

# TECHBRIEF



The national Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) program includes the development and application of advanced systems upon all parts of the transportation network, including rural areas. The U.S. DOT has developed the Advanced Rural Transportation Systems (ARTS) program to meet the needs of travelers in and through rural areas, as well as the agencies responsible for the operation and maintenance of the rural transportation system. The ARTS program complements the ITS efforts in metropolitan areas and commercial vehicle operations (CVO) by studying ways to best implement technologies that address transportation problems in rural areas.



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Highway Administration**

Research, Development, and  
Technology

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## Branson Travel and Recreational Information Program (TRIP)

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### Background

The city of Branson, Missouri, has a permanent population of around 4,400 and measures approximately 7 mi (11.3 km) along its main thoroughfare, State Highway 76. Branson attracts more than 6 million visitors per year. The congestion on State Highway 76 is severe (Level of Service F) during peak and some off-peak periods. The lack of right-of-way makes it impossible for the city to "build" out of its congestion problems. With this in mind, the Branson Travel and Recreational Information Program (TRIP) project was created. The Branson TRIP project was one of five Advanced Rural Transportation System Operational Tests selected in August 1997 by the Federal Highway Administration for deployment. The Branson area provided an excellent opportunity to test Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS) technologies in a rural tourist destination.

### Project Objective

The primary objective of the Branson TRIP Operational Test was to test the application of ATIS technologies in a rural tourist destination.

Other objectives of the system included:

- Identifying locations of congestion and providing alternative route information to travelers in the Branson area.
- Identifying road construction activities and potential areas of delays.
- Providing tourist and recreational information to visitors and potential visitors of Branson.
- Developing methods of creating a self-sustaining traveler information center.

## Capabilities

The Branson TRIP system collects traffic volume and occupancy data from 10 inductive loop detectors placed on the primary travel routes through Branson. The traffic data is compiled and normalized and then travel information is disseminated to Branson tourists through a Branson TRIP website, interactive kiosks, portable and permanent-mount Variable Message Signs (VMS), an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, and highway advisory radio. The TRIP website and web-based kiosks also provide updated road construction information, weather forecasts, and other event and tourist-related information. Future enhancements will allow the TRIP system to provide route-specific road-weather forecast information.

## Preliminary Results and Status

After 5 months of system design, integration, and installation, the

Branson TRIP system was deployed in June 1998. Some components, such as permanent-mount VMS and TRIP's IVR systems, were brought online during subsequent months. The full system is now deployed and awaiting the kickoff of the next tourist season in Branson. The success of the operational test has led the Missouri Department of Transportation to seek methods of system expansion and potential private sector operation and investment.

## Project Sponsors

Federal Highway Administration and the Missouri Department of Transportation.

## Partners

The City of Branson, Castle Rock Consultants, ADDCO, The Branson Connection, Stone County, Taney

County, Branson/Tri-Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Kimberling City/Table Rock Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, Southwest Missouri Association Council of Governments, KRZK/KOMC radio stations, the City of Kimberling, the City of Hollister, Hollister Chamber of Commerce, The Vacation Channel, Black & Veatch, Softek, BigCat Systems, Missouri Division of Tourism, Perceptions for Taney County & Stone County, Silver Dollar City, Brass Pro Shops/Dogwood Canyon, Regional Advisory Board for Intermodal Transportation/ Hampton Inn-West Branson, and Mid-American Systems.

## For more information

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