them," she said. "It might take some time for people to remember to check and follow these variable speed limits, but once it's in drivers' minds, we know it'll make a great impact."

Though the success of this system depends primarily on how closely drivers pay attention to and obey variable speed limits during heavy congestion, Downs is optimistic Central Floridians will embrace Variable Speed Limits. "Once people get used to it, I think they will love it," she said. "Faster travel times, fewer accidents, better gas mileage and less sitting still in traffic. What's not to like?"

For more information regarding variable speed limits on I-4 visit www.trans4mation.org.

This article was provided by Rick Morrow, FDOT District 5 and Derek Hudson, Global-5. For more information, please contact Mr. Morrow at (386) 943-5309 or email Rick.Morrow@dot.state.fl.us.

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FDOT District 6 Launches Road Ranger Driver's Information System

With more than 50 drivers, 20 vehicles, and two contracts to administer, the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) District 6 transportation management center (TMC) operates Road Ranger Service Patrol units in one of the largest metropolitan areas in the nation. Tracking contract compliance records and performance evaluation measures, and logging schedules are part of the daily functions of the TMC. Aiming to improve management and oversight of Road Ranger contracts, the FDOT District 6 TMC recently implemented software to automate contract related tasks to improve efficiency between the FDOT and Road Ranger contractors.

The Road Ranger Driver's Information System (RRDIS) is a Web-based application that serves as a records management and retrieval system accessible to authorized users. Accessible from the TMC's intranet site, the interactive software enables users to access critical information directly from their workstations.

With nine functional modules, the contract information that was once stored in bulky binders is now readily accessible to authorized users through this automated system. FDOT's managers are automatically notified of new potential drivers for approval as well as follow-up documentation. Control room operators can also view a contractor's daily schedule as soon as it is posted. Additionally, the application stores limited Road Ranger vehicle information, Road Ranger crash history, and beat management information. Contractors can upload a driver's schedule up to three days in advance. Managers and administrators are able to generate reports, manage contractors, and send notification alerts to various users, including: contractors and District and Central Office staffs. There are four user

types (administrator, manager, operator, and contractor), all having access to functions that are specific to their role in the process—with the administrator having access to all nine modules.

RRDIS eliminates the reliance on paperwork. The data field entry requirements of the application do not allow users to submit partial information. Incomplete driver's schedules are automatically rejected, promoting accuracy and efficiency at all times. The report generator function allows for enhanced performance evaluation of contractor-submitted documents by operators and managers. Managers are able to generate incident history reports, view vehicle and personnel status updates, and enforce contract compliance. Automating these tasks has enhanced contract management functions while minimizing administrative tasks.

This program was designed by FDOT District 6 and developed out of the FDOT's partnership with Florida International University's (FIU) Lehman Center for Transportation Research. The application's design and general functional modules allows management staff from other Districts to use RRDIS as well. The software's easily adaptive nature allows for seamless implementation for Districts with service patrol units and similar contracts. Users are able to modify the system to an agency's particular needs and situation.

This article was provided by Javier Rodriguez, FDOT District 6. For more information, please contact Mr. Rodriguez at (305) 470-5341 or email Javier.Rodriguez2@dot.state.fl.us.

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Maintenance of Traffic for Incident Responders

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) joined forces to develop a FDOT Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) course for first responders (Road Ranger, highway patrol, local police and sheriffs, fire-rescue and emergency medical personnel, and tow operators). This was undertaken in an attempt to share each group's knowledge in incident management and responder safety, and to provide a safer work zone for all. Additionally, this training will give all responders some insights into how they affect secondary crashes and congestion on the highways. After CUTR developed the core program; law enforcement, fire-rescue, asset maintenance groups, towing companies, and emergency medical service (EMS) groups met three times at the University of South Florida to finalize the product.

Training materials were evaluated and updated after each session. Once the core training program was developed, a pilot training session was conducted with law enforcement, fire-rescue, asset maintenance, and EMS to receive feedback on the course. This group's feedback was also incorporated into the course curriculum.

Since the first training session was only attended by the Florida State Fire College and one fire representative, a decision was made to have another session in Ocala with the Fire College and other fire representatives. This session will be specifically targeted toward fire and rescue personnel. The Central Office Incident Management Section is currently in the process of planning this session and it is hoped to finalize the course by the end of the year.

Once this course is completed and approved by all first responder agencies, we believe we will have a training course that will greatly reduce the number of injuries and fatalities to first responders in Florida. In addition, this training will go a long way toward harmonizing all agencies' incident management training and promoting an understanding of each agency's duties and responsibilities and show how their actions will affect the safety of all responders and the traveling public.

This article was provided by Mike Akridge, FDOT Traffic Engineering and Operations Office. For more information, please contact Mr. Akridge at (850) 410-5607 or email Michael.Akridge@dot.state.fl.us.

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