Metropolitan Model Deployment Initiative / ATIS Symposium
February 8, 2000
Scottsdale, AZ

Notes

Welcome and Introduction
Jeff Paniati, Deputy Director of the US DOT's Joint Program Office welcomed the attendees to the meeting and thought that the lessons learned from the MMDI's would be extremely valuable to those implementing ATIS.

The Role of ATIS in the Metropolitan Model Deployment Initiative (MMDI)
Dr. Joe Peters of the US DOT stated that the attendees and the US DOT were demonstrating leadership in ITS. There is a focus on ATIS from the MDI's investment in traveler information and integration. Infrastructure should be in place from the MDI's for an interest in a regional multi-modal traveler information with the major arterials, freeways and transit. If there is a focus on this kind of a regional multi-modal traveler information, then ATIS is directly or indirectly linked with many other ITS applications. ATIS is also one of the most visible ITS applications to the public. There is a need for evaluation to determine where the jury is still out in regards to the MDI's and the FHWA has been partnering with State DOT's and MPO's to determine this. With the key factor that customer satisfaction underlies all measures of effectiveness when reporting results.

Recommended Institutional Practices for Successful ATIS Deployments
Allan DeBlasio of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center chaired this session that explored the qualitative aspect of evaluation. The goal of ATIS is to provide customers with services that are needed. There are some problems identifying customers and the services to be provided as agencies may have different agendas and all levels of the population must also be included. There is a question as to owns and distributes data especially with combined funding and matching dollars. If a regional perspective is developed, then people issues must come first. Elected officials, media, MPO'', staff and the private sector must all be involved. Someone may have to give up some power and independence though. Resources must be designated as well as a point of contact who has the authority to make commitments and decisions. Some things need to be thought about differently. Current and future roles over the period of the project must be defined and the expertise of the partners must be used. Intellectual property rights must be assigned fairly. Policies must be put in writing and to insure that the parties operate in a consistent manner and within those policies. Tools for this process are *Choosing the Route to Traveler Information Deployment - An Action Guide*, the national architecture and *Successful Approaches to Deploying a Metropolitan ITS*. Other available tools are the TurboArchitecture and ITS Deployment Analysis Systems (IDAS) which is targeted at MPO's and takes benefits and formats them with site-specific projects. Any issue is a challenge and can be overcome. The AZTech program provides ATIS through many devices except pagers at this time and focuses on tourist and commuter services. Notably, AZTech achieved 200% of its objectives with 80% of its budget. San Jose has what they call an "MDI Lite" with the city working in partnership with its neighbors. TravInfo emphasizes agency-wide commitment and customer satisfaction.

Successful Practices for Collecting and Synthesizing ATIS Data
Mark Carter of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) led the discussion where ATIS is often the recipient of data, but not the source of data. There is some confusion over data elements like occupancy. ATIS may not be fully successful until ATIS has a national business model. It is a hard task to turn arterial management into ATIS. Weather not only affects travel time, but personal safety also. San Antonio utilizes low power TV for advising travelers of long-term construction projects. Travel times of segments are posted on the Web and on VMS and are updated every 2 minutes from 6AM to 10PM at a cost of 0 for hardware and $67,000 for software. In the New York metro area, EZPass toll tags are being used in the Transmit program to collect

data. Privacy is ensured and readers will be placed on over 200 miles of roadway to gather link and path travel times and speeds. Ohio's ARTEMIS project utilizes HAR, VMS, Web and the number 211 to dispense traveler information. Ohio's OTIS project's website on road closures and snow, ice and other weather conditions gets more hits than the Ohio DOT's site.

Successful Practices for Disseminating ATIS to the Customer

Jane Lappin of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center conducted this session that discuss the relative success of various practices for disseminating ATIS to the public. Findings from the Customer Satisfaction analysis of the MMDI via survey, focus group, and usage analysis data were reviewed. Washington DOT uses RealAudio at their weather website for HAR and cable TV will be available in 400,000 shortly. What is not known is if people will pay for en-route traveler information, but a regional view is necessary. Minnesota's ORION project used seed funding to deliver traveler information. ORION aspires to provide on-demand, route-specific travel times for freeways and arterials plus broader information. There is a concern about a self-sustaining system in the future when a contractor owns equipment. FM radio and telephone awareness has declined over time while cable TV and Web awareness has increased. MetroCommute Inc. provides predictive travel times as well as current travel times in the New York metro area via the Web (over 10 million hits per month) and shortly on other devices.

What Do We Know: What Do We Need to Know?

Mark Carter of SAIC and Chris Cluett of Battelle co-moderated this session. ATIS cooperation is needed between states. HAR is even utilized by office workers who check conditions before their trip. Some companies make traveler information available on their corporate intranets. Local agencies may blame congestion on traffic signalization. There is a sense of immediacy in this Internet age. A lot of the agencies' efforts are disjointed and they do not seem to be working with other agencies. Does one time shift vs. choose an alternate route? There is a blank message sign dilemma and some agencies prefer smaller, portable ones to the large fixed ones. In promoting ATIS, the public sector competes with the private sector and vice versa. A better product is needed, and then better promotion will certainly be needed. ATIS' savings need to be personalized – you saved me one hour's delay at this incident as anecdotal evidence may make the case for ATIS.

This closing session will pull together the findings and insights gained from the wide variety of MMDI evaluations regarding the uses and benefits of ATIS. It will map out what we have learned and indicate where gaps in our knowledge remain. Specifically, this session will encourage participants to share their perspectives on the practical applicability of these findings and to suggest where new information and data are needed in support of better decision making and resource allocation by the public sector at the state and local level.

Closing Remarks

Jeff Paniati closed the day's activities with the question of where the Federal investment in ATIS will go in the near future. He felt that the attendees could deal with the technical and institutional issues. When customers know about ATIS – they like it. The public sector has to decide what business it is in – if this information is available free in many media, then what niche is left for the private sector? ATMS may generate ATIS, but through ATIS there is an impact on a body of customers. Finally, more can be done with the road closure system.