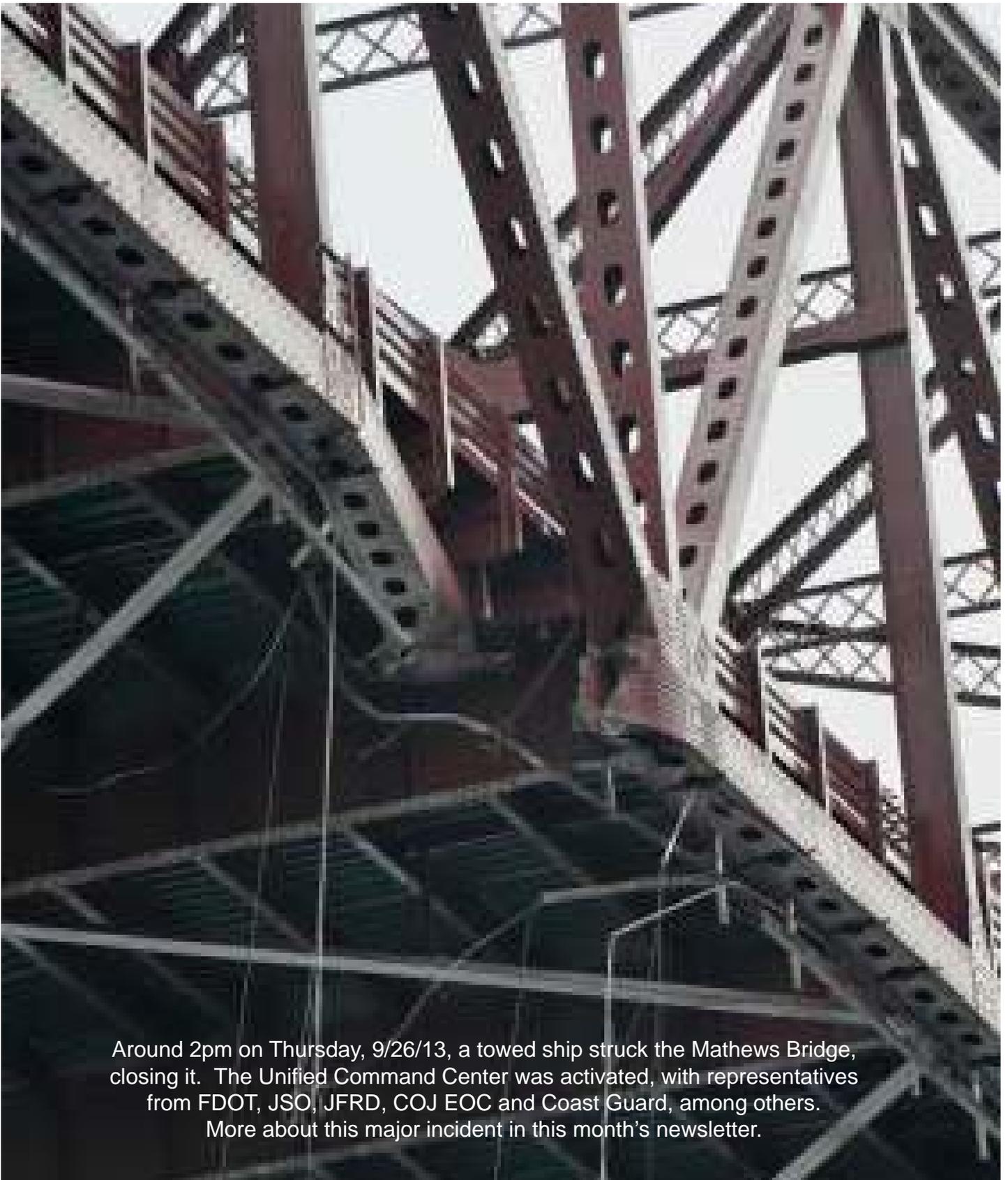




DISTRICT TWO ITS NEWSLETTER



October 2013 Issue 72



Around 2pm on Thursday, 9/26/13, a towed ship struck the Mathews Bridge, closing it. The Unified Command Center was activated, with representatives from FDOT, JSO, JFRD, COJ EOC and Coast Guard, among others. More about this major incident in this month's newsletter.



NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER

October 18, 1993 was the day a dramatic shift in my engineering career took place and leads me to feel that fate brought me to where I am today. Prior to joining the Department I was having an outstanding professional experience with Dowell-Schlumberger (D/S - a division of DOW) chemical. They paid me very well, provided extensive training and had me on a career path to be a regional manager within a few years. You'd think it was the perfect world, right? I thought so too until I realized I was putting in 70 to 80 hours a week, working for three to four straight weeks with NO days off and finding myself traveling coast to coast throughout the year.

I was young, healthy and eager so it was no big deal until that fateful night in West Virginia. Since I was the "newbie" it was always me that got the night shift on projects so there was a lot of down time to think over things. I began to reflect on my career goals and thought "I am on the fast track to be a regional manager within two years!" Sure I wanted to also achieve my post graduate goal of a Master's degree and Professional Engineering license but "that could wait." Then, I got the call that changed everything.

My sister notified me that my mom was in a Tampa hospital with heart problems and was asking if I planned to fly down to visit. Since the project was almost completed I figured that it would be a piece of cake to wrap things up and head down in a couple of days.

When I called my home office manager to let him know of the situation his first response was of a consoling nature. Since I had just completed 28 straight days in the field I figured a week off using comp time and vacation would be no problem. Instead, his response was "take a couple of days off to see your mom then head

up to Youngstown, Ohio, to take over an on-going project for a few weeks." Huh!?! My next call was to corporate where I spoke with the Vice-President of D/S. He was also very consoling but said "hey, we know this job is tough and that's the reason we pay our guys so much." That deserved a double "HUH?" The next day the project was completed so I packed my bags, called corporate and said "I'm done!" The Vice-President did call me back to try and convince me otherwise but ironically he was very understanding of my situation. They made sure that the severance package was enough where I could take my time in finding my new career path with the knowledge that the door was always open if I ever wanted to return.

So, being unemployed and unsure of what to do I began to reflect back on that fateful night. First goal was to find a job that allowed me to seek a post graduate degree. Second focus was on getting that P.E. license that would forever change my life. Third was to find a job that provided stability, a career path and certainty on my purpose in life. Money became a low priority on my list as I sought the perfect job....then came FDOT.

My interview was conducted by Nick Tsengas and Karen Kohoutek-Luckin. I will never forget that day because when I left my thought was "you blew it but there's always tomorrow and you've still got enough severance to last a year." About one week later I received the job offer from FDOT that paid about half of what I was making at D/S. At first it felt like a punch in the gut until I began to focus on my goals instead of the money.

I mention this because this past October 18th, 2013, was my 20 year anniversary with the Department. During that time I have had the chance to work at Roadway Maintenance offices

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NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER CONTINUED

in Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Central Office (Tallahassee). These experiences in the maintenance offices are what led me to ITS because of the life altering events encountered during the Hurricanes and Wild Fires in the 90's. That's when I met Mark Bounds and learned about the possibilities of ITS and how it would help with the management of major incidents through information collection and dissemination. For several years I'd been a partner of the North Florida TIM team but it wasn't until I heard about ITS that I finally put all the pieces in place. Matching up the issues and concerns brought up in TIM meetings could be easily resolved once the ITS program reached its maturity. Well folks "we're almost there" once the new RTMC is completed!

So, where does that leave me today? Let's just reflect back to a few weeks ago when a "little" incident on the Mathews Bridge created unbelievable chaos for the City of Jacksonville. I was notified around 2 PM about the bridge being hit so I immediately went to the TMC to develop a plan of action. To my chagrin all I needed to do was get out of the way as I received updates and watched the TMC folks in action. Ryan and his staff had already posted on the 511 system and were beginning to develop messages for the DMS. Likewise, they began to contact our Incident Management partners to insure that everyone was aware of the situation. Kind of feeling like I wasn't needed my next stop was to construction to speak with Scott Lent since there was an existing bridge painting project on the Mathews.

Scott provided me with the current status of the situation and told me that Chief Senterfitt from JFRD was setting up a NIMS command center and needed me to call. Once I reached Chief Senterfitt we discussed his needs for the initial

24 hours of incident command. I then called Donna and Penny to see if they could go to the NIMS command center to assist Chief Senterfitt and the Department. We then coordinated with Central Office ITS to determine if new features could be added to the 511 website so as to inform motorists on the status of the bridge closure. Once done it was time to put all of our ITS tools to good use.

First, we opened up the BlueToad site to determine traffic conditions on alternate routes. Then we checked the INRIX site to validate the travel time data. The TMC Operators were asked to keep a close eye on I-95 in the downtown and Fuller Warren area because in all likelihood there would be an additional 20,000 cars using this route for a while. I then spoke with our Traffic Signal Engineer, Glenn English, to see if the City could change the timing plan for Atlantic and Beach Boulevard so as to handle the additional traffic. Next task was to contact our TMC Consultant, Metric Engineering, to make them aware of the situation and the potential of needing them at all hours of the night over the next several days if necessary. We also contacted our Road Ranger contractor to put them on notice that a fast response to a Safe Tow call would be required in the downtown area. By the time all was said and done I felt that the ITS/TMC staff had done everything humanly possible to assist with this event so it was all of matter of "wait and see" from then on out.

It is expected that the Mathews Bridge repairs should be completed prior to the Florida/Georgia game on November 2nd. Even after this occurs we will continue to monitor the arterial roadway system using the tools

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NOTES FROM THE DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER CONTINUED

mentioned above. It's been quite a while since such a challenge has been thrown our way however I was very impressed with the response given by our team.

One final note on my 20 year anniversary is that I wouldn't be here without the partnerships and friendships that have grown over time. That's always been the biggest payoff of this job in that we are all focused on one common goal and never take NO or THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE for an answer.

Pete Vega
District 2 ITS Engineer

NORTH FLORIDA TPO UPDATE

Things are looking up when I talk about the North Florida TPO projects and I can now target January 2014 as the month we will see it pay-off. My gratitude to Jeff Sheffield for helping us overcome some challenges as shortages in local staff and funding levels created delays in our progress. The major "coup" was getting Don Fullerton back into the game! He is doing sub-consulting work for one of the NFTPO consultants, England-Thims & Miller, and is helping the local agencies configure their traffic signal equipment so as to get the optimum performance we so desperately seek. Don is also trying to revive some of the concepts he envisioned during his tenure with the City of Jacksonville that will get us where we need to go.

The NFTPO System Manager, DRMP, has been a great help over the past several months as they dedicated staff on a daily basis to the North Florida region. Their first task was to address the network communication issues in Clay County. This was not an easy task as they had to hit the pavement for several weeks trying to

determine where the problems occurred. It was worrisome because we expected they'd find that the repairs would cost thousands of dollars but fortunately due to their diligence we found that there were simple fixes just needed to the fiber terminations. They also placed a new level of focus on the BlueToad system and have been working with Milton Locklear on configuring the pairings. I see tremendous progress over the past two months that leads me to believe January will be the showcase month.

We are wrapping up several NFTPO deployment projects and beginning the final construction project on US 17 in Clay County. This is a sign that the program has begun to transition to more O&M functions that will fit in very well with the completion of the new RTMC. On the Philips Highway job the resurfacing project is almost complete so the new retiming plans can be implemented by HNTB in the near future. Once done the TMC can begin to implement an Integrated Corridor Management process between I-95 and Philips Highway using the ITS/Traffic Signal deployments on both roadways as well as the additional arterial dynamic message signs installed on a recently completed NFTPO project.

As for the RTMC the Architect is progressing toward a design that will allow the CM@Risk contractor to begin work. Groundbreaking is still set for January but the goal has and will always be to get the project completed by late 2014. We fell slightly behind on this effort due to the inexperience of the Architect but they are catching on to the objectives of the incident management team with each meeting we conduct.

Pete Vega
District 2 ITS Engineer



CONSTRUCTION

The Contractor for the Phase 7 Project on the I-295 East Beltway, starting at Atlantic Boulevard and going north to the I-95 Interchange, has completed construction. Since the last Newsletter, the contractor has been troubleshooting issues with some of the devices throughout the project and working to complete their as-built plan requirements. Once the project is Final Accepted, the Systems Manager will begin the Integration and Testing phase of the project, which is anticipated to last two months. During that time the TMC will begin receiving video images from the CCTV cameras, data from the vehicle detectors and roadside weather information sensors, and be able to post messages on the DMS. It is anticipated the TMC will have full capabilities of all of the devices prior to the end of the year.

As noted previously, the contract award for the Phase 9 Project, on SR 9A from Atlantic Blvd going south to the southern SR 9A/I-95 Interchange, will be re-advertised. The work to revise the contract plans and specifications to meet the new Let Date requirements has begun. The project is now scheduled to Let in May 2014.

The I-10 Interchange ITS Project, which includes the installation of fiber optic cable, CCTVs and MVDS within the area of the I-10/I-95 Interchange, is progressing on schedule. The contractor has completed installation of the directional bores for the conduit runs and should be finishing conduit and pull box installation in the next month. The contractor has received the poles for the vehicle detector and power service installations and will be setting those poles for the next several weeks. This project is currently scheduled to be completed in February 2014.

The JaxPort Fiber Installation Project, which includes the installation of fiber optic cable to connect FDOT to the JaxPort Talleyrand and

Blount Island Terminals, is ramping up production. Crews have been installing conduit throughout all areas of the project. This project has a contract duration of 120 days.

The SR 23 Toll Project, which is installing ITS on SR 23, I-10 from I-295 to just west of SR 23, and I-95 through St. Johns County is currently under design. This project will install fiber optic cable and devices on SR 23 and on I-10 from I-295 to just west of SR 23. The project will also install fiber optic cable on I-95 from US 1 at the south end of St. Johns County to the Rest Area at the north end of St. Johns County. The I-95 fiber installation will complete the installation of fiber optic cable between Miami and Jacksonville and allow communications between the District Two TMC and several of the other TMCs throughout the State.

John Kell
District 2 ITS Construction Project Manager

MAINTENANCE

The power service for the wireless communications connection across the Intracoastal Waterway on Beach Boulevard has been completed by JEA. The establishment of this connection has been underway for quite some time in an effort to link the signal systems on each side of the bridge to allow coordination of the signals. The connection will also provide communications to the east side of the bridge so that ITS devices can be installed to assist with traffic management and provide data collection capabilities in the area. Unfortunately, while the site was waiting to get power established by JEA, fiber to the west of the bridge was damaged. Until the fiber is repaired the City of Jacksonville and FDOT will not have the ability to use this new communications connection.

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MAINTENANCE continued

As noted in the Construction section of this Newsletter, the Phase 7 Project will be operational at the end of this year and will become the responsibility of the ITS Maintenance Section early in 2014. This project will add over 60 new devices and almost 14.5 miles of fiber optic cable to the ITS System. This will result in a greater number of ITS Maintenance responses to failed devices and communications issues beginning early next year.

Many of you have heard about the tragedy that occurred in September on San Jose Boulevard at Haley Road. For those of you who have not, a mother and her daughter were on their way to their Synagogue and while crossing San Jose in a crosswalk area, they were hit by a vehicle. The mother died and the daughter was hospitalized due to her injuries. Following this incident, members of the synagogue and other concerned citizens met with FDOT to see what could be done to make the intersection safer for pedestrians. More information regarding the incident, the following discussions between FDOT and concerned citizens, and other issues can be researched on one of the local media outlet sites. With regard to the ITS Maintenance Section, our contractor, Traffic Control Devices, installed new video detection sensors which will detect the presence of a person in the crosswalk and trigger the signal controller to prolong the time the pedestrian will have to cross the roadway. The SafeWalk video detection sensors, made by Traficon, have been loaned to FDOT by Control Technologies of Sanford, Florida as a way to demonstrate the capabilities and advantages of this technology. The SafeWalk sensors are being used for a trial period to determine their effectiveness and whether or not this system is a suitable means of addressing all of the issues raised since this tragic incident in September.

The image below shows a rectangular box imposed on the image showing the area where motion will be detected upon someone entering that area.



The current ITS Maintenance Contract is about to end and District Two has been working to create a new contract. The contract will be advertised in early November and District Two hopes to have the new contract in place in December. The new contract will have several new requirements due to the latest technologies within ITS and the latest FDOT requirements for tracking ITS materials and performance. We look forward to a great working relationship and a continued successful program with whoever the successful bidder may be.

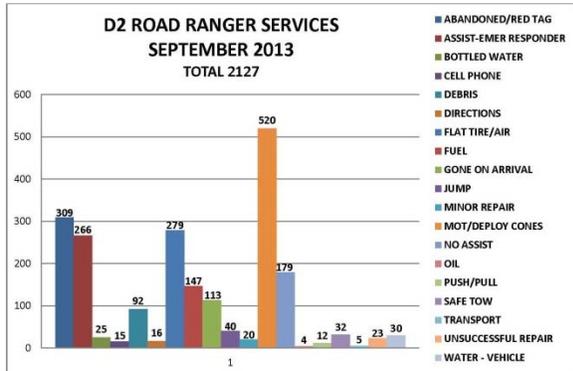
Kevin Jackson
ITS Field Specialist



ROAD RANGER UPDATE

From the letters and calls that continuously pour into our office we are assured the Road Ranger Service Patrol is a welcomed service to our motoring public and the incident responders. While we at FDOT are aware of the benefit of this program, it is always good to receive proof of this fact. Our Road Rangers always have high scores on the comment cards that are sent to our Central Office also. For *Satisfaction of Services Provided* – for the last quarter (April – June 2013) our score was 97.96% excellent. Also a Road Ranger Survey for incident Responders is completed each year and our Road Rangers score highly in all areas.

This month the Rangers provided a total of 2127 services to the motorists and incident responders.



The Road Ranger Service Patrol Operators remain trained and geared up to respond if a hurricane happens to head our way and we need to evacuate. Even though we haven't had the need, it is a comfort to know the Road Rangers are ready to assist.

Road Ranger Safe Tow services on the arterial roadways in the Jacksonville area are proving to be a welcomed service also. This service is provided on a 24/7/365 schedule and provides incident clearance making scenes safer for incident responders and traveling motorists. We had 6 safe tows in August, 6 in September and 2 so far in October.

RISC – RAPID INCIDENT SCENE CLEARANCE - UPDATE

The need for extra towing equipment for quick clearance has not occurred in the month of September so our RISC vendors have not been activated; however, all our vendors remain ready for a call. This program greatly assists with our goals set in the *Open Roads Policy* of clearing our interstates in 90 minutes.

ALACHUA-BRADFORD TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The Alachua-Bradford TIM Team held its monthly meeting on August 14th at the FDOT Gainesville Operations Office, 5301 N.E. 39th Ave. at 10:00 A.M. The following agencies were represented: Metric Engineering, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Alachua County Environmental Protection, Florida Highway Patrol, Florida Highway Patrol Commercial Vehicle Department, DBI, Florida Department of Transportation Maintenance, Traffic Operations, Construction, Intelligent Transportation Systems, Public Information Office and Traffic Management Center, Florida Forestry Service, Alachua County Emergency Management, Atkins, Medical Examiner's Office, University Towing, Alachua County Sheriff's Office Communications, Alachua County Fire Rescue, and City of Gainesville Traffic Operations. By having representation from so many of our incident responder agencies several issues were addressed and finalized at this meeting. Thanks to everyone for attending and cooperating with our incident debriefing making our Team more productive. Team member Larry Stewart, Assistant Fire Chief with the Alachua County Fire-Rescue Department volunteered to bring the newest fire vehicle and give a demonstration at our next Team Meeting on December 11th. Everyone looks forward to this event! Our thanks to the Alachua County Fire-Rescue Department!

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FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE

The First Coast TIM Team will hold the last meeting of the year on November 19th at FDOT Urban Office Training Center, 2198 Edison Avenue, at 10:00 A.M. Remember, having members from all responding agencies is how we manage so successfully. Our incident management involves city and county streets as well as interstates, having the representation of our local agencies, along with our state agencies, is a very valuable asset! Your participation at these meetings is what makes our Team so successful. We can't have "TEAMWORK" without a complete "TEAM".

REMEMBER: If you are interested in presenting a SHRP 2 Incident Management training session for your agency and would like assistance, please contact Team Member Craig Carnes with Metric Engineering at: ccarnes@metriceng.com

(See pictures, below, of training)

FHWA SHRP 2 TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT RESPONDER TRAINING

On Wednesday, September 25th, Harvey Spencer with the assistance of Craig Carnes and Bruce Strickland conducted a *SHRP 2 National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training* 4 Hour Session in Cross City, Dixie County. A total of 33 attendees were present as follows:

- 3 Law Enforcement
- 7 Fire/Rescue
- 1 Towing/Recovery
- 10 EMS
- 1 DOT
- 9 Other

Harvey, Craig and Bruce did a fantastic job and the training information was well received. Several future training sessions have been requested by agencies attending.

Another four hour training session will be held on October 17th at the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department, 408 W. University Avenue, Ste. 106, Gainesville, 32601 given by Joe Raulerson and Chris Gilbert. Since this training will be close to "printing time" I will tell you all about this training in our next issue.





MARKETING continued

Next month we'll head to Gainesville for the 32nd annual Downtown Festival and Art Show. Come join us Saturday, November 16th and Sunday, November 17th from 10am-5pm. All the vendors will be lined up along East University Avenue. For the past three years this festival has been billed as one of the top fairs in the country!

And if you strain your ears just right you can almost hear the sound of knee-high vampires decked out in dollar store fangs standing on doorsteps demanding chocolate. I don't know what it is about Halloween in Northeast Florida, but it seems to be a holiday that rivals the likes of, let's say, the Florida Georgia game. Back in 2006 I was leaving the FHP Traffic Management Center on Halloween night and got caught in a line of traffic that snaked east from the Mathews Bridge all the way past the Regency Square Mall. No particular reason other than the fact that miniature goblins and princesses were holding unsuspecting homeowners hostage in exchange for sugar. And this past Halloween on our return trip from Transpo in Bonita Springs, Penny Kamish and Ryan Crist and I came to an abrupt halt along the 295 East Beltway where accident traffic had us backed up from Baymeadows Road all the way to the I-95 corridor. I'm telling you, Halloween makes for crazy traffic patterns. This year I plan to stand under my porch light and take my chances with pint-sized Power Rangers and Sponge Bob look-alikes. No traveling for me.

Wherever *you're* headed, make sure your trip begins with a call to 511. You can also log onto www.FL511.com or, of course, download our free 511 Traffic App. Know before you go and keep moving. Happy Halloween!

Know before you go and keep moving!

Sherri Byrd
Marketing Manager

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

September was without a doubt a memorable month for the daily commuters of the Jacksonville area. During the week starting September 15th the Incident Clearance, Roadway Clearance, and Open Roads durations were substantially higher than all other weeks; which is illustrated in the chart below. The average time during the week for this performance measure was higher than the yearly average as well. One of the contributing factors for this increase was an accident involving an 18-wheeler carrying coleslaw, which was hit by an empty train heading west at the traffic signal on Alta Drive and Faye Road. This accident occurred on Tuesday September 17th around 4:30 PM while the semi-truck was waiting for the light to turn green. The truck's trailer was pushed to the side damaging the railroad traffic signal sign, and luckily no life threatening injuries were reported. This event caused major repercussions on the Interstate 295 east beltway. The north and southbound exit ramps to Alta drive were closed for almost 8 hours until about 12:30 AM the following day. Although this accident was most likely one of the main contributors to the long durations in the Performance Measures' analysis for the week, the numbers for the different type of events reported by SunGuide were very similar to the yearly average.

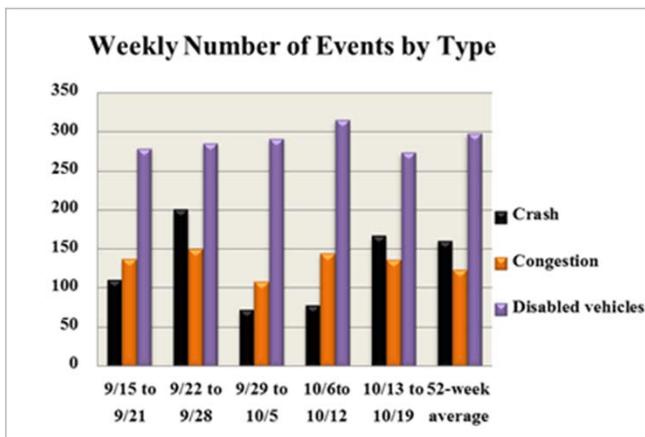
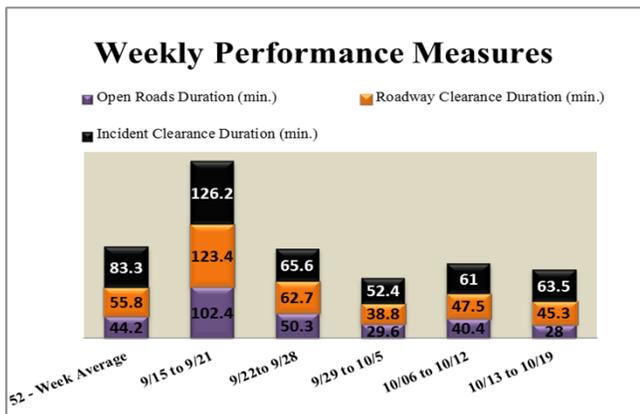
The closing of the Mathews Bridge beginning on the afternoon of Thursday September 26th did not have a considerable impact in the Performance Measures or the total amount of events reported for the week starting September 22nd when compared to the other weeks on the charts. One reason the bridge closing did not have a large impact on the Performance Measures is that the TMC is only able to track performance measures for incidents on the Interstates and not the arterial roadways. However, this bridge closing did increase the



PERFORMANCE MEASURES continued

number of motorists using the Interstates as an alternate route, so perhaps the great efforts of our TMC personnel posting floodgates to FL511 and using DMS to suggest motorists seek alternate routes helped to maintain congestion events to a reasonable number. Hopefully the bridge will open soon to alleviate some of the additional peak morning and afternoon congestion and restore the normal traffic patterns.

The following charts illustrate the Performance Measures data for the past few weeks as well as the different types of events reported.



Diana Rivas
Metric Engineering

OPERATIONS

From October 9th through 11th ITS Personnel from around the state gathered in Orlando for the Annual ITS Florida Technical Conference. Connected Vehicles, TSM&O, MAP 21 and Vendor presentations ruled the days. I will share more on the conference another time. What occurred on the way home reminded my why we do what we do.

After 2 and a half days of classes, presentations, networking, attempts to crash PWC's private party and awards banquet, most of the 100+ attendees were ready to get home to their families and start their weekend. James Speed, Tanesha Sibley and I jumped into my car and headed east on Interstate 4. Just east of Orlando we caught a DMS stating CRASH 9 MILES AHEAD ALL LANES BLOCKED. Being the intelligent driver I asked James to pull up the FL511 APP and see what was going on. Do we take an alternate route? Stop for lunch? Or proceed with due caution?





OPERATIONS continued

The answer was....STOP FOR LUNCH (for those of you that know me, note the time of 12:41PM)! We detoured at the exit to Lake Mary where James and Tanesha caught a glimpse of the Metric Office and we proceeded to Keller's BBQ for some brisket as I watched James triple up on carbs.

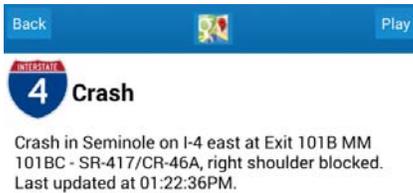


We gathered ourselves together and headed home. Three miles later we came across the last of the clean up with barely a tap of the brakes.



Following lunch, a quick check of the FL511 APP revealed that all was well in the area and the crash had moved off to the shoulder.

This was a perfect scenario of why we do what we do. Saving people time and money (as well as answering my hunger pangs). We witnessed information dissemination (511 and DMS), CCTV verification and tracking and event response coordination. It was a thing of beauty. Thank you, District 5 TMC!



Remember,

“Know Before You Go! Use 511”.

Ryan Crist
TMC Manager



www.FL511.com



SPOTLIGHT ON..ASHLEY POOLE

Talk about your upbringing – where were you born / raised?

A true Floridian! I was raised in the small, north Florida town of Live Oak surrounded by my immediate family and most of my extended family from birth until I graduated from Suwannee High School. I then moved to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida for my bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. While finishing my senior year at UF, I found an opportunity to work as a contract employee at FDOT's Materials Research Park in the corrosion office as a lab technician. There, I learned a good deal about FDOT and began hearing about the Professional Engineering Trainee program, and decided a PE Trainee would be the perfect position for me. When a position came available, I applied and became a PE Trainee for District 2 of FDOT.

Job description - your current role in Transportation and/or Emergency Response.

The PE Trainee program is set up for students who recently graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering. It is a four year program because a Civil Engineer needs four years of experience working with Professional Engineers before they can sit for the Professional Engineering exam. As a PE Trainee for FDOT, I get to spend the first 18 months of the program rotating through all the offices of District 2. I spend weeks in each area including planning, design, construction, maintenance, and all the areas in-between. Pretty much every day is spent with a different employee and it feels like I get to learn a new job each day. The program is designed so that engineers become familiar with all aspects of FDOT. We get to see what all the offices do and how they all work together so once we become Professional Engineers we can help move projects through each of the offices more efficiently. Another large benefit of the

program is networking. We learn what types of projects each office handles and what each person does in that office. After 18 months of rotation, a PE Trainee goes to a specialty phase to finish out their four years of experience before taking the PE exam.

How long have you been at your current job?

I have been a PE Trainee for a little over a year now, and I love it! I only have two phases left on my rotation schedule before going to a specialty phase. In only a year, I have learned so much about how each department works and I have made so many networking connections. At first it was a little overwhelming. Meeting with a new person each day felt like I was constantly being interviewed and learning a whole new set of terminology, skills, and assignments every day was so much to remember. After a few weeks, I started realizing how much I was gaining, not from remembering specific step by step instructions of tasks, but more of how things generally work and who does them. I also began focusing on building relationships with the employees and remembering specific characteristics and skills from each person. Soon, I realized how valuable this hidden knowledge of FDOT was when the tables began to turn a little. I started sharing with the employees that I shadowed each day parts of FDOT that they didn't know and the training began flowing in both directions.

Do you have any funny stories relating to your career? Such as a foot-in-mouth moment or a bad day at the office story?

As a trainee, part of our rotation through all the offices includes rotating through offices in other cities in our district as well. One day, another trainee and I were attending access management training in the Jacksonville office; however we first reported to the Gainesville



SPOTLIGHT ON.. **ASHLEY POOLE continued**

office and then drove a state car to Jacksonville. The Gainesville yard is gated and an employee warned us that the card key reader to automatically open the gate was recently struck by lightning and was malfunctioning. Someone would be manually locking it once everyone left the yard at 5:30 pm. We knew we would be cutting it close if we stayed until the very end of the training, but we tried it anyway. Traveling back to Gainesville, we started to get worried that we wouldn't make it back to the yard in time and started praying that someone would still be there. We drove up to the entrance and saw one vehicle about to pull out of the driveway with a closed and locked gate behind him. We quickly stopped and flagged him down to get him to open the gate for us. We explained that we were dropping off the state car, picking up our personal vehicles, and then we would be right back out. We felt bad asking him to wait on us, so we offered to lock the gate behind us when we left. He agreed and we had a huge sigh of relief that we made it back in time. We drove to the back parking lot to return the state car and walked to our personal vehicles in a side lot. We drove our personal vehicles back to the front gate to find it closed and the man was nowhere in sight. I kind of laughed a little thinking how funny it would be to be trapped inside, but said to myself "surely he only closed the gate but left the lock open". I got out of my car with intentions of finding an unclosed lock and thinking I could roll open the gate. Much to my surprise, the lock was closed! We were actually locked inside the DOT yard! All this time of worrying and praying that the gate would be open when we got there, we had never thought about getting into the yard and not being able to get out! A worst case scenario ran through my head of sleeping in my car in the DOT parking lot and waiting for someone to get there at 6:30 the next morning. We laughed it off a little and

began sharing our ideas of how to get out including: hoping someone was still in one of the buildings working late, hoping to find a gate key lying around at one of the desks, hopping over the gate and calling a friend to pick us up and drive us to our homes, finding a phone number of someone who had a key and could drive back to work to let us out. We began driving back up to the buildings and discovered that the side gate that connects the maintenance yard to the materials office was still open, and the materials office had an exit to the street that was still operating by the card key lock. That gate's card key was still working and didn't close until 6:30. We weren't trapped any longer!

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

"Do something every day that scares you" – Eleanor Roosevelt

Tell us a little about your family.

Most of my family lives in Live Oak and I'm fortunate that my schedule works out where I can see them fairly often. We are a pretty close family; we are always finding reasons to visit one another or make weekend plans together. My family is also very large: one great grandmother who is still living, 3 living grandparents, several aunts and uncles, and way too many cousins to count. My parents live in Live Oak as well. My father is a conductor for Amtrak and my mother teaches business computer classes for high school and adult students at the technical center. I have one sister, a brother-in-law, and a niece. My niece is pretty special to me, especially since we share the same birthday.

Do you have any hobbies?

Plenty! But if I narrow them down to my top three, they would be traveling, playing the piano, and dancing.



SPOTLIGHT ON..
ASHLEY POOLE continued

The past couple summers I have been able to travel to Peru on mission trips with a group from my church! It is a rough trip driving two days up high into the Andes Mountains, but completely worth the effort to get there. The views are spectacular! I led a group that was able to give presentations in the schools on morals and values. My team was very well received, and we have been asked to return next year. In the evenings, I led a Bible study for teenage girls while other team members led Bible studies for other age groups. On my first trip to Peru, we had opportunities to visit some of the surrounding villages around the town where we were staying. We had to hike into two of the villages because they didn't even have roads for us to drive on. In the second village we hiked to, I met a Peruvian woman who was 83 years old and she said that we were the first "white people" that she had ever seen in her village. It is so exciting to bring Bibles into these areas, share Bible stories with them, help them with spiritual matters, encourage their faith, and see their hearts and priorities changing right before our eyes.

I've played the piano since I could reach the keys and I love it! For my sixteenth birthday, when most teens ask for a car, I had the choice of a car or grand piano and went for the piano (knowing I would get the old family car if I took the piano).

I began taking dance lessons when I started kindergarten, and have continued ever since. Not only is it my favorite form of exercise, I get to share my talent with thousands each year. This is my fifth year dancing in the Gainesville Christmas Festival. The Gainesville Christmas Festival is a huge Christmas show: with live animals, flying angels, horse drawn carriage, indoor snow, singing, dancing, and acting all

seen in nine performances over the first two weekends in December. You can find out more at www.gainesvillechristmasfestival.com .

Favorite vacation spot?

My family has a small plot of land on Dekle Beach on the Gulf of Mexico. It is in the middle of nowhere, quiet, peaceful, right on the water, and has the best sunsets on the planet. It is by far my most favorite vacation spot.



From a Dawg to a Gator?



ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING – NOVEMBER 19TH
ALACHUA-BRADFORD TEAM TRAFFIC INCIDENT – DECEMBER 11TH
(Special Fire Department Fire Vehicle Presentation)



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