn’t you add a timestamp of when a user has been disabled?

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, and there is intent to do that as part of the cease use.

**John Hope:** If you did that, you would know when a particular user is valid and you would know what time period that user is from to know which of the two you are talking about.

**Tucker Brown:** The problem is that EM doesn’t reference the user ID. So, then I go look up the users and I have two T. Browns. I might be able to do a correlation based on the time the event was created and then know which one I am talking about but that would be difficult for a report to do on the fly.

**Mark Laird:** The next request is to change the user ID’s which would solve that problem.

**Tucker Brown:** If everything in the system was using ID’s then the key would be based on the ID, not the user name. I would still recommend active users with the same user name.

**Mark Laird:** As John mentioned, we would probably like to do something with the old names that are unique and not lose our linkage to the events.

**John Hope:** I assume when you talk about user names it is only the SunGuide user?

**Tucker Brown:** Correct. Thinking more long term there could be a request to do something like active directory and that creates another wrinkle in this as well.

**John Hope:** That is not the direction I was leaning. Another need in District Five is to keep track of all of the Road Rangers.

**Tucker Brown:** I think that is part of another larger enhancement that is part of issue 564 which is a long-running issue. The issue helps retain all values in the systems so it would never leave the system. That is in the queue of things to do and it was discussed at the SSUG already and we are waiting to get it approved at the CMB. For this user, it is trivial but for system-wide, it is a bit more complex.

**John Hope:** From District Five’s perspective, this particular one that you talk about with the SunGuide user isn’t useful. We are more interested in the Road Ranger management piece.

**Tucker Brown:** Yes, and that is already in the queue to be approved by the CMB. Any more comments on this one?

Hearing none we will move on.

**Item 4: 4562 – Nearest camera for SPARR created events.**

**Tucker Brown:** Right now, when you create an event from the operator map you get the nearest camera. What the operator map is doing is as part of the event creation process, it creates the event and gets the event back. And before it finishes, it adds the nearest camera. When you are creating an event from AVL, or a 3rd party tablet, the nearest camera is not set because they don’t know about the request itself.

The enhancement here is to consolidate that functionality as part of the event creation process. Regardless of how you create the event EM knows about the cameras and sets the nearest one. As part of this, EM needs to be made aware that cameras exist and then figure out which one is the closest. The functionality will be migrated down from the Operator Map to the EM level. Once we do that, any events created from AVL and 3rd parties would have this automatically. Does anyone have any thoughts on that?

**Bryan Homayouni:** I am just circling back to the first item, it sounded like District Five and CFX were on board but what is the take away there? Are we going to move forward with looking at that?

**Tucker Brown:** I am going to leave that one up to Central Office.

**Christine Shafik:** I think we need to regroup on this item. I am not sure how it will fall on the priority list since we have other items that have more District support. We will definitely regroup on this item.

**Bryan Homayouni:** Okay, if you could keep us posted that would be great. It is something that is impacting operations at District Five and CFX. If you need more information from our end we can provide it.

**Christine Shafik:** Central Office team, let’s make it a point to see how it is affecting other Districts if we go forward with it. If it is not then we can regroup with D5 and CFX to see how we can handle it.

**John Hope:** Since there weren’t a lot of people talking about this item is Central Office curious how the Districts are using travel times?

**Christine Shafik:** Sure, if you want to ask something that would be great.

**John Hope:** We are basically asking why the Districts aren’t using travel times.

**Mark Laird:** It isn’t that we are using them. You were talking about merging them, right?

**John Hope:** Yes.

**Mark Dunthorn:** All Districts are using travel times. I think we touched on this at the last SSUG. As far as merging, I got the impression that most Districts were merging manually.

**Mark Laird:** As was mentioned, we have a two-phase event message we don’t merge them because it focuses on the event and travel times are considered secondary to that. I don’t know how often we merge travel times with event messages.

**Justin Merritt:** So, is it safe to say that majority use it the same way we do in District One, on an as-needed basis and don’t merge travel times?

**John Hope:** At CFX we tend to merge travel time with event messaging because we have high confidence in our travel times we are reporting. It gives a clear indication to the public what to anticipate. It sounds like what it comes down to is the level of confidence in the travel time and how accurately you are able to report for a congested area.

**Justin Merritt:** Aren’t you signing specifically for congestion or are you letting travel times be listed for congestion. I am confused if you are stating the congestion is from X to Y, are you putting travel times up to repeat the same thing?

**Bryan Homayouni**: No, if we are providing event detail, crash ahead – congestion would result rather than saying congestion ahead, we’re giving you travel time. By providing an accurate travel time, you are indicating what that congestion looks like and we don’t have to have separate congestion ahead message.

**District:** it is not that I don’t trust my travel time, it is based on TVT links, calculations, and detectors.

**Bryan Homayouni:** If you automatically merge travel time then you don’t have to worry about manually inputting it.

**Justin Merritt:** How are your travel times listed? Do you have a dual-phase running at all times? Do you take the closest one to the incident and merge that one?

**Bryan Homayouni:** Our typical travel time we run a one-page travel time. We will typically do travel times to two destinations. At maximum, we go to a two-page message.

**Mark Laird:** With stop and go traffic, travel times can be inaccurate.

**Bryan Homayouni:** Travel times that are for a longer distance.

**Jason Summerfield:** I think that is where District Two does it manually because the general idea is that the crash is so far ahead that travel times are useful but we rather let you know that there is congestion over the next hill so you don’t plow into them. We’re giving an incident message and a congestion message then maybe if it is far enough in the distance we might merge it with a travel time but that would be rare.

**Justin Merritt:** Since District One, Two and Three are the most rural areas it would not be as effective for us.

**John Hope:** One of the issues we are discussing in District Five is if you are not in the congestion conditions and there is not an incident the travel times don’t change that much. Therefore, they are all mainly free-flow conditions so why are you giving travel times? If you don’t show the difference in travel time you are losing a large amount of benefit to the traveler.

**Mark Laird:** You are only talking about when it is an event because we are using them at other times.

**John Hope:** But at other times if it is free flow conditions then the values don’t change.

**Mark Laird:** It is not free flow.

**Justin Merritt:** Even if it is, I find it helpful to the people (tourists) they need to know how long it takes to get to a certain exit. It is still helpful whether it changes on a daily basis or not.

**Jason Summerfield:** Also, the congestion messages are only within a certain radius. We are still running travel times outside of there.

**Frances Ijeoma:** Does anyone else have any questions besides the travel time. The Central Office will circle back with the team and then follow up with the group.

**John Hope:** District Five had another issue – this is something that apparently the Turnpike and CFX are experiencing is the Road Ranger communication locations are being delayed for some reason. There is a latency that is happening meaning that SunGuide is not getting the information in a timely manner so the locations are then wrong.

**Frances Ijeoma:** Is there a JIRA issue for this?

**John Hope:** Yes, I created a ticket for this.

**Tucker Brown:** Is this using the SPARR application or third party?

**John Hope:** SPARR

**Tucker Brown:** We are working on the issue. We are trying to determine if it is the phone itself or the driver. We will keep you posted on the results.

**Frances Ijeoma:** If there is nothing else related to the SSUG meeting topics we will end the meeting. Thank you for the feedback.

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| New Action Items: |  |
| Action: | **Responsible Person:** |
| Follow up with the team on the impact of auto-merge for travel time if we were to move forward with item 1 | Central Office Team |
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