

KITS

kansas intelligent transportation systems

Quarterly

Vehicle Mounted VMS a Success for Wichita Motorist Assist

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2004 Conference in
Kansas City

Fall/Winter 2004

The Kansas Highway Patrol applied for funding from the ITS Set Aside Program to purchase three vehicle mounted Variable Message Signs (VMS) for the Motorist Assistance Vehicles (MAV) utilized in the Wichita Metro Area. These signs were to be used for traffic direction and control on the State and Federal Highways when needed at emergency situations. Funding was approved in December 2001.



The motorist assist program in Wichita was switching to extended cab pickups with tonneau covers. A sign was needed that would not interfere with the opening and closing of the tonneau cover. It was soon determined that there was no sign on the market that would fit these needs. Plans were drawn up and sent to the KDOT Office in Topeka. Matt Volz and Mike Floberg of the KDOT ITS Unit took the plans and did the required paperwork to send them out for bids to see if these signs could be built. They were successful in getting a workable sign from ADDCO. A prototype was ordered, built, and then delivered to the District 5 Office in Hutchinson.

Carl Helsel and John Stewart at KDOT's Hutchinson shop took the design and built the mounting assembly that attached the sign to the MAV Truck. To design a system that lowered and raised the sign from inside the bed of the truck was no easy task. Mr. Stewart was able to build a system that is very efficient and turned out even better than anticipated. Mr. Helsel then took the finished product and programmed the computer to make the sign operational.

The sign was put into service early in 2003 and has been a great success. It has been used at many crash scenes in the Wichita Metro Area. It has greatly improved the flow of traffic in these situations and has made it safer for KHP personnel in the field. It is capable of holding 99 preprogrammed messages in memory so that the most appropriate message can be utilized to fit the scene.

KHP is looking forward to late spring when all three MAV's will have the signs available for use.

Article prepared by Captain Alan Stoecklein, Troop F Operations Commander.

Projects Selected for the KDOT ITS Set-Aside Program

Since 2000 the KDOT Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Steering Committee has had the opportunity to fund projects that apply technology (such as advanced sensors, computer, electronics, and communications) to increase the safety and efficiency of the transportation system. This year the KDOT ITS Unit received 16 project requests that totaled \$4,591,000, with the 10 selected projects at a projected cost of \$2,090,125. Of the 16 project requests, 7 were from state agencies, 8 from cities, and one from the counties. The projects selected to receive funding for the fiscal year 2006 ITS Set-Aside Program are:

- KC Scout – Install ITS equipment in area currently being reconstructed on I-635 from Kansas Avenue to State Avenue.
- Speed Monitoring Trailer – Purchases a speed monitoring trailer for District 1.
- Advanced Traveler Information Systems – Support the cost of 511 system upgrades.
- Overland Park Traffic Control System/KC Scout Interface – This City of Overland Park project will provide a link from their traffic control center to KC Scout.
- Automated Small Vehicle Transit (ASVT) – This KDOT led study addresses the preliminary design needs of an ASVT system at Kansas State University.
- Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department Traffic Safety Initiative – The County will purchase a speed monitoring trailer.
- Speed Monitor – The City of Marysville will purchase a speed and traffic monitoring system.
- Traffic Signal Coordination and CCTV – This City of Lenexa project will allow connectivity between KC Scout and the city's ATMS.
- Arterial CMS's – This City of Overland Park project will install traveler information systems onto the city's arterial street system.
- Brush Creek Flood Warning System – This City of Mission Hills project will construct a flood warning system.

If you have any questions about the KDOT ITS Set Aside Program, contact, Rex Flemming (785) 296-6356 or flemming@ksdot.org



2004 ITS Heartland Chapter Annual Meeting

ITS Heartland, the local chapter of ITS America that includes Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, will hold its 5th Annual Meeting and Technology Showcase March 22-24 at the Airport Hilton in Kansas City, Missouri.

ITS Heartland's membership is comprised of ITS policy makers, engineers, technicians, local agency employees, academicians, consultants, manufacturers, and vendors. Anyone involved with ITS is encouraged to attend.

The program will have speakers from the national level as well as local representatives speaking on topics such as Center-to-Center challenges, wireless communication, integration, municipal ITS and transportation security. Tours of Kansas City Scout, the metro area freeway management center which went live on January 12th, will be available. In the past, over 35 companies have showcased their products and services in the exhibition hall and a good turnout is expected this year.

All participants are requested to register by March 5th. Vendors are encouraged to register as soon as possible as space is limited. Hotel rooms need to be reserved by March 1st. The reservation number for the Airport Hilton is (816)-891-8900. Request the ITS Heartland conference rate which is \$80. Registration and other chapter information can be found at

www.itsheartland.org



To Improve Travel Information in Kansas

511 QUICK FACTS

What is 511?

511 is the new, easy-to-remember telephone number for travel information

What kind of travel information does 511 provide in Kansas?

511 in Kansas provides fully automated, near real-time, route specific weather (current and forecasted) conditions, road condition information, and road construction, closure and detour information for the entire Kansas State highway system and the Kansas Turnpike. Since 511 is a national travel information number, callers are also able to receive road condition information for Nebraska (which has already launched 511). As other surrounding states deploy 511, access to their information will also be provided.

How does 511 work?

To use 511, callers will simply dial 511 from a land-line or cellular phone and be connected to a computerized voice message system. The system offers voice response and/or touch-tone options for users to request road specific information. 511 information is also accessible at the following web addresses: www.kanroad.org or www.safetravelusa.com.

Is there a charge for 511?

Information will be provided free of charge (or no more than the cost of a local call)

When can I call 511?

511 will provide information 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, 365 days/year

How is 511 different from the current Road Condition Hotline?

In a short period of time, 511 will replace the Road Condition Hotline. 511 will increase the frequency for reported road conditions, and improve the accuracy and detail of information provided. Hotline information is basically provided regionally whereas 511 will provide route-specific information in approximately 60-mile segments.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) handed down a ruling in July 2000 in favor of a petition filed by the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) to assign 511 as an abbreviated dialing code for national travel information services. Since then, KDOT has been at work to implement 511 in Kansas.

The goal has been to convert the current Road Condition Hotline to 511, while improving the travel information provided to our customers, including commercial or leisure travelers and local commuters. Planning, designing and building the 511 system has been a team effort, drawing from expertise from KDOT, and other partnering agencies, such as KTA, KHP, and FHWA, working together to meet the goal.

Since the Kansas 511 system is fully automated and offers voice response or touch-tone options for users to request road specific travel information, new technology has been required to support the needs of the 511 system.

The system was made available to the public on January 15, 2004, although marketing and promotion to the general public is not planned until spring or summer. This will provide the opportunity for KDOT and its partners to try the system and provide feedback before it is widely promoted to the general public. KDOT feels this is the most progressive system they can provide at this time that will also provide a good foundation for the future.

With the new voice technology in particular, KDOT knows that the 511 system can continue to be improved. However, after extensive internal testing, "we believe this cutting-edge technology is ready for public use and provides the best system possible for now," Barb Blue, 511 Project Manager, said. The voice technology that KDOT has worked diligently to develop was added last Fall to the already public 511 systems in North Dakota, Nebraska, and Montana, and has overall been well received by users.

"We want to have the best system possible, so we encourage you all to try the system and tell us what you think, especially what you think we can do to improve it," said Blue. "We are excited about the improved information and service 511 will provide over our current Road Condition Hotline," she stated.

Anyone who calls the system may provide feedback by leaving a comment on the Comment Line provided in the system by following the menu prompts.

Not only will information be improved within the state, but 511 will make Kansas information more accessible to surrounding states. The national goal for 511 is to provide one easy-to-remember traveler information number for travelers across the country. Kansas was the seventeenth state to deploy 511, including Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa in the Midwest.

Missouri and Colorado are in the process of planning their systems.



Kansas City Scout Turns the Switch

Kansas City Scout, KDOT's new traffic management system for the greater Kansas City metropolitan area, began operations Monday, January 12, 2004. The system, a joint effort with the Missouri Department of Transportation, is operating on a limited basis during its initial debut. Currently, it's operating Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. That will change to a 24/7 operation later this year.

Scout's technology includes traffic sensors, closed-circuit cameras, and large, black message boards that straddle or sit alongside the freeways and are activated with real-time traveler information when necessary.

Traffic information from those elements will feed into Scout's operations center located in Lee's Summit. Operators will monitor traffic on 75 miles of Kansas City's most congested freeways, including portions of interstates 435, 35, 70, 470, and 670 and portions of US 69 and K-10 in Kansas. They will respond to freeway incidents by notifying proper authorities to clear the roadway and keep traffic flowing as freely as possible.

The recently completed project is still undergoing technical adjustments, but Scout staff intends to operate the system while addressing minor issues inherent in operating highly sophisticated technologies.

ITS Calendar

- February 24 KDOT District 3 Meeting at Norton, ITS Presentation by Rex Fleming
- March 22-24 ITS Heartland Annual Meeting, Kansas City
- April 13 and 14 State Transportation Engineering Conference, Manhattan
- April 26-29 ITS America 14th Annual Meeting and Exhibition, San Antonio www.itsa.org
- May 11-12 Transportation Safety Conference, Topeka

Retirement Creates a Void for ITS in Kansas

Bruce Baldwin, FHWA ITS/Safety Engineer in the Kansas Division, will be retiring at the end of February. An Open House will be held on March 1, 2004 from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the FHWA offices. If you would like to send a card, letter, pictures or any other memory item to be included in a memory book, please send them to: Jane Clouse, FHWA Office, 3300 SW Topeka Blvd., Suite 1, Topeka, KS 66611-2275 or Jane.Clouse@fhwa.dot.gov



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