Ask Mike

Q&A with Mike Stokes,

MDOT ITS Program Manager

Do you have a question for Mike ?

Email them to us at

mstraffic@mdot.state.ms.us

"Project" continued
and conditions only through news channels, hindering their ability to respond to emergencies promptly. With the MED-COM center, medical dispatchers now have interactive access to all the traffic information through the msTraffic system and are able to intelligently direct emergency vehicles, thereby reaching accident scenes more quickly, and saving time when moments count.

"Hattiesburg" continued
Cameras (CCTVS) are also included in this project. CCTVS will be added at the intersections of MS 11, Helveston Rd., WSF Tatum Rd., and Elks Lake Rd. Live streaming video from the cameras will be available to operations staff at the Hattiesburg Regional TMC (future) and at the Statewide TMC in Jackson.

At these TMC locations staff will be able to view and control the cameras and post alerts of incidents and congestion on msTraffic.com. These alerts will be sent to subscribers of this free service, and live streaming video of the fixed camera feeds from these sites will also be available to the public on the msTraffic.com website.

This project is part of Hattiesburg's *Intelligent Transportation System Deployment Project* plan and represents a significant step in the progression of the City's goal of incorporating fiber optic communications to signals throughout the City.

76-02

MDOT ITS Mississippi
Intelligent Transportation Systems

Mike Stokes
P.O. Box 1850
Jackson, MS 39215-1850

MDOT ITS Mississippi
Intelligent Transportation Systems

Newsletter prepared by MDOT ITS Integrator Team July 2009

NEWSLETTER

Coming Soon to Mississippi: 511 Travel Information

Expanding upon the travel information services which the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) currently provides, the Department is now bringing 511 to Mississippians. A professional services RFP will soon be released by the Department for the design, implementation, operation, maintenance and marketing of a 511 system for the state. The MDOT 511 system will allow users to call a single phone number statewide and, through the use of interactive voice recognition, obtain traveler information on roadways.

511 is the Federal Communications Commission's designated three-digit telephone number for traveler information. Since its establishment in 1999, it has been an ongoing effort by the 511 Deployment Coalition to encourage and assist states in implementing 511, making it a nationally available and recognizable service. According to the 511 Deployment Coalition, in 2009, 511 was accessible to 70% of the population. Mississippi, one of only 16 states that does not have active 511 services in any area of the state, will effectively increase the accessibility of 511.

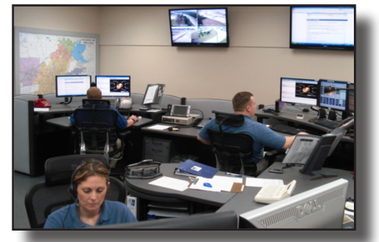
The MDOT 511 system will be fed by information provided by the 511 system provider along with the data which is currently available on the mstraffic website. This site provides a variety of traveler information including construction advisories, camera images and incident alerts. Callers will be able to receive accident and congestion information as well as construction, emergency and AMBER alerts. It is envisioned that in addition to the information currently provided on the mstraffic website, that weather information and travel times (future) may also be provided. Tourist and transit information are also other possible information resources that may be available via the MDOT 511 system.

- "511" continued inside

MDOT's MsTraffic/ MED-COM Project Gains National Recognition

The MDOT traffic engineering division was awarded a highly coveted Best of ITS award for Best New Practices for their submission of "Saving Lives Through Innovative Partnerships – the msTraffic/MED-COM Project." The awards are based on organizations whose projects have demonstrated specific and measurable outcomes and exemplify innovation by rising above the standard performance level. One of only four awards issued in 2009 compared to twelve issued in 2008, the award was received at the ITS America business meeting and awards ceremony in National Harbor, Maryland on June 1, 2009.

The MED-COM project was devised to create a union between msTraffic and a new state-wide emergency response system known as the Mississippi MED-COM Center, which is located at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. Operators at the center, available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, are able to view live streaming video of major inter-



states and intersections enabling them to direct emergency service vehicles in reaching emergency scenes and subsequently, medical facilities as necessary. Before the project was constructed, medical dispatchers had access to traffic information

- "Project" continued on back

GS&P

- "511" continued

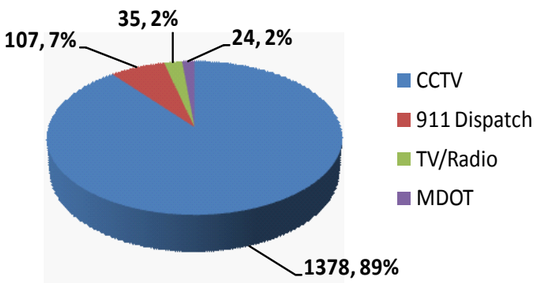
MDOT intends to implement a phased deployment of the 511 traveler information by geographical area. It is MDOT's intention that over time, the MDOT 511 system will be phased in statewide. "The reasoning behind the phased approach is two-fold," explains MDOT ITS Program Manager, Mike Stokes, "first the availability of data and second the availability of funding." "Mississippi's ITS infrastructure and devices are concentrated in the more metropolitan areas of the state. As the msTraffic network expands and operations commence in other areas in the state, phases of the 511 system will be deployed."

Funding for the project was obtained from a FHWA AMBER Alert Grant, as the system is intended to broadcast AMBER alerts, in addition to other travel information. "We anticipate that the grant money will adequately cover at least the first phase of our 511 deployment but are not sure just how far those monies will go as additional phases are implemented. There are deployment, maintenance and operational costs to consider and once an area is operational we are committed to maintaining a valuable level service in that area."

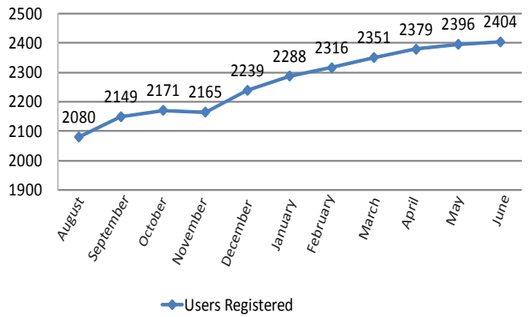
It is MDOT's objective to make 511 the symbol of traveler information in Mississippi. This is a service that will be recognizable and useful to commuters, travelers and other end users of transportation services of all types – one that will significantly improve traveler safety, emergency and enforcement activities.

MDOT Statewide Traffic Management Center & msTraffic.com Quick-Stats

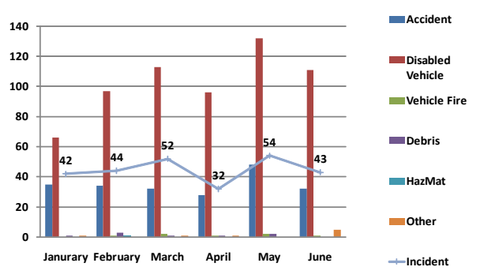
Events Managed by Detection Source August 2008 to March 2009



Total MSTraffic Users Registered for Email and/or Text Alerts

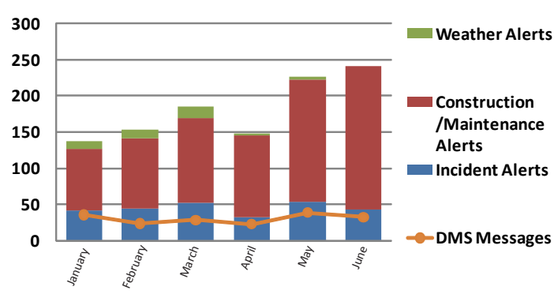


Incident Events Managed and Incident Alerts Issued



Note: If an incident event is not affecting traffic an Incident Alert is not issued. Ex: A disabled vehicle may not require an alert. TMC Staff coordinate with various incident management partners to manage and clear incident events, regardless of whether an incident alert is issued.

Total Alerts Issued by Type and DMS Messages Posted



Plans for Regional ITS Chapter Now Underway

Plans to form an ITS America regional chapter between Mississippi, Louisiana and possibly Alabama are in the works. The chapter, tentatively known as the Gulf Region Intelligent Transportation Society (GRITS), would become the fourth regional ITS America chapter in addition to the 21 state chapters already on the ITS America roster.

The formation of this regional chapter signifies the collaborative efforts between the bordering states to advance the mission of ITS by networking in research, development, and design of ITS technologies to improve the safety, security, and efficiency of the nation's surface transportation system. It is the objective of the chapter to work together to provide a local union for ITS industry stakeholders to gather and exchange ideas for improvement and expansion of the region's transportation system.

"We hope that as a regional chapter, we will be able to collaborate and form partnerships at the public, private and academic arenas within our three states, fostering discussion and solutions to transportation issues that we face, through the use of innovative ITS technologies," said Mike Stokes, MDOT ITS Program Manager.

Members of the Louisiana-Mississippi ITSA Chapter Steering Committee recently gathered to discuss further development of GRITS. The committee discussed a proposed chapter mission, goals and objectives, possible chapter officers and the election process. The committee determined that the membership structure would consist of individual, public/ non-profit organization, private organization and student memberships. The development of a chapter website, mailing list and chapter bylaws are currently being composed.

While GRITS is in its initial stages, it is clear that each of the States involved support the partnership of members, government associations, academic institutions, and private groups in an effort to increase awareness of intelligent transportation systems and its benefits to the public.

The Mississippi Department of Transportation Releases Hattiesburg Fiber Project for Bid

This June, an ITS project in Hattiesburg was released for bid which includes the addition of fiber optic cable and MDOT traffic cameras on US 49 through Hattiesburg. Incorporating fiber optic communications to signals throughout Hattiesburg has been the City's goal since 2004. With the signals linked, traffic engineers will be able to adjust the timing of signals remotely which will better serve travelers by relieving congestion and enhancing mobility. The effects of this congestion relief translate to fuel, time, and monetary savings to motorists as well as the resulting reduction of carbon emissions and improved air quality.

Specifically, the project will link the signals between Hardy Street and Elks Lake Road and provide cameras at a number of the cross-streets. Five signals will be connected to the more than forty signals that are currently or soon to be linked via the completion of various construction projects in the area. Traffic Engineers with both the City and MDOT will also have the ability to create event specific timing plans, for use during hurricane evacuations or University of Southern Mississippi events which result in increased traffic. This will result in reduced delay and congestion for travelers during high volume travel periods.

In addition to the fiber, which will provide the communications capability to the traffic signals, Closed Circuit Television

"Hattiesburg" continued on back