

# TIM NEWSLETTER

ALACHUA / BRADFORD COUNTY, FL

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**First Quarter 2014**



# TEAM UPDATE

**DONNA R. DANSON – FDOT DISTRICT 2 ITS OPERATIONS PROJECT MANAGER**

As we begin 2014, I hope everyone had a great holiday season and received many blessings. I like the beginning of things, especially a new year.

This is a time for us to renew our strengths as we look back on our past accomplishments. Our Alachua-Bradford Traffic Incident Management Team grew in many ways last year. We added valuable new members, increased training, developed procedures, learned from difficult situations and incidents, had presentations and visited several member agencies all while increasing our friendships and teamwork!

As we reflect on the past year, we can all realize how blessed we are to belong to such a positive team. Of course the main thing we need to remember is it takes all of us working together to accomplish the missions and goals we have set. That being said, we need to continue on our path and continue to grow, learn and provide even greater incident management for the safety of our motorists and incident responders. Your participation to the team is needed and appreciated.

I would like to remind everyone to set up the Federal Highway Strategic Highway Research Program (FHWA SHRP) Incident Responder training sessions for your agency by contacting Craig Carnes at [ccarnes@metriceng.com](mailto:ccarnes@metriceng.com). By the end of this year, we should have all responders trained.

**Let's continue to move forward and make 2014 even greater than our passed years.**

## **NEXT ALACHUA / BRADFORD TIM TEAM MEETINGS:**

**FDOT GAINESVILLE OPERATIONS OFFICE – 5301 N.E. 39<sup>TH</sup> AVE – GAINESVILLE**

**APRIL 9, 2014**

**JUNE 11, 2014**

**AUGUST 13, 2014**

**OCTOBER 8, 2014**

**DECEMBER 10, 2014**



### **MISSION:**

*The Florida Department of Transportation District Two's Traffic Incident Management Teams through partnering efforts strive to continuously reduce incident scene clearance times to deter congestion and improve safety. The Teams' objective is to exceed the Open Roads Policy thus ensuring mobility, economic prosperity, and quality of life.*

### **VISION:**

*Through cooperation, communication and training the Teams intend to reduce incident scene clearance times by 10 percent each year through 2015.*

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

ED WARD – FDOT DISTRICT 2 EMERGENCY COORDINATION OFFICER

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year. We definitely have a lot to be thankful for, especially in the area of hurricanes. The 2013 hurricane season officially ended November 30, but that doesn't mean we can't or won't have a tropical storm or hurricane before the 2014 season begins. It just means it is the end of the "official" season when it is most likely for tropical cyclones to form.

At the beginning of the 2013 hurricane season, Dr. William Gray predicted there would be 18 named storms, 9 hurricanes and 4 major hurricanes. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicted there would be 13 to 20 named storms, seven to 11 hurricanes and three to six major hurricanes. The only prediction either source was close to was the number of named storms. The season ended with 13 named storms. That number was barely within NOAA's prediction range and well under Dr. Gray's. However, being under prediction is a good thing which we can be thankful for!

There were only two hurricanes this year, Humberto and Ingrid. That is the fewest number since 1982. Humberto became a hurricane September 11 at 5 a.m. Humberto was the second latest forming hurricane on record for the Atlantic basin. The latest forming hurricane was Gustav in 2002 which became a hurricane also September 11 at 11 a.m., just six hours later than Humberto. Neither hurricane made major category strength which is category three or higher. The only storm to make landfall in the United States was the first storm of the season, Tropical Storm Andrea. Andrea made landfall near Steinhatchee June 6 with winds reaching 65 mph.

We can thank the unpredictable atmospheric patterns of extremely dry and sinking air combined with strong vertical wind shear in the Atlantic basin for our exceptionally low storm activity this year. Whatever the reasons are for the low storm activity, I'll gladly accept them and hope they continue in the future.

So, what can we now expect through the winter months? There seems to be just as much uncertainty about this as there is with the predicting of hurricanes. Most of the uncertainty is due to the fact that the current El Nino Southern Oscillation (ESNO) across the eastern Pacific is in a neutral position and is expected to remain neutral through the winter months. So, what does that mean? It means we are neither in an El Nino condition nor a La Nina condition. By being neutral, it means that there will be little to no affect by either system on our weather.

The Climate Prediction Center is giving equal chance for us having above, below or near normal temperatures this winter. They are giving us "an enhanced chance for below normal rainfall" this winter. No matter whether we end up having a cold, warm or moderate winter, it sounds like it may be dryer than normal. As good as the forecasters and the Climate Prediction Center are at predicting/forecasting the weather and with all advanced technology, there remains too many unknowns that simply cannot be predicted. We saw record low temperatures January 7 and 8 with wind chills in the single digits.

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# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

ED WARD – FDOT DISTRICT 2 EMERGENCY COORDINATION OFFICER

FDOT District Two experienced no road or bridge closures due to Leon. We did experience some rain and very cold temperatures. Crews from the Bridge Maintenance Department staged equipment at all of the movable bridges and bridges with metal grating Wednesday night, January 29, just in case. The bridge tenders on the movable bridges raised and lowered the bridges every two hours as a preventive measure to keep the mechanical parts from freezing shut. They also drove heavy trucks across the metal deck bridges to break up any ice that may have begun to form.

Fortunately, the temperature did not get below freezing in the areas where the greatest concern was. Crews from the FDOT Lake City Operations Maintenance and Perry Maintenance remained at their yards all night in case they were needed to respond to law enforcement closing a road or bridge. Our asset maintenance contractors were also put on alert and remained available throughout Wednesday night. Transfield Services, contractor for Interstate 10 for the Perry area, was able to thwart off a few bridges from freezing in Madison County by applying sand to the bridge decks as soon as ice began to form. Great job Transfield and thank you!

The response to winter storm Leon was truly a huge team effort. With the help of every FDOT District Two Maintenance Unit, Bridge Department and our contractors, we were able to keep the motoring public in our district safe. I still believe we are blessed to live in Florida – even when attacked by a winter storm! I guess we'll just have to wait and see what the rest of this winter brings.

**Until next time, stay safe.**





# TMC UPDATE

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CENTER ACTIVITIES

*The Traffic Management Center (TMC) is a jointly funded project by: City of Gainesville; Alachua County; University of Florida and the Florida Department of Transportation. It is operated by the City of Gainesville.*

On October 18, a vehicle crash near I-75 on Newberry Road caused a temporary constriction of all eastbound traffic down to one travel lane. This caused significant congestion along Newberry Road. Due to the incidents proximity to the interstate, the northbound off ramp queue nearly overflowed. Actions were taken by TMC operators to quickly and safely assist traffic through the area.

Gainesville TMC assisted with traffic control when a crash occurred in the intersection of Northwest 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue (State Road 222) at 34<sup>th</sup> Street (State Road 121) November 15. The incident was in the intersection and caused all westbound and southbound lanes to be detoured. Congestion spread from the intersection and caused back ups into the surrounding areas. Adjustments were made in the traffic flow to help facilitate the additional demand caused by the detour.

A severe traffic crash which required a lengthy investigation November 11 forced the oversaturated intersection of Southwest 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Southwest 62<sup>nd</sup> Boulevard to be closed during peak hour traffic. The intersection is heavily used and forced drivers to detour through the already busy West 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Gainesville TMC assisted in arterial management during the incident by implementing special timing to give some relief to the rush hour traffic.

### Questions?

Traffic Management Center

(352) 393-7960

Monday through Friday

Hours of Operation: 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Website: [www.gac-smartraffic.com](http://www.gac-smartraffic.com)

Follow us on Twitter: @gacsmartraffic

Like us on Facebook: Gainesville / Alachua County Smartraffic



# CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

MONICA REIFEISS – ATKINS PUBLIC INFORMATION

A system designed to alert motorists of hazardous travel conditions is being installed on Interstate 75 and U.S. 441 through Paynes Prairie in Alachua County. Construction on the \$2.1 million project begins in February and is expected to take about a year to complete.

In 2012, an unfortunate crash occurred along a stretch of I-75 within Paynes Prairie where a mixture of fog and smoke covered the area in a matter of minutes, leading to almost zero visibility within the prairie. Due to the geographical make-up and location, the 22,000 acre prairie is often encased in fog/smoke which can travel to nearby roadways and impair drivers. The Florida State Legislature funded the installation of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) equipment along this area of I-75 and U.S. 441. The main goal of this project is to provide advanced warning to motorists when traffic congestion or low visibility is present on I-75 and U.S. 441 and alerting motorists to use caution or to use an alternate route.

This ITS project consists of dynamic message signs, closed-circuit television cameras, vehicle detection devices, visibility sensors and thermal cameras. This equipment is designed to provide a system that alerts motorists of deteriorating driving conditions or special circumstances in the area.

#### **The following is being installed on I-75 between the Marion County line and Archer Road (SR 24):**

- Three dynamic message signs, two approaching the Prairie along the northbound lanes and one along the southbound lanes
- A total of 12 closed-circuit television cameras approximately every mile that will allow Traffic Management Center (TMC) staff to monitor the weather conditions on the Prairie and relay alerts to the message boards
- Eight visibility sensors throughout the Prairie to measure the visibility, provide appropriate messages and alert officials if visibility drops below a threshold, initially set at one mile
- A total of 18 vehicle detectors approximately each mile up to the Prairie and then each half mile through the Prairie to monitor the traffic flow including speed and volume
- One thermal camera in the center of the Prairie which will allow TMC staff to monitor conditions during heavy fog

#### **The following is being installed on US 441 between Southwest 63<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and Southwest 109<sup>th</sup> Place:**

- Two dynamic message signs, one at each end of the Prairie
- Three closed-circuit television cameras along the project
- Four visibility sensors to cover the Prairie
- Three vehicle detectors along the project
- One thermal camera in the center of the Prairie

Fiber optic cables and wireless technology is being installed along each roadway throughout the project to efficiently receive and transmit the data collected from the detection equipment. Information is shared with highway and safety officials, including the Traffic Management Center (TMC) located in Gainesville.

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# CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

MONICA REIFEISS – ATKINS PUBLIC INFORMATION

## Other news in Alachua County:

FDOT began a resurfacing project on U.S. 441 in Alachua and Gainesville March 18.

Work on this FDOT project includes removing and replacing up to three inches of asphalt on 11 miles of U.S. 441 between Northwest Sixth Street in Gainesville and the railroad overpass/Rachael Boulevard (County Road 2054) overpass just south of Alachua.

Other construction activities include widening the roadway at various locations so bicycle lanes can be marked on the shoulder, widening the existing sidewalk from Northwest Sixth Street to approximately a tenth of a mile south to provide a ten foot bike path, replacing traffic signal sensors at Northwest 53rd Avenue, Northwest 34th Street and Northwest 43rd Street and modifying drainage.

FDOT hired Preferred Materials, Inc. of Jacksonville to complete the work for \$8.8 million. The work is expected to take about nine months to complete, depending on weather conditions and other unexpected circumstances.



# FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL UPDATE

LT. JEFF FROST – FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL (850-617-2301)

## WE PROTECT YOUR FAMILY, HELP US PROTECT OURS

*FHP focuses on the Move Over law during the month of January*

A routine traffic stop can be anything but routine for emergency responders. Since 1999, more than 200 law enforcement officers in the United States have died and thousands injured in a crash as a result of being on the side of the road doing their job and being hit by an oncoming vehicle. During the month of January, Florida Highway Patrol troopers increased their focus on making drivers aware of the state's Move Over law. The law protects law enforcement officers, emergency workers and tow truck drivers who are stopped along Florida roadways doing their jobs.

"Florida's Move Over law was enacted in 2002 to safeguard Florida's emergency responders who are out on the roadways every day working to protect you and your families," said Col. David Brierton, director of the Florida Highway Patrol. "Abide by the Move Over law and help us protect our emergency personnel and their families."

## UNDERSTANDING MOVE OVER:

Drivers must move over when a patrol car, emergency vehicle and/or tow truck is stopped on the side of a road with lights flashing. If they cannot move over safely, drivers should slow down to a speed of 20 mph below the posted speed limit. **Always approach the emergency vehicle with caution.**

Violating Move Over laws puts motorists and emergency responders at risk. In Florida, it can also result in a fine and points on your driver license record. Read more about Florida's Mover Over law at <http://www.flhsmv.gov/SafetyTips/MoveOverTips.htm>.

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol.

## To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered:

- Visit [www.flhsmv.gov](http://www.flhsmv.gov)
- Add us on Instagram: **FLHSMV**
- Follow us on Twitter: **@FLHSMV**
- Find us on Facebook!



# TEAM MEMBER UPDATE: PETER VEGA

PETER VEGA, PE – DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER – TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ITS – JACKSONVILLE URBAN OFFICE

I have been the District Two Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) engineer for the past 10 and a half years. I am responsible for any traffic management technologies placed on the district's roadway system. This includes closed-circuit TV cameras, dynamic message signs, vehicle detectors, road weather information systems, vehicle tracking systems and traffic signal controller cabinets.

Part of my job is to work with our offices in planning, project development and environmental, work program, design, construction and maintenance. Each addresses a certain aspect of ITS deployments from concept to end of life. My greatest task is to incorporate the needs of the Traffic Incident Team (TIM) partners into these projects to insure that beneficial features are received by everyone. I must use a system engineering approach with every project we create to address value added features and cost saving measures that fit into the region's ITS architecture developed several years ago.

I graduated from college in 1990 and began my engineering career with DOW Chemical. It was a fantastic job that paid extremely well, but demanded every minute of my time. After working 80 hours per week for more than two years, I decided that "things had to change." After college I'd set the bar high for my future with goals of acquiring a master's degree and professional engineer's license. I soon realized this would not be accomplished during my tenure at DOW, so I sought greener pastures in Jacksonville.

I landed my first "gig" at the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Jacksonville maintenance office as an area engineer in October 1993. After three years, I felt the need to extend my value at FDOT and got a position with the FDOT St. Augustine maintenance office as their MMS Engineer. During this time, I accomplished my goals by earning an MBA from the University of North Florida and passing my professional engineer's exam.

After three years in St. Augustine, my feet got itchy for more experience so I took a job with FDOT's Central Office as the State Sign and Structures Engineer. I had offices in Lake City and Oviedo, overseeing a staff of approximately 30 people who manufactured roadway signs and structures. This was a very exciting time for me because I had the opportunity to see just how the department worked from a statewide perspective. I met a ton of very intelligent and dedicated department staff who took the time to share their expertise.

Of course, after three years I felt the moss growing so I began to seek my next adventure. When I received the opportunity to be the District Two ITS Engineer, the first question from my supervisor was "so, are you going to be here for the next three years?" After shaking off a nervous laugh, I made him a promise that I will guarantee him five if he treats me well. I guess in a way things have been hunky-dory because it's now past year 10 and I haven't lost my stride. My belief is that ITS is the future of transportation so each new and innovative technology/application I see keeps me from going anywhere else.

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# TEAM MEMBER UPDATE: PETER VEGA

PETER VEGA, PE – DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER – TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ITS – JACKSONVILLE URBAN OFFICE

Probably the funniest job-related story I could tell was about my first few months with FDOT. I am a “hands-on” type of manager who does not expect my staff to do anything I wouldn’t do. Within four months of starting my tenure as the area engineer, I decided to take one day a week to work on the roadway system with a field crew. I did thermoplastic applications one week, mowing the next, a little ditch digging here and there but the “coup de gras” in humor was the day I went to help the shoulder crew.

I remember it like yesterday. Load the truck bed with hay, set up your maintenance of traffic (MOT), align the dump trucks and get the engines warmed up. Then it rained and we had to readjust our game plan. We were working along U.S. 301 north of Baldwin and saw that the roadway had water puddles all over due to the high shoulders. The crew foreman told me we had to dig “weep-holes” in the area to get the water to run off the road. He handed me a shovel and we got to work.

As I was digging, one of our motherly type employees watched me like a hawk and kept giving me advice every waking moment. As huge semis whizzed by, she kept grabbing me and pulling me away from the road. I finally got the nerve to ask “what the heck are you doing?” She told me that if I wasn’t careful and turned my back to these truckers, they would try to hit the deepest puddle to get me wet. I responded with “okay”, but thought “they can’t be that good.”

About 15 minutes later, she went to get some water and left me unattended in my naïve ways. I was chugging along, knocking out one weep-hole every few minutes and thought “dang I’m getting good at this job.” With unwarranted confidence, I determined that if I pushed the dirt down the shoulder I’d be more productive so I turned my back to the road and forgot all about the semis. Yep, within a matter of minutes, I was soaked from top to bottom and had a chance to turn so that I could see the trucker laughing in his mirror as he honked his horn a few times. Lesson learned and I’ve never disregarded any advice given to me by someone with more experience.

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# TEAM MEMBER UPDATE: PETER VEGA

PETER VEGA, PE – DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER – TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ITS – JACKSONVILLE URBAN OFFICE

The most memorable “aha” moment in my life probably came the day that I decided my career with DOW Chemical was coming to an end. During my time with them, I was very successful and financially well off, but something was missing. The eighty-hour work weeks tended to numb your senses, especially when you worked thirty straight days. I realized that I’d begun to neglect my family, friends and personal well-being during this time. Yeah, I was making nearly \$100,000 per year but was this what life was all about?

One day, I finished a project in the hills of Tennessee and slept until 10 a.m. When I woke up I was in a daze and could not remember where I was, what I was supposed to do, what day of the week we were in and barely remembered my name. I had a panic attack and could remember only one thing....the home office telephone number. I called and spoke to our receptionist who realized I was having a panic attack. While on the phone with her I learned that this was nothing new and several of the field engineers had similar experiences in the past.

Once I had a chance to regroup, I met with my boss upon returning to Jacksonville. I asked for a week vacation to catch my breath and to check up on my ailing mom. His response was “I’ll give you a couple of days and then I need you in Charlotte.” When I tried to justify needing more time he responded with, “Hey, that’s why you get paid the big bucks.” When I returned to my apartment that I hadn’t seen in over a month the “aha” moment came. I never returned back to work at DOW after that day and I still never regret the decision. Lesson learned was “money isn’t everything.”

I can honestly say that I’ve never had a bad job in my entire life. Each was a stepping stone to learning something new and advancing my career aspirations. From the bag boy at Winn Dixie to the warehouse employee at Landmark Bank, everything has been a learning experience that’s led me to today. As for the best job, I am in it hence the reason I’ve been here for over 10 years.

I do not like to brag about my accomplishments at work and anyone that’s come to my office to visit will bear witness when they see the stack of awards and plaques I have stacked in the corner of my book shelf. I guess the most special accomplishment was the year I received the Superior Achievement Award for District Two. It was totally unexpected and truly appreciated, but my response was typical of everything I do. I felt that I was just doing my job and allowing me to do so (and do it well) was a reward in itself.

I was born in New York City and lived there until I was 10. It was the greatest learning experience a kid could ever receive. I learned about culture, arts, architecture and communication during my time in the “Big Apple”. Due to my mischievous and independent ways, my mom and dad decided to move to St. Petersburg in the winter of 1975. It was the most horrific and beneficial move in my childhood years, because I had traded in my exposure to all the experiences in New York for year-long great weather and sports. In a sense, it was the best move my parents did with me and is the reason I see things differently from others to this day.

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# TEAM MEMBER UPDATE: PETER VEGA

**PETER VEGA, PE – DISTRICT 2 ITS ENGINEER – TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ITS – JACKSONVILLE URBAN OFFICE**

I am married with no kids. We have two cats (Yoshi and Tucker), a one-legged Cockatiel (Uno) and a rabbit (Buffy) that we consider our kids. I won't go into the story of how we acquired each, but if you ever read the North Florida TIM team monthly newsletters you'll know the story.

I am pretty simple as far as hobbies. First and foremost is PEOPLE WATCHING! I enjoy nothing better than just going to the mall, grabbing a seat at the hub of activity and watching all the weird things people do/say/wear as they walk by me. My other passion is golf because I suck at it. I always tell my friends if I was ever good at golf I'd probably hate it because it would become boring to me. Finally, I try to incorporate physical fitness into my daily life because that's what will keep me going strong into my 80's.

My favorite vacation spot is "warmth." Anywhere that has temperatures in the 80's is fine with me. That means the Caribbean, Mexico, South America or the southeast United States in the spring.

The best advice I received was from someone who told me, "If you don't speak up, your voice will be never heard." It amazes me how many people complain and provide opinions, but never offer up a word of advice or solutions on how to address an issue. I can attribute this piece of advice to a fifth grade teacher who repeatedly told our class to share our thoughts no matter how dumb they may seem.

My most inspiring quote was from my high school baseball coach who repeatedly told us, "Don't be intimidated, they put on their pants one leg at a time just like you do." At the time, it didn't seem to make sense because our team sucked that year. As I grew older I realized we are all human. No matter what possessions you own, what house you live in or what status in society you hold, no one is better than their common man. It could all go away in an instant, so treat others the way you would like to be treated.

