

Issue Paper

Management of Florida Intelligent Transportation System Deployments

Florida's Transportation Management Centers and Collocation

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List of Acronyms

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CFP	Cost Feasible Plan
CHART	Coordinated Highways Action Response Team
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FDLE	Florida Department of Law Enforcement
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FHP	Florida Highway Patrol
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIHS	Florida Intrastate Highway System
FWC	Florida Wildlife Commission
ITS	Intelligent Transportation System
JPA	Joint Participation Agreement
MDX	Miami-Dade Expressway Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
RCC	Regional Communication Center
RTMC	Regional Transportation Management Center
THCEA	Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority
TMC	Transportation Management Center
TOCC	Transportation Operations Communications Center
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation

1. Introduction

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has made a long-term commitment to the deployment of intelligent transportation systems in the State of Florida. To support this commitment, the FDOT developed the *Ten-Year ITS Cost Feasible Plan (CFP)* to guide ITS deployments on the Florida Intrastate Highway System (FIHS). Several regional transportation management center (RTMC) deployments are included in the *CFP*. These new centers, along with the existing RTMCs, will act as central locations for collecting and disseminating traffic information; facilitating incident management; and managing traffic in each region.

For a RTMC to truly be the central location as noted above, a certain amount of multi-agency cooperation and coordination must be achieved, given the fact that responsibility for transportation systems rests with various agencies on so many levels. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Highway Traffic Operations and Freeway Management* final report, there are three levels of multiagency coordination: 1) minimal using mainly voice; 2) sharing data and some level of control sharing; and 3) integration of multiple agencies into a single central system. The FHWA report notes that Level 2 is considered state-of-the-art and Level 3 is rarely achieved. This *White Paper* explores one means of achieving Level 3 coordination commonly called collocation.

1.1 Concept of Collocation

Collocation is defined as “the act or result of placing or arranging together.”¹ Collocation as it applies to RTMCs is the act or result of placing multiple agencies within one shared facility to help manage a regional transportation system. The purpose of collocation is to facilitate regional coordination across the various agencies that are responsible for different aspects of the same regional transportation system, allowing better response and resolution to issues as they arise.

¹ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2002)

2. National Experience

2.1 Background

As noted in *Section 1*, actually integrating multiple agencies into a central system is a rare achievement. This integration can be achieved through collocation and also through sharing “a data and communications network in order to share data and facilitate control decisions.” The following sections describe the experiences some RTMCs have had with this level of coordination.

2.2 Houston TranStar

The Houston TranStar facility opened in 1996 and is a collocated facility with six main partners: Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County Traffic Engineering, Harris County Emergency Management, City of Houston Traffic Division, Houston Metro (Police, Bus, and Rail Dispatch), and the City of Houston Dispatch. Each of these agencies acts independently with their own authority structure however they do work cooperatively to share certain resources such as with maintaining the equipment in the facility. There is a five person team which regulates the network equipment which is made up of the various agencies and if an agency deploys new equipment it wants maintained it must abide by the rules of this team. TranStar is also virtually connected with several other offices of emergency management within the Houston area through their regional incident management system Web site, which tracks information on freeway incidents and other major events, such as natural disasters, terrorist threats, etc. This system is password protected to allow only authorized personnel access.

Overall, the Houston TranStar experience with collocation has been an extremely positive one with improvements in agency cooperation, better responses to incidents, and better overall management of the regional transportation system.

2.3 San Antonio TransGuide

The TransGuide RTMC became operational in 1995 and is a collocated facility with three main partners. These include TxDOT, the City of San Antonio (Police/Fire/EMS/Traffic), and VIA Metropolitan Transit. The original design for the TransGuide facility included only TxDOT but the decision for collocation with the other noted agencies occurred during the design causing the addition of a third floor to the RTMC to accommodate the agencies. While the facility is a collocated facility each agency is autonomous with limited interaction between the agencies. Unlike TranStar where the agencies may work together to share resources or set regulations in the RTMC at TransGuide each agency is responsible only for itself. For example every agency is required to provide its own equipment and maintain that equipment independently. TransGuide is a TxDOT owned facility and they fund most of the operational costs for the RTMC with the limited funding support from the partner agencies.

Overall, the TransGuide experience with collocation has been a good one with noted improvements in incident response times from having the agencies all in one room.

2.4 Maryland CHART

The Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART) program started in the mid-1980’s as the “Reach the Beach” initiative, which was implement to help improve travel to and from the eastern shore. It has since blossomed into a multijurisdictional and multidisciplinary program. Maryland has a main statewide RTMC and two satellite TMCs, one in the Washington D.C. area and one in the Baltimore area, which share facilities with the State Police. The satellite TMCs are actually located in the State Police barracks in those locations with operations running from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. To accomplish this collocation, however, the Maryland Department of Transportation was fully responsible for funding the retrofitting of the State Police barracks and for supplying all the equipment needed to run the CHART program in these facilities. The Maryland Department of Transportation also helps pay for equipment for the State Police, such as motorcycles to help them respond to incidents quicker. Beyond the collocation occurring at these facilities, the CHART software platform, which includes emergency management, video surveillance, and transportation management modules, among others, is deployed in 45 operation centers around the State. This facilitates an integrated data sharing network between the Maryland Department of Transportation and their regional partners.

According to the FHWA *Highway Traffic Operations and Freeway Management* final report, Maryland is a good example of how to achieve Level 3 coordination and cooperation.

3. Existing / Planned Florida Experience

Each FDOT District has developed RTMC designs and concepts of operation, based on such factors as time, funding, and institutional constraints. In these designs and concepts of operation, the strategies have been identified for collocation with other local agencies. This *Section* outlines the existing and planned traffic management center (TMC) collocation strategies by District.

3.1 District 1

District 1 has plans for two separate TMCs – one in Fort Myers that will be the main RTMC and one in Sarasota/Manatee that will be a satellite TMC. At the Fort Myers RTMC, which is scheduled to be let for construction in May 2005, there are plans to collocate with the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), pending the resolution of some obstacles. For further information, see the *Fort Myers RTMC White Paper*, which has been included as *Appendix A*.

The Sarasota/Manatee TMC is scheduled to be constructed in 2005 by Manatee County through a joint participation agreement (JPA) with the FDOT. There will be collocation with signal systems for Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, and City of Bradenton. District 1 is developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for this facility’s collocation plan.

3.2 District 2

District 2 has a RTMC under operation in Jacksonville, located in the FDOT Urban Office. This RTMC is not currently collocated with any other partners; however, it is linked via fiber optic cable to the FHP Troop G Regional Communication Center (RCC) and to the City of Jacksonville Traffic Engineering Office.

In taking advantage of the connection with these regional partners, the District 2 RTMC is run after hours by the FHP personnel, who contact the ITS staff only in times of difficulty, and the City of Jacksonville utilizes the closed-circuit television (CCTV) images to manage the arterial system around the freeway interchanges. This satellite concept allows for regional communication when the option for collocation is not available. To date, this arrangement has worked well for District 2.

3.3 District 3

District 3 is in the planning stages regarding any RTMCs; however, collocation in the existing City of Tallahassee TMC is under discussion. While no TMCs exist in District 3, Pensacola is being considered for the utilization of an existing State-owned facility as a TMC and having local agencies collocate there.

3.4 District 4

District 4 has plans for separate RTMCs, including one in Broward County and one in Palm Beach County. In the Broward RTMC, collocation will occur with the Broward County Traffic Engineering Division, Broward County Transit, and the FHP. When the Center opens, Broward County Traffic Engineering will be in the facility first, with the other two agencies moving in later.

The Palm Beach RTMC also plans to have collocation with the Palm Beach County Traffic Engineering Division and FHP; however, the details about how the collocation will work have not been finalized. There are also plans to connect to the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in each county as it becomes feasible.

3.5 District 5

District 5 operates an RTMC in Orlando. Collocated there are the FHP, Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), and the 511 service provider for Central Florida. There are plans to operate the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority’s ITS from the RTMC as well. While there are no plans for other local agencies to collocate in this facility, these agencies do have access to the District 5 system through various network connections. The agencies currently connected include local EOCs, Volusia County, the City of Orlando, Seminole County, Orange County, and the City of Daytona Beach, with both Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise and Brevard County being connected soon. It is expected that as other agencies join, they will be connected as well.

3.6 District 6

District 6 is finishing integration of their ITS in the new RTMC located next to the existing District office in Miami. In this RTMC, the FHP, the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC), and Smartroute Systems (the 511 service provider) will be collocated with the District. There are no plans for other agencies to share the facility, though there is unassigned office space available for future collocation.

The Miami-Dade Expressway Authority (MDX) which controls a number of toll facilities in Miami-Dade County will also have a TMC. In anticipation of the transfer of these toll facilities from FDOT in July 2001 MDX created an Operations Center to operate and maintain the collection of tolls for the MDX system. This Operations Center currently houses the MDX Toll Collection System database, the Central Communications Network management and monitoring system, the Inventory and Asset Management Integrated System, the Central Communications Infrastructure, the Financial Management Systems, and the Collaborative Information Systems. With the deployment of ITS along the MDX corridors the Operations Center is being evolved into a “Multiple Operations Center”, which will combine information systems, toll collection operations, and ITS management (the TMC) under one roof. In order to continue its active coordination and cooperation with District 6 MDX is also installing a fiber connection between the MDX Operations Center and the District 6 RTMC. This will allow information sharing and emergency operational control.

3.7 District 7

District 7 is planning to have the Tampa RTMC online in April 2006. This facility will be collocated with FHP Troop C’s regional dispatch. There are no plans for collocation with any other local agencies. There are plans to share the network’s data and video with the other local agencies’ TMCs as they come online. The other agencies planning to have TMCs are Hillborough County and the City of Tampa, which will collocate with the Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority (THCEA).

3.8 Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise

Florida’s Turnpike Enterprise has two RTMCs, one in Pompano Beach and the other at Turkey Lake in Orlando. In May 2003, the Turnpike started a pilot program to provide the RTMC staff with on-site training at the FHP Lake Worth Dispatch Center. This program provides two full time TMC dispatch operators at the FHP facility who act as a liaison between the FHP, the RTMC, and the Turnpike Roadway Maintenance Office. This pilot has been viewed as successful and Turnpike Traffic Operations is looking into making it permanent, as well as extending the hours of dispatch beyond the current 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday operations. There are no other plans for collocation at this time; however, coordination with other agencies’ RTMCs is an ongoing effort as the new facilities come online.

4. Obstacles

As noted previously, achieving a multiagency centralized ITS is difficult. The reasons vary, but can be broken down into three main components: institutional issues, cost or funding issues, and schedule. The following sections discuss these obstacles in more detail.

4.1 Institutional Issues

Institutional issues are those components inherent to the organization of transportation agencies and the jurisdictional divisions of the regional transportation system. As a result of this division, transportation agencies have traditionally focused solely on their own mission and have developed policies and procedures that are applied only within their own boundaries without giving due consideration to coordination with other agencies. This narrow focus can also lead to difficulties in sharing resources across jurisdictions.

Another institutional issue is concern for security of systems between agencies. In today’s environment after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there is an even greater need for the sharing of information across jurisdictional boundaries. Designating which systems to share, the level of security access to establish, and which partners can participate poses a significant challenge in getting agencies to agree to collocation.

4.2 Cost

Cost or funding can be a major obstacle to collocation occurring in TMCs. Often, transportation agencies are able to get capital funding for capacity improvement or new development projects, but not for operations and maintenance (O&M) of existing facilities. This affects collocation in that it may be possible for an agency to get funding to build a new TMC, but not to retrofit an existing facility to allow collocation. The other implication of this is that agencies may not be able to get funding to staff positions in a RTMC, even if they are given space in the facility.

4.3 Schedule

The timing of a TMC coming online is another barrier to collocation. The reason why schedule may be a barrier to collocation is that agencies are at varying stages of deploying ITS projects. They may or may not be ready to consider collocation in an upcoming TMC when the opportunity presents itself. This results in several TMCs being built in a region because of differences in agency readiness and capabilities.

5. Benefits

The benefits of TMC collocation are both tangible and intangible. It is because of these benefits that agencies continue to pursue creating centralized ITS through collocation or network interconnection, despite the difficulties. The following sections discuss some of these benefits in greater detail.

5.1 Reduced Response Times

As stated in the FHWA’s final report, “When emergency services agencies share facilities and traffic monitoring resources with transportation management agencies, the efficiency and speed of incident response are measurably improved.” Reduction in response times to incidents is one of the main benefits cited for collocation. The benefit here is derived from having the emergency services groups notified immediately of any incidents the TMC becomes aware of and, through the utilization of CCTV cameras, they can identify needed response equipment. This is one of the main benefits noted by Jack Whaley, P.E., Director of Houston TranStar. “Combining emergency management personnel and transportation personnel has led to better responses to incidents in a quicker timeframe,” he noted.

TransGuide, in San Antonio, has seen similar benefits, with a reduction of as much as 15 percent in response time noted by the Texas Transportation Institute. Mr. Brian Fariello, Traffic Management Engineer, TransGuide noted that the reduction in response times is the main benefit from collocation that they have seen. “With the San Antonio 911 dispatch in the RTMC the operators get information about incidents immediately and the police are able to use the CCTV cameras to coordinate a response. Also the VIA Metropolitan Transit is able to use the information to alter their bus dispatching,” he noted.

5.2 Breakdown of Institutional Issues

One of the obstacles to collocation noted was institutional issues. If collocation is achieved despite the obstacles, it can help break down those institutional barriers. Mr. Whaley experienced this first hand at Houston TranStar

He explained that some of the benefits to collocation were: “1) The different agencies were able to use each other’s resources, allowing the agencies to expand their capabilities due to leveraging lessons learned from the collocation experience; 2) when conflicts between the different agencies arose, they were easier to handle and were resolved in a quicker manner.”

The FHWA series on *Making the Case for Regional Transportation Operations Collaboration and Coordination* states, “A regional concept of operations is a primary product of regional operations collaboration and coordination. It is a regional strategy for achieving the shared vision of operators and service providers.”

5.3 Resource Sharing

Resource sharing is another main benefit of collocation. The TranStar experience also bears this out. Mr. Whaley said, “Collocation facilitated the sharing of resources external to the RTMC, such as fiber.” This was also identified in the proceedings from the National Conference on Traffic Incident Management: A Road Map to the Future, which was held in March 2002. There, David Ekern, Minnesota Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner and American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Associate Director, discussed Minnesota’s efforts in creating nine transportation operation communication centers (TOCC). These are collocated facilities with traffic operation, enforcement services, emergency response, maintenance operation, traveler information, and transit operation functions. Mr. Ekern noted that these TOCCs were developed from “the recognition of multiple agencies that they could not afford technology or staffing to serve customers in non-metropolitan environments.” As a result, they pooled their resources to create the TOCCs and share their operations.

6. Conclusion

As noted by the FHWA, achieving a central system for regional operations is very difficult, with this level of coordination rarely occurring. While the obstacles to collocation and the creation of a central data and communications network to share data and facilitate control decisions are many, the benefits to be reaped will continue to push agencies toward this level of coordination.

This push can already be seen in Florida with the numerous RTMCs existing or planned that are working toward collocation and network sharing with regional partners. As Florida continues to invest in statewide ITS, there will be more opportunities for creating this centralized traffic management capability, the immediate and long-term benefits of which make it well worth achieving.

7. References

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Appendix A

Fort Myers RTMC White Paper

Fort Myers Regional Traffic Management Center Co-Location of FDOT and FHP

Introduction

The Florida DOT has determined that a regional transportation management center is needed for management of traffic, incidents and traveler information for the I-75 corridor in Southwest Florida. An FDOT study taking FHP and other emergency management operations into account determined that Fort Myers was the ideal location for regional management including Collier, Lee, Charlotte, Sarasota and Manatee Counties. The study reflects consensus of District 1 and the Central ITS Office. A memorandum of understanding between FDOT and FHP (executed December 7, 2001, attached) establishes agreement to cooperate to establish the collocation of state law enforcement joint radio dispatch in Traffic Management Centers, should collocation be mutually beneficial. The timeline for the center, field equipment and communications is to have the system fully operational; on a 24-7 basis before roadway widening begins in 2006/7.

FHP however, has their dispatch operations at Page Field in Fort Myers under a long term (15 year) lease with the Lee County Port Authority. Further, FHP is currently moving its District Office to this same location. There are provisions for early termination, but they come with a price that needs to be considered in the plans to collocate operations at Daniels Parkway.

Center Operations

The Fort Myers RTMC will enable effective management by FDOT District One of the I-75 Corridor providing improvements in traveler and responder safety, travel reliability and improved public agency image. Similar operations have demonstrated benefits of 15 to 50% reduction in crashes and 20 to 48% in travel time. The key to this success is that the RTMC serves as the hub of activity and information sharing for management and operations of the corridor as a joint effort by each agency.

The specific information that will be available to all of the operating agencies and public includes:

- Real-time, color, full-motion video covering nearly all of the roadway and cross streets
- Full instrumentation of the travel lanes measuring speeds and continuously comparing this with historical speeds to detect problems
- Monitoring of breaches of the cable barrier system adjacent to canals
- Direct information on the occurrence of traffic incidents, their location, severity, estimated time to clear.
- Real-time information on environmental effects including fog, smoke, wind and flooding
- Real-time location of service patrol operators with oversight of their priorities
- Public internet access to real time travel speeds, video snapshots, travel conditions and advisories and travel times
- Traveler information through the use of electronic signs, highway advisory radio and the Everglades Radio Network

All of these resources allow the agencies to complete their missions more effectively. This occurs through: improving the effectiveness of law enforcement; reducing the impacts of incidents; reducing travel delay and frustration; improving responder safety by reducing exposure to traffic and advance warning of emergency locations; and reduced secondary crashes by early warnings of incidents.

Facility Governance

Each agency can maintain its own identity and procedures with no reduction in security or efficiency. The collocation just allows the agencies to directly access more information than they have previously had, improving their efficiency, performance and work environment. Background checks can be performed for any non-sworn personnel with access to secure areas.

Since FDOT is taking the lead on construction of the facility on state property, all needs for access, security and facility features can be addressed. The partner agencies will be relieved of being facility owners or lessors to other non-state agencies. A straightforward cost sharing formula can be developed with funds automatically transferred among the agencies. Staffing costs are unchanged, although some tasks can be shared, reducing staff needs.

Implementation

Florida DOT and FHP have reached agreement on the desirability of collocation at the RTMC for all of the reasons described above. In order to migrate FHP from Page Field to the Daniels Parkway site, the following options are possible:

- Build the RTMC and move both the FHP District and Dispatch. This allows FHP operations to be with dispatch, adds to security of the site, and avoids further duplications of costs to the State in the long run. This is the ideal plan for the operations of the RTMC for FDOT and FHP. Relocation of other law enforcement agencies to the Daniels Parkway Site would complete the ideal scenario for FHP.
- Build the RTMC at the Daniels Parkway site and move FHP Dispatch only. This option could include a plan to move the FHP District and other law enforcement agencies in the future, should funding allow. This may also avoid the penalty in the lease for moving too soon. This is a short term plan if the ideal solution cannot be implemented.
- Build the RTMC with a phasing plan to add to the building in the future to accommodate FHP Dispatch and District and could include other law enforcement agencies to be relocated. This option reduces initial costs and gives FHP more time to address internal issues with the migration. This is a long term plan if the ideal solution cannot be implemented.

The following steps need to follow in order to keep the preparation of the RTMC project on track. These steps need to be concluded by June 1, 2004.

- FDOT to prepare a white paper on co-location
- FHP to present the white paper internally
- FDOT to arrange TMC scanning tour of similar joint operations centers
- FHP to participate in a scanning tour
- FHP to provide input on initial space and function needs in the RTMC
- FHP to provide details on current lease agreement at Page Field
- FHP to participate in development of detailed functional requirements for the facility