

# Weather Information via a Common Phone Number: The U.S. Experience

Ronald E. Boenau, P.E.

11 July 2008

# Travel Information to the Public

- > Traditional Means and Traditional Technologies
  - Radio, Television, Word of Mouth
  
- > New Technologies and Innovative Services
  - Cable, Internet, Mobile Phone

# Legislative Initiatives

- > 1991 – ISTEA
  - New vision for surface transportation
  - Renewal of surface transportation
  - Job creation, reduced congestion, rebuilding transportation infrastructure
  - Maintain mobility
  - Address environmental issues
  - RESULT: stimulated technology development

## Legislative Initiative [continued]

- > 1998 – TEA-21
  - Reaffirmed commitment to transportation
  - Emphasis on people rather than concrete, asphalt and steel
  - Safety and mobility
  - Partnerships among federal, state, local groups
  - RESULT: Confirmed that newer technology can be used to improve transportation

## Travel Information Needed

- > Information options available
  - Transportation facility based [VMS, kiosks, etc.]
  - Communication based [land line/cell phones, Internet, pagers]
- > 1999 – USDOT petition to US Federal Communications Commission
  - Request for 3-digit phone number
  - Over 300 different existing phone numbers in US providing travel information.

## 3-Digit Phone Number Granted

- > 2000 – received FCC approval
- > Implementation left to states and local agencies
- > No federal requirements
- > No mandated method of funding
- > Quality service expected with FCC to review implementation in 5 years.

# Implementation

- > Deployment Coalition Established
  - USDOT, AASHTO, APTA, ITS America
  - Guidelines Established [business models, transfer to 911, security, interoperability, public transportation content, highway content, weather content]

# Weather and Environment Content

- > Rationale: establish “basic” content and provide consistency
- > Weather content desired by the public
  - Exceptions to the norm
  - Specific impact on transportation network
  - Segment by geography and corridor
- > Indexes established
  - Summer index [precipitation, storms, etc.]
  - Winter index [temperature, precipitation, snow, wind, ice]
- > Other considerations: liability

# Status of 511 Travel Information Services

- > 511 now available to 47% of population
  - 42 different 511 services in 33 states
  - 30 co-branded websites for travel information
  - One-half of 511 services have weather information
- > Weather information addresses snow, snow drifts, ice, high winds, earthquakes, avalanches, road closures
- > Sources of Information: National Weather Service, meteorological services, agricultural weather services
- > Summary of Services
  - Many different formats and types of weather reports
  - Variety of weather sources used [state DOTs, highway police, National Weather Service, meteorological services]

# The Lakeside Conference Safety in Mobility 2008

ATTC  
AUTONOMOUS TRAFFIC TELEMATICS CLUSTER

austria  
TECH



Lakeside  
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY  
PARK

Thank you for your attention.

Ron Boenau [ronald.boenau@dot.gov](mailto:ronald.boenau@dot.gov)