

## FDOT DISTRICT TWO

Intelligent Transportation Systems Newsletter –  
April 2010  
Issue 31



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## ITS Announcements

**HAZMAT TRAINING** – *KENTON BROWN, FDEP* 11:00 AM MAY 18, 2010  
 FDOT URBAN OFFICE TRAINING CENTER  
 2198 EDISON AVENUE  
 JACKSONVILLE, FL 32204

*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

Spring Break 2010 has come and gone but it has left a lasting impression on the TMC staff and me due to the changing traffic patterns when compared to last year. About the second week of April it dawned on me that the **Economy is bouncing back!** I know I am sticking my neck out by making this assumption but I believe the proof is in the pudding (as they say). First and foremost, traffic was horrible!!! I know it sounds like an oxymoron to say something bad (Spring Break) was good (Florida tourism and economy) but it's the honest truth from our perspective. Travel times got steadily worse as vacationers tied up traffic and we noticed unusual back-ups all the way to the Fuller Warren Bridge, which is not normal from our perception.

To make matters worse, I made my bi-weekly jaunt to see my 81 year old mother in Orlando on a Saturday and spent an extra 30 minutes on the road due to those "snow birds." During this trip I decided to make it a worthwhile journey by counting the number of in-state plates versus outside of Florida to get a perspective. I discovered that 60% of the vehicles I passed or who passed me had out of State license plates. Of those, a large majority were from Canada, the northeast and the Midwest. I could also tell several of the "locals" were not pleased with this increase in traffic as the bobbed and weaved through cars trying to gain that extra inch or two during their trip.

One other sign that drew our attention was the exponential increase in the number of traffic accidents throughout the first few weeks of April. Usually, we can rely on one or two accidents during the day in non-rainy conditions. During the first few weeks of April this number increased to about eight per day at least three times during the week. This is the norm during heavy rains and poor visibility; however Jacksonville is in a dry spell and hasn't seen any bad weather (except for the cold) in quite a while. So, from a layman's point of view this may be a good sign that Florida's tourism has bounced back and could lead to a boost in our economy over the coming year.

I have not had a chance to review the data and punch the numbers to see if our assumption is correct but I hope to do so in early May. I will compare vehicle detection data between March/April 2009 and 2010. I will also run an incident and event management reports in SunGuide to see how much of an increase occurred between both time periods. My last check will be the number of Road Ranger assists and we will assess the data since it can provide tag information as well. This last analysis will be a little tougher due to budgetary constraints that led to the reduction of the Road Ranger program but I can get a pretty good comparison by analyzing the information on a per Operator basis.

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## Notes from the ITS Engineer continued

Speaking of exciting news, I had the chance to see a report on ABC news regarding the future of autonomous cars. Scientists are on the verge of producing a vehicle that can transport blind people with information on the desired destination. In the next year they will begin test runs in the Mojave Desert and will then expand their investigation onto urban roadways. They estimated that these vehicles will be on the market and in use within the next twenty years, but the necessary infrastructure needs to be in place to make it happen. If the government or private entities can deliver the infrastructure sooner then the opportunity arises for having this vehicle on the road within the next ten years.

Why is this so important to me? Well, my 81 year old mother lost her license over the past year due to the medications she must take each day. She is a very strong-willed and independent woman who refuses to rely on others for help, so this was like a shot in the heart to her. She works off her own schedule and hates the exercise of trying to coordinate with her children for rides to the grocery store, doctor appointments and church. I realize she may not be around by the time this technology becomes available, however the situation points out a dire need that must be addressed in the coming years. As the average age of our population increases over the next decade we will need to develop solutions to assist with their mobility in a cost-effective manner.

Autonomous vehicles, by far, is the best and most proven method yet as witnessed during the past three ITS America and World Congress events.

The other important thing I keep in mind is the “apple didn’t fall far from the tree.” One day, I will be in her shoes and will also desire the freedom to control my mobility. Currently, aging is playing a cruel game with me as more body parts begin aching, eye sight acuity is decreasing and my memory is starting to fade. When I ask my doctor “what’s going on?” his reply is “nothing, you are just getting old like the rest of us.” In a sense, I wouldn’t mind not having to see that nut case more often but I know that one day I’ll get the urge for a double-espresso at Starbucks and won’t be able to hoof it the two miles or so to their establishment.

## The Lighter Side

This month I will introduce you to the oldest member of our household, “Yoshi.” She is a flame-point cat who is part Siamese and full of dynamite. I adopted Yoshi about 12 years ago when a friend asked if I could take one of her kittens. At the time, I had never owned a pet during my adult years and was hesitant to take on the daunting task of caring for something so little and fragile. Of course, she was the runt of the litter, weighing less than two pounds but she had a lot of spunk and that was what attracted me to her. I decided to give it a shot and brought her home to my apartment. My roommate,

### The Lighter Side continued

Cindy, already had a cat, Jinx, so I thought it would be a good way for them to entertain themselves during the day.

The first few weeks were tough as Yoshi meowed throughout the night while wanting to play with anything within her reach. She went unnamed for a while until my future wife insisted that I be responsible and come up with something. Out of the blue I decided to call her "Yoshi" and boy did the name fit the cat. Don't know where I came up with the title but I soon learned that there was an outfielder on the New York Mets with the same name as well as a Superhero on the Cartoon Channel. The outfielder basically "sucked," having to be coddled by the Mets until they finally let him go. The Superhero was a cut-up who always got into mischief, thus making things worse for every rescue. I soon learned the name fit my cat very well.

Once Yoshi got comfortable with her environment I can just say that "all hell broke loose in that apartment!" First, she and the Jinx turned the apartment into a frat house, knocking things over everywhere while making a mess of things. One day I came home early and found Yoshi sharpening her claws on the front of my \$1,000 Sony speakers, thus making me think "what the heck had I done!" She also learned to be a ninja kitty by hiding behind objects and attacking at your most vulnerable moment. Over the first few months several glasses of wine were spilled as we

tried to break her from her habit. We soon learned that when her tail began wagging wildly and her butt started wiggling that she was preparing to launch herself on someone in the household.

As Yoshi got older she mellowed and started developing her normal habits. It all turned out to be good and she now has become the perfect pet (on most occasions). Each evening when I pull into the driveway I can see her pink nose looking through the door window for me. When I enter she greets me with a "drive-by" begging for a petting before I get to the kitchen. Once I put my wallet, phone and key chain down she begins kneading my legs like a masseuse working overtime. Then, she says "feed me!" and heads out back to play. I usually don't see her for a while until dinner then the Siamese in her comes out to create some mischief.

We usually have dinner around 6:30 and Yoshi is sitting by the pool waiting for her opportunity. Within seconds of my getting up to put away the dishes she pounces on my seat to claim as her own. When I try to return to my chair she pushes me away with her hind legs as if to say "dibs, you got up sucker!" Once I settle into another chair at the table she gives me a smile and a wink, then wanders on back to the pool to enjoy the rest of the evening. I go through this on a daily basis and have quickly learned that she runs this household, but who can blame us since she's about 60 years old in cat years.

**The Lighter Side continued**

Yoshi is my confidant who sits on the desk whenever I am doing work (just like tonight). It's amazing that when I can't get into work she decides it's time for some entertainment. She creeps over slowly, starts rubbing her head on my arm and then "BAM" she starts running her paws on my key board to destroy anything I had written. Fortunately tonight she must think I am creating something good because she's just sitting there purring, waiting for the next day's adventure.

Pete Vega  
District 2  
ITS Engineer



Yoshi, matriarch of the household, decides she doesn't want to pose for the camera, and, SHE DOESN'T!

**Marketing**

In Jacksonville, sunny days mean "Starry Nights"... the concert series, that is. We teamed up with the City of Jacksonville for two very special events this month. The Starry Nights Styx concert, with special guests, the Jacksonville Sympony Orchestra, was held on April 10<sup>th</sup> followed by Idina Mendez in concert April 24<sup>th</sup> (Broadway star of "Wicked" and Tony award winner for "Rent". She's currently guest starring on FOX's hit TV series "Glee"). We set up our tent and prize wheel while the music carried us into the night. It's always fun to get out in the community and meet the people who use 511 every day (and get the word out to those who haven't discovered the system yet).

In addition to the Starry Nights series, we also partnered with the Hyatt Regency in downtown Jacksonville for their annual Employee Benefits Expo. And, we teamed up with the I-95 Welcome Center to help promote Safety Week across the State of Florida. It was a big month, but there's no time to rest. May means more festivals. In fact, this weekend, look for us at World of Nations in Jacksonville and the Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival in Fernandina Beach.

Sherri Byrd  
511 Marketing Manager

### Performance Measures

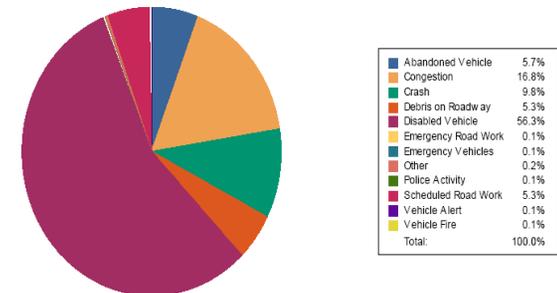
Some progress is being made in the quest to achieve an accurate report. A new version of the Performance Measures reporting software is expected in June. The weekly audit of the Flagged Events Report has proved to be an invaluable tool. One of the primary weaknesses of the current version of the Quarterly Report is that it excludes a large amount of events from the report. Apparent software issues are being reported to Central Office, but the audit feature of the SunGuide reports has been more than useful in accurately portraying the chronology of an event, even after it has been closed. The Flagged Events report highlights the characteristic(s) of each excluded event that caused it to be excluded. These characteristics are then reviewed for accuracy. If inaccurate information or an omission is found in the event chronology, the audit feature can then be used to revise the event chronology. After this, the event has the specified criteria to be included in the Performance Measures and the Quarterly Report reflects this update.

This Flagged Events report has been largely used for events in March and April. The improvement to the Quarterly Performance Measures Report is clearly seen in the progressive increase in the number of included events each month from January, when the new version of the quarterly report was released, until now. In January there were 45 included events, in February, 59, in

March there were 128 and up to April 22 there have already been 119 events for the month of April. On a larger scale, for January, 2.3% of all events entered in SunGuide were included in the Quarterly Performance Measures Report, but for April 7.5% of all entered events have been included in the Quarterly Performance Measures Report. It is good to note, that one of the primary reasons that so few events are included in the Quarterly Report is due to the fact that the majority of events entered in SunGuide are non-lane blocking events whereas the Quarterly Performance Measures Report only includes events that reported lane blockage.

It is imperative that the Performance Measures give an accurate representation of what is actually occurring during incidents since this data is used to show where the strengths and weakness lie with those involved in managing the incidents.

Percentage of Event Types for all Events



Jill Dawson  
Metric Engineering

### Road Ranger Update

Our current Road Ranger Service Patrol Rangers are still actively patrolling and providing service within the same limits on I-95, I-295, 9A, I-10 and J. Turner Butler. All routes are activated 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM.

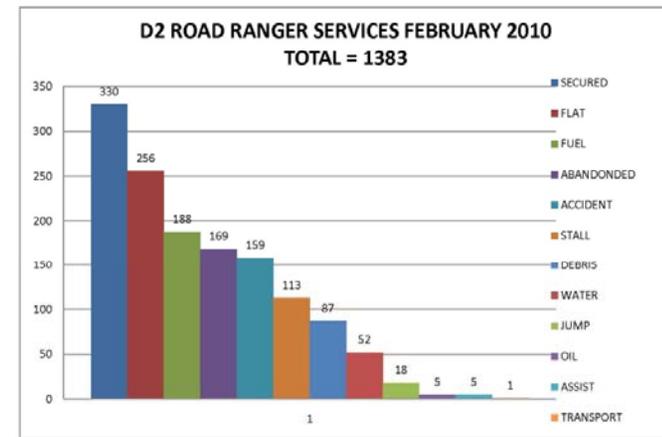
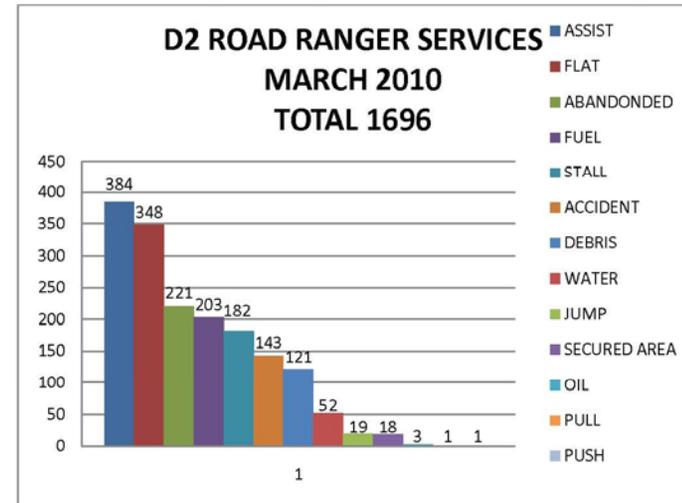
As of Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> the coverage is being covered with 6 Road Ranger vehicles instead of 8. As shown on the charts, Road Ranger Operators assisted 1696 stranded vehicles in the month of March. Our Road Ranger Service Patrol continues to be a great asset to our District 2 Traffic Incident Management Program and we look forward to starting our new contract.

The Oral Presentations from the shortlisted companies bidding on our District 2 Road Ranger Program will be conducted on April 26, 2010. The Companies competing are: Sunshine Towing, Inc., Jorgensen Contract Services, LLC., Infrastructure Corporation of America (ICA), and First Coast Road Rangers, LLC. We are hoping the new contract will be awarded by May, 2010.

Results are back for our Statewide Road Ranger Survey for Incident Responders and can be found at:

[http://www.dot.state.fl.us/trafficoperations/Traf\\_Incid\\_ent/pdf/RR\\_Annual\\_Survey\\_Report-FINAL\\_2010.pdf](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/trafficoperations/Traf_Incid_ent/pdf/RR_Annual_Survey_Report-FINAL_2010.pdf)

A special thanks to all incident responders who participated in this survey



### RISC (Rapid Incident Scene Clearance Update)

Since December 18, 2010, we have not had an incident that required the services of our Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC). Our Contractors, Southern Wrecker and Recovery, LLC., Walt's Wrecker Service, John's Towing Auto and Truck Services, Inc., and University Towing and Transport, Inc. – are ready to be activated if the need arises.

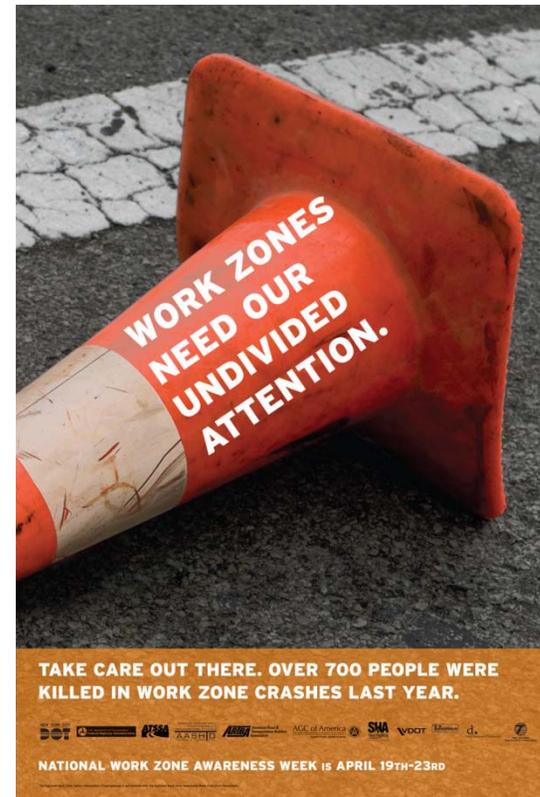
## Maintenance

The ITS System continues to function well. The ITS Maintenance Contractor has been doing minor repairs to ITS Devices as they surface. In recent months we have been tracking the availability of the ITS Devices. We are proud to say that in March at any given time 95 percent of all devices (Detectors, Cameras and Dynamic Message Signs) were available for use. Considering the large number of devices deployed around Jacksonville, this is a great achievement.

As for an update on the fiber connection to the Jacksonville Maintenance Yard, the efforts for coordinating the use of JEA power poles has been dragging on, so we have now decided to install the conduit and fiber along Ellis Road underground. We have revised the plan sheets to reflect this change and are now coordinating with the City of Jacksonville for permits to install the conduit and fiber along Ellis Road. Once this connection is completed, several offices and conference rooms throughout the Jacksonville Maintenance Yard will have the ability to view videos of traffic and incident scenes, thus allowing Maintenance personnel to deploy their resources better and track the progress of their Contractors. They will also be able to monitor major incidents along the roadway that impact traffic, thereby giving them more detailed information for Central and District Office inquiries.

The bids have been received for the new ITS Maintenance Contract and Traffic Control Devices (TCD) was the low bidder. TCD is the current ITS Maintenance Contractor and has done a great job working with us for the past several years and we look forward to continuing this relationship. The new contract is expected to be in place by May 31, 2010.

Kevin Jackson  
District 2 ITS Field Specialist



## Construction

The I-95 Project (Phase VI) is installing 96-fiber cable, CCTV cameras, Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) and Vehicle Detectors along I-95 from the I-295 Southern Interchange to the St. Johns County Line. This project continues to run smoothly, with approximately 75% of the work completed and only 60% of the Contract Time used. All of the conduit, pull boxes, splice vaults, and fiber optic cable have been installed along with the majority of the Electrical services. The Contractor is currently installing ITS Devices and concrete pads around the pull boxes. Electrical services and associated electrical equipment are being installed at each of the device sites. Device Stand Alone Testing is expected to begin within the next few weeks. The Project is on schedule for completion in July.

This project will allow the Traffic Management Center to monitor traffic congestion resulting from commuters exiting onto CR 210 and provide motorists advanced warnings of the congestion. These advanced warnings along with the newly completed Interchange improvements at CR 210, will provide some long needed relief from congestion for the people who live along CR 210 and commute into Jacksonville.

The SR 9A Project (Phase VII) has received FDOT comments from the 100% plan submittal and will be submitting Signed and Sealed plans in early May. This project is installing 96-fiber cable, CCTV cameras, Dynamic Message Signs

(DMS), Vehicle Detectors and Roadside Weather Information Sensors along SR 9A from Atlantic Blvd North to I-95. The Project also includes two Arterial Dynamic Message Signs and two CCTV cameras on Heckscher Drive approaching SR 9A in each direction. The Construction Contract will be let in early Fall with an anticipated start of Construction in Early 2011.

This project is critical to this area due to the continuing growth of JaxPort and also the development along SR 9A. The ITS devices installed by this Project will provide Traffic Management Center Operators with the ability to view the roadways and provide information to motorists and responders alike.

The I-295 Project (Phase VIII) has submitted 60% plans. This project is installing 96-fiber cable, CCTV cameras, Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), Vehicle Detectors and Roadside Weather Information Sensors along I-295 from I-10 North to I-95. This project will complete the Fiber Communications ring around the Western side of Jacksonville. This project is important to this area of Jacksonville due to the large number of Trucking companies along the corridor and the proximity to Jacksonville International Airport.

Several projects are ongoing with Duval and Clay Counties. The SR 21 / Blanding Blvd Project has submitted 100% Design Plans and the Design Build Team plans to start construction around the end of April. The SR 5 / US 1 Project has been

**Construction continued**

re-advertised with bids being due on June 9<sup>th</sup>. Bids were received for the SR 15/US 17 Project. PAH was the low bidder for this Project and have been awarded the Contract. All of these projects are using existing fiber infrastructure and adding Arterial Dynamic Message Signs and CCTV cameras to allow for the City of Jacksonville and Clay County to view their arterial roadways, provide information to travelers, and dynamically adjust their signal timing to help alleviate congestion.

John Kell  
District 2 ITS Construction Project Manager



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

**Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Update**

**FIRST COAST TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE**

The First Coast Traffic Management Team will meet on Tuesday, May 18, 2010, at the Florida Department of Transportation's Urban Office Training Center at 10:00 AM. This meeting will be followed at 11:00 AM by a special HazMat Training given by Kenton Brown, Emergency Response Manager, FDEP/Division of Law Enforcement. Members of the Alachua Traffic Incident Management Team will be attending also.

**ALACHUA TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM UPDATE**

The Alachua Traffic Incident Management held its team meeting on Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, at the FDOT Gainesville Maintenance Conference Room, N.E. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM. The following agencies were represented: AAG Environmental, City of Gainesville Traffic Operations, FDOT Safety Office, FDOT Traffic Operations, FHP, University Towing, FDOT Maintenance, Metric Engineering, PBS&J, FDEP-BER, and FDOT ITS Office. After a debriefing and discussion of incidents from the last two months, agency reports were given.

Donna Danson  
District 2 ITS Operations  
Program Manager

## North Florida TPO Update

The North Florida TPO hosted a Northeast Florida ITS Coalition meeting this past April 14<sup>th</sup> at the Department's Urban Office Training center. Several agencies participated in this event and a number of topics were covered by the panel. An overview of current and future ITS/Traffic Signal controller upgrade projects was presented to the audience by Jeff Sheffield and Pete Vega. A presentation on the proposed Federal Bill for funding of future ITS projects was presented by Metric Engineering. HNTB displayed the latest progress with the ITS Master Plan update and the ongoing Roadway Weather Information System (RWIS) study. In the final presentation, JTA displayed images being captured throughout Jacksonville by its transit facilities and buses.

This event was two hours of intense information on the past, present and future of ITS in Northeast Florida. Participants were encouraged to think outside the box and to consider methods of integrating several projects into one multi-agency effort. As an example, the Department's ITS staff presented ideas to JTA on how they could utilize existing infrastructure to make their WiFi deployment more robust. Likewise, imagination and foresight are what led to discussions about using existing RWIS wireless capabilities to assist St. Johns County with tying in CCTV Camera images and traffic signal controller information back to their complex on State Road 16.

This meeting was a stepping stone for what is to come in the next year or two. Coordination will be the key to achieving economies of scale, thereby allowing us to expand our dollars for additional ITS deployments. Key coordinators will be the North Florida TPO and the Department since help will be needed to tie up these loose ends. The firm that will assist the team in accomplishing this will be the North Florida TPO's ITS System Manager, DRMP. Mr. Jim Highland and Mr. Joe Perri were introduced to the crowd and were given the daunting task of taking all the information we currently have and piecing it together into one homogeneous effort.

The North Florida TPO continues to support ITS in this region by requesting projects for future consideration. Their leadership has made a commitment to achieving success and we will soon have to come up with methods of measuring the benefits of these ITS deployments. Overall, a bright future is ahead for the region and the only thing holding everyone back is the ability to finding time to see things through.



## Operations

ITS and the TMC play a major role in reducing secondary crashes and reducing queues by making motorists more informed about what conditions lay ahead. With knowledge of a crash, congestion or construction motorists can reduce speed and be prepared to make a lane shift or re-route. DMS messages, 511 phone, web and personalized services are utilized to get the word out. There is a lot of activity on those roadways and the more informed the motorists are the safer travel will be.

We had a busy month in March with the TMC working over 2,200 events! That is up from 800+ events last year in March and up over 600 events from just this past December. More ways to gather information has expanded our coverage area and the quality of the information we are providing. The Road Rangers remain a consistent force out on the roads assisting in 1,600 events throughout the work week. Amazingly, out of those 2,200+ events only 325 ended up blocking some type of lane or ramp.

Communication with the plane has been invaluable to the TMC operations with the pilot being that “Eye in the Sky” to assist with our blind spots. For more rural areas the TMC has also been using internet traffic from Metro Networks to assist with traffic conditions on some of these road segments. This has assisted in confirming activity in those rural areas and monitoring backups where we have no ITS devices.

We depend on the many different partners in District 2. The outreach continues to bring in all the information we can to the TMC in a timely manner, so that we can, in turn, get that quality information out to the traveling public.

You can reach our 24/7 line at (904) 301-3700 (ext. 122) or our work day line at (904) 360-5465. You can also now leave feedback on the Next Generation 511 System to report any notable traffic conditions, incidents, or 'bugs' you may find in the system. This user feedback is relayed directly to our operators, in real-time, and is an important supplement to our deployed devices.

Remember: **Know Before You Go!**

**Dial 511 or go to [FL511.com](http://FL511.com)**

Ryan Crist  
Senior TMC Supervisor

## Spotlight on...Pete Vega

This month's spotlight shines on Pete Vega, ITS Engineer for FDOT District 2.

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

I was born at Bellevue Hospital in New York City in 1964. This facility is America's oldest public hospital and was established in 1736 with six beds. Ironically, about 30 years ago the hospital shifted its focus to treating mental health issues but my mom kept saying it was a method for them to be able to treat people like me.

I lived in the City for 10 years before my parents decided they'd seen enough of my mischief, so they decided to move me to a safer haven, St. Petersburg, in 1975. Talk about cultural shock! I went from going to museums, baseball stadiums, Broadway plays and huge parades to Alligator Farms and Wikiwatchee. Yes, life sucked for a while.

Fortunately, the move was the best thing that could have happened since I spent all of my teenage years playing sports year round. Having this opportunity really led to the person I am today.

### **Early Career and/or brief job history:**

I graduated from the University of South Florida in 1990 and immediately began working for Dowell-Schlumberger(a division of Dow Chemical). I began my Engineering career with them as a trainee and quickly moved up the ranks to an

Assistant Office Manager/Engineer in their Jacksonville operations. I managed a crew of about 20 personnel and was required to be a salesman, safety engineer and field person, all in one sitting. Once I realized that working 70 hours per week was not for me (at salary no less!) I decided to expand my horizons by attempting to reach goals of getting my Masters Degree and P.E. License.

After a few months an opportunity arose to interview with the Department of Transportation. The position I interviewed for was the Area Maintenance Engineer, which seemed intriguing and was perfect for me to achieve these goals. I began with the Florida DOT in October 1993 and have never looked back. During my tenure I have also had the opportunity to work with the Maintenance Management System, Central Office Sign & Structure shops and the ITS office.

### **Job Description – your role in transportation:**

The ITS office was the “dream job” I had actually never dreamed of in the past. This position allows me to work with all areas of the Department and not just one discipline. On a weekly basis I could be working with the Planning, Statistics, Maintenance, Construction, Design and Work Program offices related to several different issues/projects. This position also exposes me to daily interaction with the general public and local Politicians.

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### Spotlight on...Pete Vega continued

Expectations from this position are huge and I never forget how fortunate I am to have this opportunity. My role is to insure that existing and future roadway systems function to the highest efficiency and safety. I must research the past to gain from lessons learned while looking into the future for possible opportunities. The prospect of Intellidrive technology is just around the corner and it is my responsibility to insure we are ready when this shift in transportation management occurs.

My early career with ITS dealt with CCTV Cameras and Dynamic Message Signs. My current role is to incorporate traffic data from the vehicle detection systems. In the future I will be expected to determine roadway impacts due to weather conditions using Roadway Weather Information system devices as well as integrating Intellidrive technology into the mix. Likewise, the ITS office will get more involved in adaptive traffic signalization control as we attempt to improve our region's congestion management effort. The next challenge will be to tie all of these pieces together into one homogeneous system that can begin anticipating traffic conditions and events, thereby expediting response times and recovery efforts.

### **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?**

Probably the funniest story I can share happened to me during my first few months on the job with the Department. I am a true believer in "practicing what you preach" and felt the best way to learn is to "just do it." So, I made it a habit of spending one day per month with field crews so that I could learn the challenges and obstacles for them to get their job done.

One day I was out with the shoulder repair crew when a torrential rain caught us in the middle of the day. We were working on the two lane section of US 301 just north of Baldwin and noticed water build-up on the road. The crew's supervisor decided the best solution was to begin making weep holes along the shoulder to let the water drain off. He handed each of us a shovel and rain coat, and then assigned us to a certain section of the road.

As we were working, his assistant kept grabbing my shoulder and pulling me away from the road. At first I thought it was for my safety but soon learned she was trying to prevent me from getting splashed by truck drivers who were trying to get us wet by driving over the deepest portion of the water build-up. I was grateful for her concern and kept digging away. Well, she had to spend some time coordinating with her supervisor and must

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### Spotlight on...Pete Vega continued

have felt confident she had trained me well so I was on my own just digging up weep holes. Since I was a novice at this type work I began “shoveling away” to try and keep up with the other crew members. Well...yep...you guessed it. I was soaked from head to toe and had six-hours left in the work day.

The crew could not stop laughing as they fell to the ground in sheer amusement. By the time we recovered everyone was soaked down to their “skivvies” but it did not matter because I had made their day. Every now and then when I see one of the crew at the maintenance yard we share a secret chuckle as we pass.

#### **What’s the best advice anyone’s ever given you?**

Treat everyone the way you would want to be treated but treat your so called “enemies” even better. Then, maybe someday they will become your best friend. This is very true, just ask my three best friends.

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

The quote about walking on the beach and seeing one set of foot prints. I’ve been blessed that there were several moments in my life where I thought I’d never survive but something helped me get through it. Those were the times when I noticed it wasn’t me that left those foot prints.

#### **How long have you been at your current job?**

This April was my eight-year anniversary as the District Two ITS Engineer. Seems like only four but feels like almost twenty though.

#### **Any job related awards or special recognition you’ve received?**

Yes, I’ve received several. The most surprising was the District’s Superior Achievement award I received a few years ago. It was unexpected and appreciated since it was for a job I truly enjoy. Also, the Jacksonville TMC received an award last year from ITS Florida for their performance. I really believe this team is one of the best in Florida and winning this award shows them I am not the only one that notices their work ethic.

#### **Describe a ‘defining moment’ in your career or personal life.**

I was a Junior in High School and was trying to “hang” with the “in crowd” since they had the prettiest girls on campus. We were in this school organization that did volunteer work (to get out of class of course). One event we participated in dealt with taking kids with special needs to a County Fair.

I thought perfect; I could now hang with Laura and finally get that date I always wanted. Well, when we arrived at the Fair the adult coordinators began divvying up the kids, one to a person. Laura ended up with this hyperactive little girl that kept running in

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**Spotlight on...Pete Vega continued**

circles and wanted to get on all the rides. I, on the other hand, ended up with Mike, a paraplegic eight-year old stuck in a wheel chair with the thickest eye glasses I had ever seen.

Of course, as a teenager all I could think of was “me”, and Mike quickly picked up on it. After about a half-hour of wheeling Mike around he pulled me over to whisper in my ear “that’s all right, you can get on the rides and I’ll just wait for you over here.” In one-sentence this eight-year old kid changed my life for the better and I will never be able to repay him for those words.

The rest of the day it was just me and him enjoying everything at the fair the best that we could. With the permission of Mike’s parents I was allowed to pick him up out of the wheel chair and carry him on my shoulders for most of the day. He did not get to ride everything but I feel it was a lot more than he expected.

At the end of the day I spoke with Laura on the bus and she mentioned how she’d noticed the attention I paid to Mike that day. For a moment it crossed my mind that “I was in” and could get a date with her just by asking. Then I thought about my day with Mike and realized this wasn’t the right time. I never did go on a date with Laura but we

became very close friends the rest of High School. I always hope that someday I’ll get the chance to thank Mike for all that he has done for me.

**Best job ever / worst job ever... or both?**

I have never had a worst job. I have enjoyed each and every one of them. The Best job is of course the one I have right now.

**Tell us a little about your family.**

Two sisters and a brother, all living in Central Florida near my mom. I have a wife, Carla, and our five “kids” (three cats, a cockatiel and a dwarf rabbit). One of my sisters works for FDLE so we share a number of discussions about being a State Employee. My other sister works for the US Postal Service while my brother works for an Armored Car agency.

My mom was the catalyst that led to our work ethic. She is a go-getter that would keep working to this day if not for her 82 year old body limiting her abilities.

**Do you have any hobbies?**

Golf, action movies and sleep (LOT’S of sleep)

**Favorite vacation spot?**

Caribbean Islands (especially Puerto Rico)

Spotlight on...Pete Vega continued

**Anything else you'd like to add...**

This is the 33<sup>rd</sup> issue of the ITS Newsletter and I thought I could sneak in a few more years before anyone would notice I had never done a "spot light". I can honestly say that I do not like the limelight but feel each and every member of our team deserves recognition for all their hard work. From the ITS staff to our contractors; Metric, SmartRoute Systems and Traffic Control Devices, everyone on the ITS team deserves a round of applause for all the hard work they have been providing to the Department and Northeast Florida region.



One of the most difficult men to get a photo of. Here, in his element with stacks or paperwork and reading material and the standard cup of coffee.

Penny's Pondering

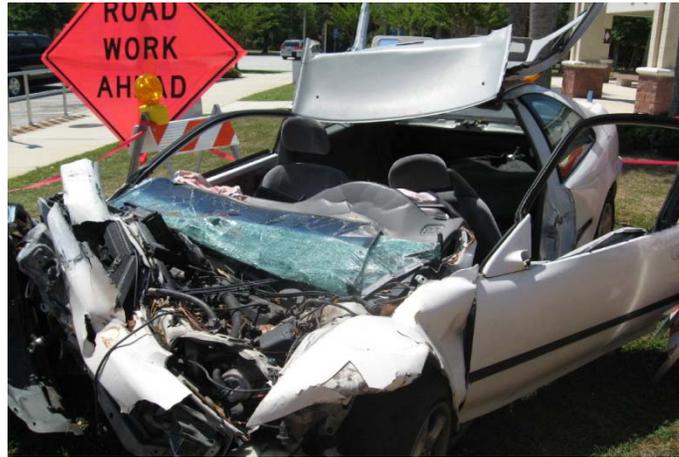
I think there isn't a person out there who hasn't been frustrated by the additional congestion caused by "rubbernecker"...and probably not a single person who hasn't been guilty of the practice. But, did you know that according to Wikipedia, the term was coined in 1890 to describe tourists and their interest in various sights. H.L. Mencken said, "it is one of the best words ever coined".

Elvis Presley's song "Rubberneckin'", released posthumously, referred to the practice of young men straining their necks and swiveling their heads to observe all of the beautiful women

Jonathan P. Masinick of the University of Virginia, in his research project **An Analysis on the Impact of Rubbernecking on Urban Freeway Traffic** quotes a 2003 study by the Virginia Commonwealth University's Transportation Safety Training Center (TSTC) revealed that rubbernecking was the leading cause of vehicle crashes. Mr. Masinick summarizes that approximately 10 percent of crashes are the result of rubbernecking, and thinks further research would be helpful in seeing if "barriers" that block the "view" would decrease these secondary crashes.

In the UK, a company has invented a mobile accident screen (named "Axi-Shield") designed to be erected around motor vehicle accidents to discourage rubbernecking. A similar plan was proposed in Florida, some years ago. Unfortunately, lack of funding caused this pilot project to be shelved.

## Photo Gallery



511 visits the I-95 Welcome Center during Safety Week with this display to make you think



Employees attending the Hyatt Employee Expo



Performers who joined 511, among others, at the Hyatt Employee Expo

# Photo Gallery



Styx, with JSO, and new lead singer Lawrence Gowen. Because of the exit of Dennis DeYoung, no "Mr. Roboto" or "Lady"!



Two of our youngest marketing assistants, Nick Venditti & Jared Kamish schooled visitors about 511 on a clear, windy, cool night at Styx



Our newest 511 Marketing person, Donovan King, at a hazy Starry Nights Idina Mendez concert



A comfortable crowd awaiting Idina Mendez

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 Jason Summerfield, Network Manager  
 Derrick Odom, TMC Assistant Supervisor  
 Santos Morin, 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>
Jesse Gilmour	Jason Evans	Santos Morin	Sherri Byrd
Jessica Lakey	David Rolfe	Adrienne Catapano	Kristen Kirk
Adam Page	Rebecca Reid	Jessica Vazquez	
	Tyler Sowers	Ed Capps	