

# FDOT DISTRICT TWO

Intelligent Transportation Systems Newsletter –  
September 2009  
Issue 25



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## **ITS Announcements**

**Alachua TIM Meeting**

**October 14th**

*Please contact the ITS Office at (904) 360-5465 if you would like to participate in the meetings.*

## Notes from the District 2 ITS Engineer

The month of September has become one of the most unique in my seven plus years with the ITS office. This has definitely been a month of preparation for the future as we worked with the new North Florida TPO projects, JTA's application for a TIGER grant, new candidate projects for the Work Program office and the overall expectations for District Two as leadership changes occur. But before I begin there should be some "kudos" to those of you that picked up on photograph of the parakeet (and not cockatiel) in last month's newsletter. During my impatience in getting the article "out to print" I negligently cut and pasted the wrong picture on my computer. In a sense, it was gratifying to know that so many readers picked up on this error and made me aware that I need to be a little more diligent in reviewing my material prior to publication.

I will address the North Florida TPO projects and JTA application a little later, but first I want to share some news related to District Two. Earlier this month, District Secretary Charles Baldwin announced that he has tendered his letter of resignation to the State Secretary effective September 17th. This occurred in conjunction with the upcoming retirement of the District Two Traffic Operations Engineer, Mr. Jim Scott. The departure of both these gentlemen may have a huge impact on our office since over the past several years they provided significant contributions to the overall growth of the ITS program. These two individuals

were key components in getting our job done and the hope is that the transition will be a smooth one.

I am saddened by the departure of Secretary Baldwin because I felt he always tried to bring the best out of his staff in finding solutions by looking outside of the box. He was the type of leader that didn't allow you to take the easy way out and expected employees to look at every possible alternative before coming to him with an answer. I feel this approach made all of us better workers and provided the autonomy that made District personnel strive to be better. I recall one meeting where Donna and I met with Secretary Baldwin to discuss the Road Ranger program. I forewarned her to "expect the unexpected" and to be ready for some tough questions. As anticipated, he threw a gauntlet of questions at us but fortunately we were ready. After the meeting I noticed that Donna had a little kick in her step and realized he had wryly posed a challenge to her while providing the much needed autonomy she desired. I felt that she left that meeting with a new lease on life for the Road Ranger program, thereby taking it to the next level of performance.

I am also saddened by the departure of Mr. Jim Scott since he was one of the main reasons I decided to take the ITS position in District Two. He is retiring on September 30<sup>th</sup> after being the District's Traffic Operations Engineer for twenty-two years. In a sense he has shaped the ITS program into what it

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**Notes from the ITS Engineer continued**

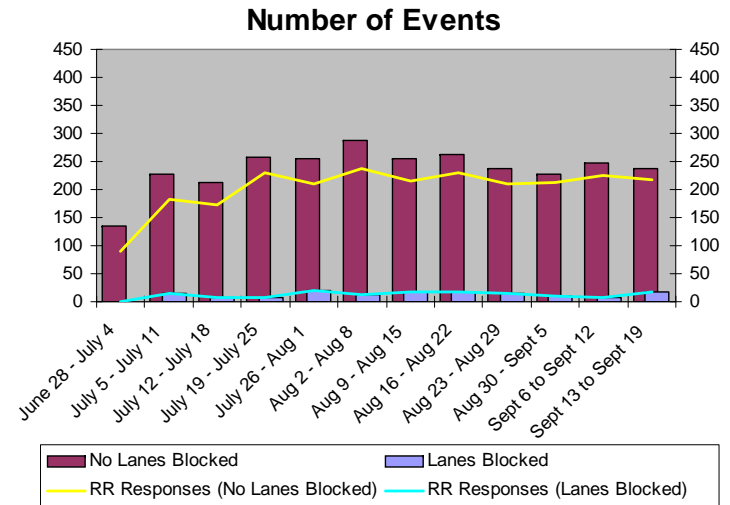
is today and he realized the significance of our effort in managing the flow of traffic on Interstate roadways. I credit Jim for making me a better leader because he too expected us to look at every possible alternative before providing a recommended solution. He was the “yin” to my “yang” when considering these alternatives and often shed some light that made me take a look at the possible solutions from another perspective. I realized that on a number of occasions I must have frustrated him but in the end I hope he understood that we were both looking out for the best interest of District Two.

So, where does the District’s ITS program go from here? Although their loss is huge I am confident that the ITS program will continue with its current efforts in the anticipation that more challenges will be thrown our way in the future. Stability is the key and we still have Jim’s assistant, Mr. Chris Ledew, leading the charge. Likewise, the District’s Director of Operations, Mr. Nick Tsengas, has realized the benefits that ITS can bring to the District and has been an avid supporter of our efforts. Transition in the Department is nothing new to FDOT personnel and we have gone through several changes in leadership at the District Secretary level over the past 15 years or so. The hope is that we can maintain the momentum gained over the past two years as we continue to nurture the ITS program.

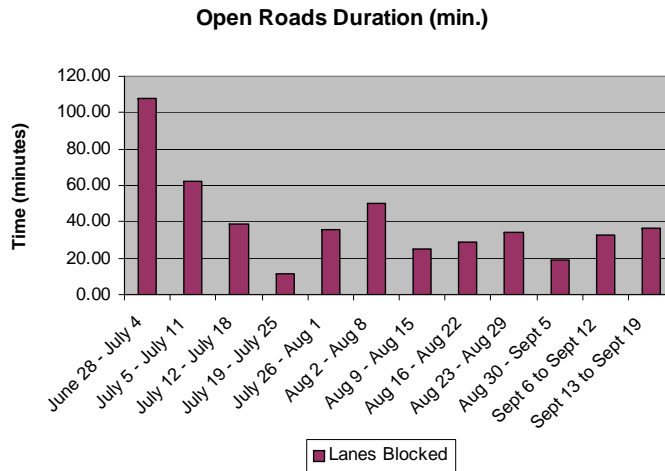
Pete Vega  
District 2 ITS Engineer

**Performance Measures**

The average number of events each week over the last month did not deviate greatly from the overall average for July and August. Notice though, in the two graphs below that the values reported for July and August were more dissimilar than the values reported for the last four weeks. This same trend was seen in the duration times. The fact that the trend lines are becoming more like a flat line than a series of peaks and valleys indicates that the operators and Road Rangers are becoming accustomed to the new arrangement as a team and are in turn perfecting their routine and becoming more precise in their actions.



Performance Measures continued



Still, not all problems have been resolved. There continue to be negative duration times reported on occasion in the Performance Measures report. For example, during the week of August 31 the Open Roads Duration was reported to be -19.32 minutes for the PM Peak. And for events of Level “Other” severity, the Open Roads duration, when reported is always negative. Oddly, an event of severity Level “Other” indicates there was no lane blockage, so an Open Roads Duration is not applicable. The contributing factor to the negative values is most likely an error in the formula used to measure this value.

Based on the Performance Measures Audit report, the Open Roads duration is counted from the time the Road Ranger arrives on scene to the time the roads are cleared. However, often the roads are cleared before the Road Ranger arrives. So using Road Rangers as a basis for this value gives inconclusive data.

Additionally, the effects of the construction on I-95 at the JTB interchange are being analyzed. It has been noted that there was an average of 0.35 crashes per day before construction began. Then about 0.62 crashes per day from August 4, when construction began to August 18 when a new DMS message was displayed. The crash rate continued to increase over the next couple of weeks to an average of 0.77 crashes per day. Fortunately though, it seems drivers are adjusting to the new traffic pattern as there were only 3 crashes reported from August 27 to September 19, which is an average of 0.13 crashes per day. Additionally, Glenn English with FDOT Traffic Operations implemented the retiming of the traffic signals at the end of the southbound exit ramp at the intersection with JTB. This likely played a role in the decrease of the crash rate. Another factor that contributed to the decrease in crashes was that the construction company expedited the widening of the rate to allow the passage of a larger traffic volume.

Jill Dawson  
Metric Engineering

Traffic Incident Management

**FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT  
MANAGEMENT TEAM:**

The District 2 First Coast Traffic Incident Management Team held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at the FDOT Urban Office Training Center at 10:00 am. FDOT Mike Goldman announced the upcoming opening SR 23, Brannan Field/Chafee exit off I-10 and reminded team members this will assist with continued work being done in this area. Team members actively participated in the debriefing of incidents occurring since our last meeting in July.

The Team was commended for their “Teamwork approach” in the handling of the problem with increased number of incidents occurring on I-95 due to construction being done on J. Turner Butler Boulevard. Once the increase was noticed, all agencies quickly met and took corrective actions to solve the situation. Since several requests for training in the area of hazardous materials were given, it was decided Donna will get with Kenton Brown and Terry Carr to develop training for our January 2010 meeting. After a presentation by Mr. John Long on the Florida Gas Transmission Company the meeting was adjourned. The following agencies were present:

- First Coast Road Rangers
- City of Jacksonville - Environmental
- Metric Engineering

- Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office
- Transfield
- St. Johns County
- Jorgensen Contracting
- PBS&J
- Florida Highway Patrol
- Nassau County Sheriff’s Office
- Johns Towing Company
- Southern Wrecker Service
- Florida Gas Transmission Co.
- HNTB Consultants
- St John’s County Sheriff’s Office
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Dept of Environmental Protection
- FDOT Central Office
- FDOT Emergency Operations
- FDOT ITS
- FDOT Motor Carrier Compliance
- FDOT Maintenance
- FDOT Traffic Operations
- FDOT Public Information Office

**ALACHUA TRAFFIC INCIDENT  
MANAGEMENT TEAM:**

The next Alachua Traffic Incident Management Team meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14, 2009. Mr. John Long with Florida Gas Transmission Company will be sharing his presentation on the gas line running throughout Florida. The meeting will be held at the FDOT Gainesville Maintenance Office, N. E. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 10:00 AM.

### Road Ranger Update

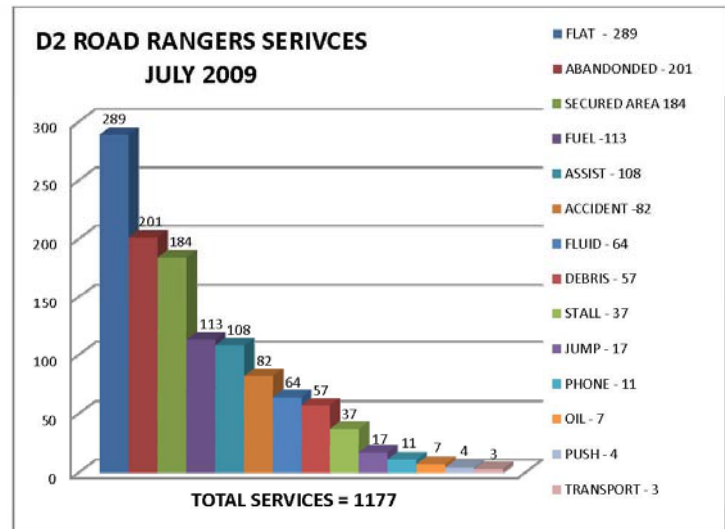
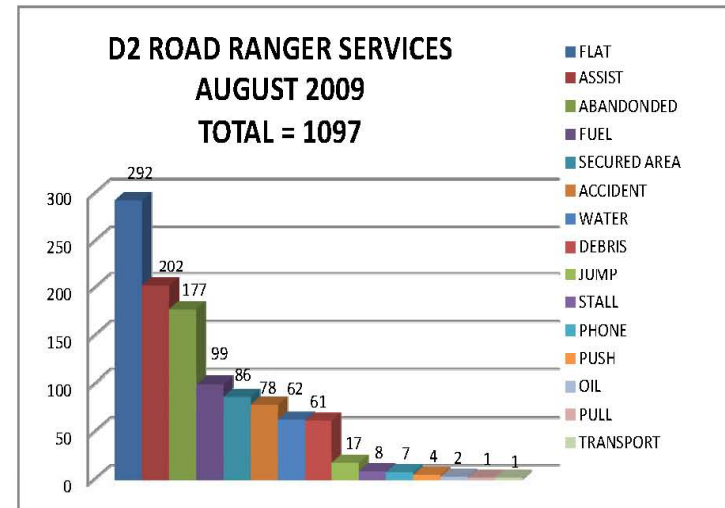
Proving their value in our challenge with incident management, our Road Ranger Service Patrol Operators assisted one thousand ninety-seven (1097) stranded motorists - changing two hundred ninety-two (292) flat tires in the month of August 2009. The assistance provided to FHP and JSO with one hundred seventy-seven (177) abandoned vehicles and securing the incident area for seventy-eight (78) crashes greatly improved the safety of all first responders.

The Department is aware of the appreciation for the services provided by the numerous letters received from motorists. We are still optimistic in the goal of increasing our current Road Ranger Service Patrol in the near future.

### RISC Update

Since August 17, 2009, we have not had an incident requiring the services of our RISC (Rapid Incident Scene Clearance) contractors in Duval, Nassau, St. Johns and Baker Counties. University Towing and Transport in Gainesville will soon be approved to assist on I-75 in Alachua and Columbia Counties and on I-10 in Baker, Columbia and Suwannee Counties. We look forward to having the added coverage.

Donna Danson  
District 2 ITS Project Manager



## Maintenance

Nothing major has occurred in September with the ITS maintenance efforts. It seems that the staff is spending a large amount of time troubleshooting and fixing the vehicle detectors along I-95. Fortunately, the travel times are still very accurate, however we rely on these devices for incident detection as well and there are too many in need of attention at this point in time. We have decided to work with the Traffic Engineering Research Lab to determine if this is a deficiency in the product or if improvements in the field installation need to be made.

We have a majority of the equipment up throughout the system and things should slow down much more now that the storm season is nearly ending. It seemed that electrical surge damage was more frequent this summer so we have decided to take a closer look at the grounding to see if there is a problem we can immediately fix. This fits in nicely with our upcoming plans to analyze equipment repair and electrical utility use history to get a grasp of the current deployment. This will be beneficial as we begin the final stretch of deployments in the Jacksonville area for the District Two Program.

The month of October appears to be quite busy as we will also begin to reconfigure the hubs with multiple switches to handle the pending communication systems for traffic signals in Duval

and Clay County. District Five (Deland) was gracious enough to provide a number of network components we currently use when they decided to upgrade their fiber infrastructure in Central Florida. The estimated value of this equipment is a little over \$250,000 and will allow us to improve our communication network for the next several years.

Kevin Jackson  
District 2 ITS Field Specialist



[www.fl511.com](http://www.fl511.com)



## Construction

Things are going steady on the Construction side of things for ITS deployments. Work on the southern end of I-95 in Duval should begin in late October and the contractor has 200 days to complete the project once they begin. The Phase VII project along State Road 9A is finishing up 60% plans and all the major conflicts have been addressed. The only pending issue is the electrical utilities being provided by JEA. Historically, this has been the norm for ITS projects with a goal of getting all the utility information incorporated into the 90% plans.

The selection for the System Manager on the Phase VIII project along I-295 has been completed and Vanus Engineering was the chosen consultant. This firm has a wealth of experience with System Management on ITS projects in the District Seven region (Tampa) and their team is expected to bring a fresh prospective to our deployment when they come on board. Contract negotiations are expected to be completed in October and they should begin work sometime in late November.

The State Road 21 Design/Build project received bids on September 29<sup>th</sup> with the lowest bidder being the team of Miller Electric/Metric Engineering. Their bid was about 9% less than the initial estimate for this project. The technical

team must now review their submittal to determine if they captured all the requirements for the project. If they do not appear to meet these requirements then the team will review the submittal for the next lowest bidder. The project is expected to begin this March with completion by the early part of the summer.

Next in line will be the Philips Highway and US 17 traffic signal projects that will also incorporate ITS devices. These projects will set up the framework for the ITS business plan of continually deploying projects driven by the North Florida TPO Regional ITS Master Plan. The goal is to have a continual learning process as projects are completed that will allow us to drive down costs while providing improved quality in the deployments. Over the next three years it is anticipated that there will be at least three ITS projects handled annually for the North Florida TPO to meet the goals set in the ITS Master Plan.

John Kell  
District 2 ITS Construction Project Manager

## North Florida TPO Update

Last month we introduced several ITS projects that are being funded by the North Florida TPO.

One project that was still in the development stage was the effort being handled by the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA). The federal government asked State and Local agencies to submit applications for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant funds with a due date of September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009. JTA had a multi-modal complex planned west of downtown Jacksonville that included a Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC). The North Florida TPO realized the importance of the RTMC, thus they provided \$5.1 million dollars of their SU funding in support of this effort by JTA.

In the coming months JTA will learn if their application was a success, and if so they will complete the final design for the first phase of this multi-modal complex. The RTMC is part of this phase and will be built on the third floor of the facility. If the application is denied then the North Florida TPO has asked the Department to proceed with its own design and construction of an RTMC using these \$5.1 million in funds, with the possibility of additional funding once the design generates a more detailed estimate. So, it looks like within the next two to three years

there will be some construction activity for an RTMC that will house ITS operations, FHP, City of Jacksonville Traffic Operations, City of Jacksonville Sheriff dispatchers and City of Jacksonville Fire/Rescue dispatchers.

The District Two ITS office feels blessed to have the support of the North Florida TPO as a partner and looks forward to meeting many of the challenges they have thrown our way. In a sense, they have taken the responsibility of being the region's "ITS Champion" to another level by supporting the effort to its fullest capability. In a sense, they are practicing what they preach by providing the necessary funding to meet the goals of the region's ITS Master Plan and continue to amaze us with their determination.



## Operations

Labor Day has come and gone and we are firmly in our 'school traffic' pattern season. Things have been different in spots around town with the new movement from 95 South to I 10 essentially shutting down the old 'Iron Bridge' and causing some extra morning delays until everyone gets used to it. And we all know about the 95 and JTB construction zone that we have been keeping a close eye on. Working with JTA and the DOT's own signal guru Glenn English we have seen definite improvements in the length of the queue for morning and afternoon rush which in turn reduces the number of crashes. JTA also deployed extra VMS signs between the Fuller Warren and JTB and the TMC has tweaked the messages on our Southbound facing DMS to warn commuters.

As many of us also know its FOOTBALL Season. Now I won't tell you what team I root for (that wears Orange and Blue and wins championships) but the TMC has been working with our partners in Gainesville and Tallahassee to make sure we fully utilize the new Next Generation 511 to post floodgate messages in those areas to warn travelers of the impending traffic backups. Of course, we do this as well on game day with our Hometown Jacksonville Jaguars!

Inside the TMC our team has been staying busy as always. For September we recorded over 1500 events in our SUNGUIDE software with more than 150 instances of travel lane blockage and 8 with a

complete lane blockage for a duration. Disabled vehicles are what we deal with the most, over 800 this month, and of course we do that in conjunction with the great Road Ranger staff.

Personnel wise the TMC welcomes Tyler Sowers as our new Sunday Dayshift Operator. Tyler is currently on track to get a degree at UNF and we are happy to have him with us. Also, I want to recognize Jason Evans and David Rolfe who have been Overnight Operators for 4 years now! We appreciate their hard work and dedication.

As always, we are looking forward here in the TMC. Our Network expert Jason Summerfield is hard at work with the City Of Jax. in hopes that we will soon have access to their Network of cameras. This will greatly improve our ability to assist law enforcement with detours.

We encourage you all to try the new 511 system and let us know what you think..You can leave feedback on the system and it comes directly to the TMC staff. And of course you can call us here at the TMC 24/7 with questions or when you notice traffic conditions we need to post. 904-301-3700 x122 is the 24/7 and Mon- Fri 6a to 6p we can also be reached at the Urban Office at 360-5465. The more information the better, so if you see a slowdown, breakdown, construction closure, etc give us a call so we can inform the public.

Derrick Odom  
Senior TMC Supervisor

### Spotlight on...Joyce Davis

Take a trip up to the I-95 Florida Welcome Center, and you'll find that a few things have changed over the years... new facility, landscaping, picnic areas... but with all the changes, one thing has remained the same – Joyce Davis!

Joyce has worked at the Welcome Center for over 40 years! That's right. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, she'll be celebrating her 41<sup>st</sup> year with the company, no doubt making her one of the most recognizable faces among Florida's tourists.

In March of 2004 the Welcome Center Lobby was dedicated to Joyce in recognition of her then 35 years of service. Now a plaque hanging on the wall proudly welcomes visitors to the Joyce Davis Lobby.

It might not come as a surprise, then, that other things in Joyce's life have remained constant. She's been married to her husband Robert (Red) for 52 years. "He was my sports hero in school," Joyce recalls fondly. "I was a cheerleader and cheered him to victory." Joyce and Robert have 2 children, 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

Joyce says that all things are possible if you only believe. And borrowing from advice passed down from her mother, Joyce says, "Thank God everyday. Do your best and smile."

As the Welcome Center Manager, Joyce loves seeing people so excited about visiting Florida. She and her 11 employees try to make every visitor feel as though their trip to the Welcome Center is one of the highlights of their trip.

"This is a very rewarding job. We help thousands and thousands of people with information about Florida. They are usually happy and smiling. You smile back at them and it makes for a wonderful day," she adds.



Joyce Davis, "giver" of true Southern hospitality

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### Spotlight on...Joyce Davis continued

Joyce was born and raised in Jacksonville, in the area now known as Cecil Field. She lived in Jacksonville until she was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and then moved to St. George, Georgia. When she was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade her family moved to Hilliard and she's been there ever since.

But even with such deep roots in the Northeast Florida area, Joyce still has a sense of adventure. "I like to ride with my husband down roads that we have never traveled on before," says Joyce.

I'm personally waiting for Joyce to write a book on the secret to happiness. I don't think I've ever seen her without a smile on her face. Next time you're up in the Yulee area, stop in and say hi to Joyce and the rest of the Welcome Center team.



### Marketing

This month the 511 Marketing Team partnered with a long-time friend (the Jacksonville Equestrian Center), while also adding a couple of new friends. Both the Hunter Jumper Finals and the Southeast Mounted Police Competition were held at the Westside equestrian complex earlier in the month. 511 magnets and brochures were placed in goodie bags and distributed to all the competitors.

As far as new partners go, we've added Greyhound and Amtrak to our list of friends. Passengers and guests can now pick up our 511 brochures on their way into and out of the Jacksonville area terminals.

Next month, we'll make a stop at the Riverside Arts Market. Look for the 511 booth Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> from 10am – 4pm, rain or shine. The Riverside Arts Market is located beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge and features 160 local artists, food vendors, street performers and even a fresh produce market. Over 250,000 people have visited the market since it opened in April earlier this year, making it one of Jacksonville's most popular **free** weekend attractions.

## Photo Gallery



511 at the Equestrian Center



Road Rangers helping out on the Dames Point Bridge



Best wishes to Secretary Charles Baldwin , **finally** getting to enjoy a well-deserved retirement

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We bid a fond farewell to Jim Scott, DTOE, and wish him lots of time for tennis doubles matches!

## Contact Information

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TMC Desk at FDOT **360-5465** Mon-Fri 6a-6p  
 TMC Desk at FHP - **\*FHP (301-3700) x 122** -24/7/365  
 Penny Kamish, Project Manager  
 Derrick Odom, TMC Supervisor  
 Ryan Crist, TMC Supervisor  
 Jason Summerfield, Network Manager  
 John (Sean) Wilcox, TMC Assistant Supervisor  
 Sherri Byrd, 511 Marketing Manager

<b><u>D2 Day Operators</u></b>	<b><u>D2 Night &amp; Weekend Operators</u></b>	<b><u>D3 Day Operators</u></b>	<b><u>511 Probe</u></b>
Brian Deiter	Jason Evans	Santos Morin	Sherri Byrd
Jesse Gilmour	David Rolfe	Adrienne Catapano	Kristen Kirk
Jessica Lakey	Sarah Stephenson	Jessica Vazquez	
Mike Pirrone	Adam Page		