



National Operations Center of Excellence Newsletter

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From the Executive Director

By Dennis Motiani



Beginning this month, the NOCoe newsletter will include a message from either a current or previous Commissioner or Secretary of State, who will share past operations-related experiences and challenges in both an informative and thought-provoking manner.

I am also pleased to announce that the National Operations Center of Excellence now has a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in place that will provide guidance on technical topics for future services.

Mr. Tony Kratofil of Michigan DOT will serve as the Committee Chair and other distinguished members are Dean Gustafson, Virginia DOT; Galen McGill, Oregon DOT; Phillip "Brad" Freeze, Tennessee DOT; Eric Rensel, Gannett Fleming; Beverly Kuhn, Texas A&M University; Patrick McGowan, Serco; and Peter Keen, Digital Traffic Systems. I enthusiastically look forward to working with the committee in developing a Technical Services Plan which will better identify your ongoing needs in operations and how best the Center can meet them.

This plan will outline various services the Center will offer during this year and

will be updated on an annual basis. Your suggestions for technical services and/or topics are also strongly encouraged and should be directed to contact@transportationops.org.

Note: I recently attended the ITS Tennessee Annual Meeting and was very impressed with their leadership, commitment and quality of presentations. Congratulations to outgoing President Gerald Bolden, Mr. Michael Rebick and the rest of the Board at ITS Tennessee for a very successful annual meeting. Also, best wishes to Mr. Philip "Brad" Freeze, the incoming President, and the fantastic Board of Directors who will continue the good work previously accomplished by President Bolden.

A Welcome to NTOC Talks Newsletter Subscribers

The Center would like to welcome past subscribers to the National Transportation Operations Coalition's **NTOC Talks** e-newsletter. We hope you will find the NOCoE (<http://www.transportationops.org/>) to be a place where you can share information as well as receive it – we encourage you to share in our [discussion forum](#) your latest work plan, specific challenge you are facing with operations practice or a new technology, and techniques you've used to empower your staff. This is YOUR transportation operations resource and we are interested in your feedback to continually improve our portfolio of services. Please feel free to contact me with your suggestions, either through the website or at d.motiani@transportationops.org.

Step Up: Improving FDOT's Batting Average
By Ananth Prasad, PE

**Senior Vice President, HNTB Corporation and Former Secretary,
Florida Department of Transportation**

How It Started

It didn't take long for me to realize that my appointment as Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation was going to be one of the bigger challenges I'd faced in my professional career; a challenge I was looking forward to tackling.

State employees in Florida had not seen a pay increase in six years; they faced budget constraints and travel restrictions, and the state legislature had decided to place a larger responsibility on employee contributions to their respective health care plans. In addition, the retirement system was being revamped and job reductions in the workforce were ongoing. It seemed like the agency was drifting and employees were losing motivation.

The state was reeling from one of the worst economic recessions the country had seen and FDOT was working to stay relevant. This challenging backdrop combined with my experience working in the private sector helped me understand what FDOT could achieve.

I wanted FDOT to be one of the best state departments of transportation in the country; an agency that would be recognized within the state and country as innovative. I envisioned changing the culture of the agency by empowering employees to continuously look for ways to do things better and more efficiently, and at the end of the day, challenge the status quo.

With that goal in mind, I was determined. I embarked on a journey by announcing the following: a workplace culture of "Step-Up," a rallying motto for continuous improvement; a shift to centralized control with decentralized execution where decisionmaking is consistent, predictable and repeatable;

interactions with others that are courteous, professional and respectful; bold actions, innovative ideas and inspirational communication were going to be embedded into the agency's culture.

The challenge was welcomed by employees seeking inclusion in the functions of the agency. What I didn't realize initially, and later found most interesting, is that FDOT had inadvertently backed into a full-blown employee engagement practice.

Over a three-year period, FDOT utilized a three-phase approach to change the workplace culture of an agency with more than 6,500 employees. The Step -Up culture re-channeled the energy of employees into a work culture that assisted them in becoming part of something significant, along with the opportunity to make a difference, do meaningful work and belong to an engaging workplace.

The Secretary's challenge to fulfill the capacity of the agency remains ongoing—*an idea only gets you to a better idea*. To be sure, leadership provided by the Secretary is *more than just task accomplishment, it's about helping employees realize their potential*.

Metrics Count: Measuring Progress

During the past four years of Step-Up, FDOT has made significant gains in performance, work satisfaction and employee engagement.

FDOT became the benefactor of the biggest budget ever in the history of the state (\$10.2 billion) and is delivering the biggest capital program ever with the least number of state employees (6,500 down from more than 7,000 four years ago and more than 10,000 a decade ago) while achieving the highest employee satisfaction survey score (a survey that FDOT initiated in 2001 and has continued since).

In 2013, FDOT, for the first time ever, met all 20 performance measures

established by the Florida Transportation Commission, a Governor-appointed, independent oversight body.

A culture of bold, innovative and inspirational thinking has resulted in FDOT saving more than \$150 million per year by implementing strategies such as the use of weathering steel, removal of lights on maintenance of traffic devices and overhead signs, removal of motorist aid call boxes and reduction of fleet.

While secretaries (directors and/or commissioners) come and go, it is the culture of the agency and its employees that will ultimately create a legacy. Will they create a dynasty or become a flash in the pan?

How Transit Agencies Are Working to Manage Congestion

Via [Governing.com](#)

Transit agencies and companies have tried raising toll prices at peak times, but even that's not keeping drivers away, so they're looking for new ways to reduce congestion.

The idea behind high-occupancy toll lanes is pretty simple: Carpoolers ride free, but single riders pay a toll rate set by the principles of supply and demand. The more crowded the lane becomes, the more expensive the toll.

Tolls that automatically adjust to traffic do help pay for the roads they are on, but their main purpose is to reduce congestion on highways, said Neil Gray, director of governmental affairs for the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association, an industry group.

But now many of the companies and agencies that run toll roads are

discovering that even high prices sometimes aren't enough to keep traffic flowing as fast as they would like.

In many cases, they're looking for new ways to satisfy demand, or even drive it down, without building even more lanes. To read more, please click on the link above.

CFX Deploys Detection System/San Antonio Wrong Way Driving Initiative

The Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) has successfully deployed a TAPCO WWD detection system on SR 528 at the SR 520 EB off-ramp; [this presentation explains the specifics](#). CFX has four other systems planned for construction on SR 408 in Orlando within the next 60 days. Its system utilizes radar and wide-angle camera technology to detect oncoming and outgoing vehicles, virtually eliminating any false positives. The information is relayed via proprietary BlinkLink software and is emailed to the Regional Transportation Management Center (RTMC) within (an average of) 6 seconds with an audible alert, location and multiple photos so that the RTMC can deploy the necessary safety protocol. All five locations are part of a one-year study conducted by Dr. Al-Deek of the University of Central Florida to determine the extent of the problem and to recommend a resolution based on collected data.

The Texas Department of Transportation has developed best practices regarding warning signs for motorists driving the wrong way. Jianming Ma, of the Texas Department of Transportation, has agreed to [share this presentation](#) of best practices by Brian G. Fariello, PE, titled "San Antonio Wrong Way Driving Initiative."

Managing MDOT's Transportation Systems Using Performance Measures **By Jason Firman, Michigan DOT**

Michigan DOT released its first Congestion & Mobility Report in 2014. This report includes varied performance measures over a two-year period on all freeway routes in Michigan. These performance measures rely on probe data for measurement.

The report was developed to help Michigan regions, Transportation Service Centers, operation engineers and planners expand current knowledge on how Michigan freeways are operating over time and to make comparisons or detect trends. The report identifies congested areas, when congestion occurs and how often, corridor rankings, causes of delay and more. This information has been used to help justify construction or operational projects like an active traffic management system but also verify the benefits of past projects. It can show how weather, incidents and construction projects big and small impact traffic and can be used to adjust how MDOT deals with these impacts.

MDOT is currently working on the 2014 report which will include Travel Time Reliability information. Following is the link to the Michigan.gov website where you may view these reports. There is an introductory chapter followed by a chapter for each region of the state.

DDOT Debuts Ride App

Via [the Washington Post](#)

The Ride DC large-screen display, introduced by the D.C. Department of Transportation in December, combines multiple real-time transit options on the same neighborhood map. It provides arrival information for Metrorail and Metro and Circulator buses, and also tracks the availability of nearby Capital Bikeshare and Car2Go vehicles. The one thing it hasn't offered is portability.

That wasn't an oversight, DDOT chief information officer Jose Colon said last month. "The first initiative was to develop a dashboard portal for the public to create their own transit screen," he said. "They're able to display it on a large monitor at their facility. This could be a school, an apartment building, any retail establishment."

Now all that travel information can also be retrieved on smartphones through the Ride DC Trip Planner. The mobile app was released late last month for Android devices, as a free download from the Google Play store. An iPhone version is expected to be available soon.

Please click on the link above to read more.

Guidelines for Virtual Transportation Management Center Development

This [guidebook](#) is intended to serve as a detailed reference that addresses the concepts, methods, processes, tasks, techniques, and other related issues for practitioners to consider associated with planning and development for a virtual Traffic Management Center (TMC). The guidebook describes the business planning process for developing a virtual TMC and provides guidance and procedures for addressing technical, operational and institutional issues such as data needs, communications, responsibilities, and agreements for collaborating remotely will be beneficial.

Freeway Operations; Regional Systems Management and Operations; Managed Lanes 2014

TRB's Transportation Research Record: [Journal of the Transportation Research](#)

Board, NO. 2470 consists of 18 papers that explore a comprehensive framework for planning and assessment of traffic incident management programs; evaluation of hero-coordinated ramp metering installation; online scalable approach for identifying secondary crashes; freeway travel time forecasting; real-time queue-end detection on freeways with floating car data; mainstream traffic flow control at sags; design of emergency response system to minimize incident impacts; and estimation of congestion-related travel time losses on freeways.

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