

BUILDING THE VISION

A Series of AZTech ITS Model Deployment Success Stories for the Phoenix Metropolitan Area

NUMBER FOUR

Spreading the Word

Effectively Communicating Conditions of County Roads and City Streets

The Challenge:

Taking a good thing and making it even better is a strength of AZTech. There's the Highway Closure and Restriction System (HCRS), for example. The HCRS, which is a statewide service of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), provides travelers with timely traffic information on scheduled and unscheduled state roadway closures.

The HCRS does an outstanding job of keeping travelers apprised of the status of state roads throughout Arizona. What it doesn't do, however, is furnish similar information regarding county roads and city streets. Maricopa County and its cities lacked a consistent method of communicating to the media and the public regarding closures and conditions of their roadways. AZTech set out to fill this need.

The Solution:

Rather than devise a new system from scratch, AZTech followed a much easier path: take the proven HCRS and modify it for county roads and city streets. The result is the Roadway Closure and Restriction System (RCRS). The most significant adjustment was adapting the HCRS referencing system, which is based on state route and milepost numbers. "We modified the ADOT system to allow that same type of information to be entered for surface streets, not just highways," said Tomas Guerra, regional manager for Computran Systems Corporation, the private partner that developed the HCRS and modified it to create the RCRS. "By making some relatively straightforward modifications, we were able to take the same mechanisms and apply them to the surface streets."

The RCRS provides construction, maintenance and public works staffs with a single collection point for reporting all planned and actual closures, restrictions, incidents and conditions. "AZTech is the first system to combine both the urban and rural roadways, so we get statewide coverage," said Guerra. The system encompasses a wide range of contributing factors, including traffic incidents, construction, maintenance, weather and special events.

Within five minutes of being entered in the RCRS, the roadway information is disseminated to the public. It is distributed throughout an extensive electronic network that includes ADOT's Internet home page, AZTech kiosks, the Voice Remote Access System (a synthesized computer voice system) and ADOT's Public Remote Access System (a telephone call-up system that travelers can access by dialing 1-888-411-ROAD). The system also provides roadway information to AZTech's cable television and personalized automated messaging services.

The RCRS has been installed at the Maricopa County DOT and the cities of Tempe, Mesa and Glendale, with Phoenix expected to come online by mid-November 1998. In AZTech's second phase, Scottsdale and several other cities will join the RCRS. In addition to the individual cities, there are currently nine

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ADOT district offices statewide providing roadway information, as well as pilot sites at the Arizona Department of Public Safety, Grand Canyon National Park and the National Weather Service. Integrating the RCRS with the HCRS gives travelers a full-spectrum service. "If you're traveling from Apache Junction to Phoenix, for example, you can go to the same source to see where ADOT, Maricopa County and the cities' public works departments are closing or working on roads," said Pierre Pretorius, AZTech program manager.

The Benefits:

As a result of AZTech's RCRS, Maricopa County and its individual cities have gained a valuable resource for communicating road closures and conditions to each other, as well as to the media and the public. "Everybody is now reporting their planned closures and maintenance activities in the same format, on the same system," said Dan Powell, AZTech Chief Administrator. "This allows us to share information and collect it at one location to be distributed to the public."

For travelers, that means that timely, consolidated information on roadways -- state roads, county roads and city streets -- is easily accessible. "From the public's perspective, it's all presented as one unified service," said Guerra. "It's taken a lot of cooperation between agencies to share information to the benefit of each other as well as to the public."

RCRS also delivers significant institutional advantages. "The other benefit is that city public works agencies will be able to see what their neighboring cities are doing," said Pretorius. "By showing both actual and planned closures, the RCRS will help neighboring cities coordinate their closures." And by building upon an existing application, AZTech minimized its costs. "We saw an opportunity through AZTech to leverage a previous investment for a rural application and modify it for an urban application," said Pretorius.

As an international showcase for state-of-the-art Intelligent Transportation Systems, the AZTech Model Deployment Initiative has documented numerous success stories. To learn more, visit the AZTech home page on the Internet at <http://www.azfms.com>.