



Polk County Traffic Incident Management Team

Team Meeting

June 12, 2008

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Jim Hills	Lakeland Fire	Bruce Doras	FHP
Ken Wade	Polk County Traffic	Heather Cullaton	ARC Towing Service
Scott Baver	EMS/IMS	Steve Webb	Webb's Towing
Ken Straub	SWS First Response	Darwin Ryan	Ryan's Wrecker Service
Mickey Nalker	Polk County Traffic	Joe Bolton	Bolton's Towing Service
Henry Hays	511 Tampa/traffic.com	Robert Sessions	Polk County Sheriffs Office
Debra Grenig	Polk County Traffic	Mike Meehan	511
Bruce Best	Flint's Wrecker Service	Jeffrey Alspaugh	Polk County Traffic
Amy Shafer	Polk County Traffic	Eddie Gross	Polk County Traffic
Robert Pitman	Polk County Fire	Ted Smith	Delcan Corp
Gary Weiss	ACT	Don Olson	FDOT
Mike McArthur	Stepp's Towing	Megh Govindu	VANUS
Dean Empie	VMS, Inc.		

Call to Order: The Polk County TIM Team meeting was held on Thursday, June 12, 2008 at 9:30 AM at the Polk County Traffic Engineering and Operations Office, 3000 Sheffield Road, Winter Haven, FL 33880. Ted Smith and Don Olson facilitated the meeting.

Handouts: Don Olson and Ted Smith distributed the following handouts.

- Section 3.1 - Interstate 4 Contraflow Plan for Tampa Bay and Figure 3.1 - Contraflow Plan for I-4 from I-275 to SR 417 from the *Technical Memorandum 3 - Traffic Incident Management, Contraflow Best-Practice Recommendations*, Version 6, April 13, 2006.
- Section 5 - Conclusions from the *FIHS Contraflow Plan Executive Summary*, Version 1, June 13, 2005.
- TIM Team Times Newsletter, 20th Edition, Polk County, May 2008

Introductions: Don Olson introduced himself and welcomed all the attendees to the Polk County TIM meeting. Don mentioned that TIM members work together as a team to look at incidents. These incidents could be traffic, safety, or weather related. Some incidents are bottle necks and some are crashes. Don introduced Ted Smith and told the members that they will go through the items on the agenda. If any questions or additional items come out during the meeting or later, either Don or Ted can answer the questions during the meeting or through e-mails.

Ted identified that the I-4 corridor is missing a traffic incident management team. Ted mentioned that Orlando has a tri-county team that includes Seminole, Osceola, and Orange Counties. Florida Turnpike has two teams. Florida DOT District Seven has a team in Hillsborough County and a team in Pinellas County. Two teams operate for I-75, first team includes Charlotte, Sarasota, and Manatee Counties, and the second team includes Collier and Lee Counties. Ted mentioned that the TIM team concept has been very successful in bringing people from different agencies together in order to discuss issues related to traffic incident management. From experience, it has been identified that communication, cooperation, and coordination are important elements in incident management.

Ted works with the US DOT and indicated that roadway operations and management are buzz words these days in Washington, DC. Federal funding is allocated to monitor performance measures to see how well the states are improving in roadway operations and management. Incident management is not just limited to local agencies but is also monitored nationwide. Florida is successful in developing procedures and inter-agency agreements resulting in best practices documents. Great work is being done in Florida. Good networking is taking place from these meetings, and mutual respect among different agencies is the goal. Quarterly meetings will be held for the Polk TIM Team. Alternative locations are being considered for future meetings.

Don asked everyone to introduce themselves. Don introduced himself as the project manager to facilitate TIM team meetings. Don mentioned that the Polk County Traffic Engineering and Operations has a great building and appreciated their facilities and refreshments. Everyone introduced themselves. Ted mentioned that Delcan and VANUS is a joint venture to support Florida DOT on TIM issues. Don mentioned that the main goal of TIM meetings is to improve safety at the traffic incident scene.

Update on TIM team initiative:

- Don will work on providing three ring binders for all team members so that meeting handouts can be archived for future reference and sharing purposes.
- During the Collier-Lee Counties TIM meeting on June 11, 2008, FHP mentioned that they are concerned about motorists parking on the shoulders. Because of this, emergency personnel can not use the shoulder as an emergency lane to get to the incident. This is a statewide issue that needs to be addressed. Don suggested that TIM Team members work together to plan and launch a public awareness campaign. Multi – Media.
- Ted mentioned that a couple years ago FHP and FDOT got together and developed a ground breaking Open Roads Policy. The main objective of this policy is to restore traffic flows at the traffic incident scene. Florida uses 90 minutes as a bench mark. Other states use other standards. Not all, but more than 90% of incidents in Florida are handled within 90 minutes. Some incidents take more than two to three hours.
- Some municipalities developed local open roads agreement. In this, local agencies also sign-up and agree to cooperate in the agreement. Some agreements were also signed by the chief executive and agency heads. The main goal is to fine tune emergency response to fit in the 90 minutes clearance time goal.
- Don mentioned that consideration should be given to the local economy during incidents because traffic incidents block the roadways and result in traffic back-ups. Also, secondary crashes should be considered because some times secondary crashes are worse than primary crashes. Good traffic incident management practices will improve economy by keeping the traffic moving and improve safety by reducing secondary crashes.
- Ted asked if any agencies experienced secondary crashes. Three to four members raised their hands.

- On an average, approximately 50 tow truck personnel die per year while working at incident scenes. Comparatively, this number is more than law enforcement and fire personnel combined. Measures should be implemented to improve safety for tow truck personnel.
- Ted asked the members if everyone attended the Polk County TIM Orientation and Call to Action meetings that were conducted in April. He then added that the TIM team website www.swfltim.org has prior TIM team meeting minutes, handouts, and presentations for members who missed the two meetings in April to catch up with the discussions.
- Don mentioned that one of the items that came up in the April meetings was request for opticom devices at signals for fire truck preemption. The opticom devices would be for the signals on US 27 on both sides of I-4. The request went to Mr. Don Cashdollar and he is waiting for more information from Polk County Traffic Operations.
- Ted showed a document that just came out. He mentioned that the US Fire Administration has worked with US DOT and FHWA for two years to come up with a good Manual/document on Traffic Incident Management Systems. The manual is available at www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/tims_0408.pdf. The document talks about evidence recovery, towing and recovery operations, traffic operations, vehicle positioning, etc. at incident scenes. This document explains the concept and asked members to share the information with their agency staff. The document came out in April 2008, and more modules on this issue will be coming through the National Fire Academy.
- Because of incident issues including stopping distance and sight distance at different speeds, particularly at hill tops, advance warning signs are really important at incident scenes. Advance warning signs are rarely placed and needs to be used on a regular basis. High profile florescent pink color is the official MUTCD color for incident advance warning signs. Awareness and education is needed on incident advance warning signs. The original color that was selected for incident management signs was lime green; but that was reserved for school warning signs. The next best color was the florescent coral or hot pink/magenta.
- Effective November 24, 2008, all personnel working at an incident on an interstate or local road must wear, at a minimum, a Type II safety vest. Ted asked everyone to go through the safety vest requirements carefully and have their personnel implement them at incident scenes. OSHA penalty will be applied if the safety vest requirements are not followed. A new safety vest is also being developed that is in between Type II and Type III safety vests. The new safety vest is geared for law enforcement and fire rescue with features like slits for weapons, pockets for radio, and five point break away shoulders.
- A video titled "Your Vest Won't Stop This Bullet" was developed by International Chiefs of Police and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for law enforcement personnel. This is a good informational video for all personnel working at incident scenes. Don and Ted will plan to show this video in a future meeting.
- Don mentioned that the 511 program provides real time motorist information and is part of the TIM team initiatives. More information can be found on the website www.511tampabay.com.
- Mr. Mike Meehan's summary about 511 program:
 - Works on the basic concept that, the more traffic diverted from the incident scene means the more safe it is for emergency response personnel to work at the incident scene.
 - When calling the 511 system, give the name of the road first and then direction, like I-4 and then say eastbound.
 - Ten years ago FCC developed 511 nationally as a traveler information services. Each state implements the program differently. Florida works with private contractors in each district like Tampa Bay area, Southwest Florida area.
 - Each regional area will then be joined together for a statewide 511 system, which will come out by the end of the year.

- The 511 program can place alerts such as amber alert, smoke problem, gas leak, and major incidents in the system.
- On a monthly basis the 511 system receives approximately 60,000 calls and the website receives 600,000 hits.
- For team members the best number to reach 511 system is 813-637-0170 and for Nextel users the number is 162*19*195. Mike requested not to give these numbers to general public.
- General public can call the tip line 813-207-0800 to provide or update information to the 511 system. The preferred order to provide information to the 511 system is direction, roadway, condition, and cause.
- Ted mentioned that giving stale information may neutralize the credibility of the 511 system. Everyone can work together to update the information on the 511 system and provide real time information as much as possible.
- Sensors are installed on I-4 typically in the median and provides traffic, speed, travel time, vehicle occupancy, and independent lane flow information to the 511 system.
- The messages on the DMS signs in Tampa are inputted manually and the information is drawn from the sensors.
- A traffic and incident scene management training video developed by Wisconsin State Patrol was shown to the members. The video depicted the steps involved in the process of incident management to make the incident scene safer.
- Ted added that incident management is a team effort and by combining resources the incident scene can be made safer. Safety vests are recommended regardless of the time of day. Vehicle position is very important for scene safety and communication, cooperation, and coordination among different agencies is the key at incident scenes. Technically, the first officer who arrives at the incident scene has 15 minutes to take command of the scene and determine the amount of time that it may take to clear the incident. Continuous upgrades to traffic control as each emergency unit arrives adds to scene safety.
- Don mentioned the Lee County tanker truck rollover incident. I-75 was blocked for four hours and the traffic was diverted to the local streets. Lee County Traffic Operations implemented a pre-programmed signal plan on local roads for this incident. The pre-programmed signal plan worked efficiently and cleared the congestion caused on local streets due to the incident on I-75. Don reiterated the importance of signal systems for situations like these.
- Don asked the Polk County Traffic Operations about their signal systems and a member gave the following update.
 - Polk County is currently working on countywide ITS upgrade.
 - Currently 20 signals can be tracked from the traffic management center. Signal timings and phasing can be controlled remotely.
 - In the future, approximately 65 county signals will be connected to the traffic management center. As a next step, the County is planning to add DOT signals to the traffic management center.
 - Currently Polk County has 13 traffic monitoring cameras. In the future, one-third of the County signals will be equipped with cameras.
 - Polk County is willing to share the video with other agencies.
- Traffic Operations prepared emergency contact information packets and asked all the members to pick a packet on their way out.
- Don discussed the Rapid Incident Scene Clearance (RISC) Program, which is currently being considered and initially would only cover I-4 in Polk County. In the future, Florida DOT will expand the system to other roadways like US 27. This program provides incentives to clear the incident efficiently and operates as follows.

- If a trooper who arrives at a major incident scene determines the incident meets the RISC criteria and has blocked the interstate, the trooper will call the TMC and request a RISC activation which will bring two heavy recovery trucks and a support truck. The TMC will confirm and activate RISC by notifying the RISC Contractor to mobilize.
- TMC will first place a call to a PRE-QUALIFIED tow company for response. The tow company has 15 minutes to respond to the call. If the tow company does not respond within 15 minutes, the TMC moves on to the next tow company on the rotation list.
- Once a tow company responds and acknowledges the call-out, it has 45 minutes to get to the incident scene. A minimum \$600 bonus will be provided if this condition is met. (One tow company operator mentioned that 45 minutes is a fair time to get to the incident scene after notification).
- All three of the trucks and all additional specific equipment that is requested by the TMC should arrive at the incident scene within 60 minutes after notification, to be qualified for the bonus. The TMC will be the official time-keeper for contract time.
- The tow trucks and additional equipment operators have to wait for the incident commander to give them notice to proceed (NTP) to clear the scene. Once the notice to proceed is given, the 'travel portion' of the roadway should be cleared in 90 minutes. If only tow trucks are used to clear the travel portion of the roadway within 90 minutes, a \$2,500 bonus will be provided. If the additional equipment (i.e. bobcat, lowboy) is also used to clear the travel portion of the roadway within 90 minutes, an additional \$1,000 bonus will be provided. This means that the maximum bonus possible is \$3,500 per incident.
- If the travel portion of the roadway is not cleared within 90 minutes, then no bonus will be provided. If it takes more than three hours to clear the incident from the travel lanes, a \$600 fine will be imposed on the towing company. In addition, a \$10 per minute additional charge (after the three hour limit) will be imposed until the roadway is cleared.
- The program has both incentives and penalties.
- RISC will be determined by the field officer who will be trained, and all milestone times will be recorded for review. A post incident review will be conducted to determine if all criteria is met before distributing bonus checks.
- Operators in the RISC program need to be certified. Information for training and certification for operators is available on the Florida DOT website.
- The RISC program is beyond the standard rotation program and is co-managed by FHP and Florida DOT.
- Some incidents such as the recent I-4 incident that involve fire, multiple trucks/vehicles, and fatalities/injuries may be above and beyond RISC activation. These incidents may take more time to clear even after RISC activation.
- The Florida DOT District Seven office has the authority to activate RISC program.
- The City of Atlanta just started their version of the RISC program in January. It is called TRIP (Towing and Recovery Incentive Program). They had 12 activations and have cut the clearance time down to just less than one hour in six months. Prior to implementing the RISC Program it was five hours.
- One member asked what resources does Florida DOT have in central Florida to manage the RISC program because not all roadways had cameras installed. Don answered that the RISC program is on I-4 only at this point. Florida DOT plans to expand the program to other roadways in the future.
- One member asked about the liability issues for tow agencies associated with relocating the incident to open the travel lanes faster. Ted answered that Florida has liability protection program when working under the direction of law enforcement or DOT personnel. The tower is exempt from anything other than 'gross negligence'.

- The RISC program is a new dimension that provides incentives to clear the scene faster rather than the traditional business model which rewards tow companies to maximize their time to increase their compensation.
- Don asked the members if anyone was involved in the I-4 Contraflow exercise that was conducted a few weeks ago. One member mentioned that they were not informed about the exercise, and expressed interest to be involved in future exercises. She asked for the contact person for this program, and Don answered that he will be the primary contact person.
- Ted asked the members for feedback on future meeting locations. Don mentioned that the Traffic Operations is a nice facility, but has been directed to seek a meeting location close to I-4 so that Florida DOT District Seven from Tampa and District Five from Orlando can be involved. One member mentioned about a conference room available in Lakeland. The Polk County I-4 roadway is managed by the Tampa TMC. The TIM Team may elect to meet once a year at the Polk County Traffic Operations facility. Ted asked for agency logos and asked the members to forward their logos to Don, Don.Olson@dot.state.fl.us or Christina Florez at VANUS, cflorez@vanusinc.com
- Don and Ted thanked Traffic Operations for the facility, refreshments, and for the hospitality.
- Members recommended discussing memorandum of understanding between agencies regarding disciplined/appropriate use of emergency lighting at incident scenes. Ted mentioned that the new fire trucks now have an interlock system that dims or turns off front facing lights when the vehicle is parked.
- Ted thanked all members for attending the meeting and reminded everyone to pick up the emergency contact information packets prepared by Traffic Operations.

Useful web sites:

TIM Teams: www.swftim.org

Scheduled 2008 Meeting Dates:

Thursday September 11, 2008

Thursday December 11, 2008

Attachments:

- Section 3.1 - Interstate 4 Contraflow Plan for Tampa Bay and Figure 3.1 - Contraflow Plan for I-4 from I-275 to SR 417 from the *Technical Memorandum 3 – Traffic Incident Management, Contraflow Best-Practice Recommendations*, Version 6, April 13, 2006.
- Section 5 - Conclusions from the *FIHS Contraflow Plan Executive Summary*, Version 1, June 13, 2005.

Meeting Notes by Megh Govindu, VANUS, Inc. (813) 831-8870