

## Priority, Market-Ready Technologies and Innovations

### 511 Traveler Information

#### **Problem: Access to 511 traveler information systems remains limited**

Telephone services for travelers provide real-time information about work zones, traffic incidents, and other causes of congestion. They allow travelers to make more informed decisions about their travel routes or modes and increase safety by helping motorists avoid areas with congestion or incidents. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) petitioned the Federal Communications Commission in 1999 for a three-digit dialing code for travel information and was assigned 511 in 2000. In 2001, the Cincinnati, OH, area became the first location in the country to use 511 for travel information.

#### *Why is 511 needed?*

Before the 511 dialing code was assigned for travel information, more than 300 different telephone numbers provided travel information in the United States. A test drive in 1999 showed that 11 different numbers were required to access travel information on a trip from Washington, DC, to New York, NY. As 10-digit phone numbers and new area codes proliferate, a single, easy-to-remember number will help local and interstate travelers and shippers avoid delays and save time.

#### *How widespread are 511 services?*

More than 90 million Americans, or 32 percent, now have access to 511 services. Since 2001, systems have been deployed in all or parts of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. Other States are planning to implement 511 systems.

#### **Putting It in Perspective**

- Over 1.1 million calls were made to 511 in September 2005, bringing the total number of 511 calls to nearly 40 million.
- Over 32 percent of Americans have access to 511 services.
- By 2006, half the country is expected to have 511 access.

#### **Solution: Increasing access to 511 services will help travelers make better decisions**

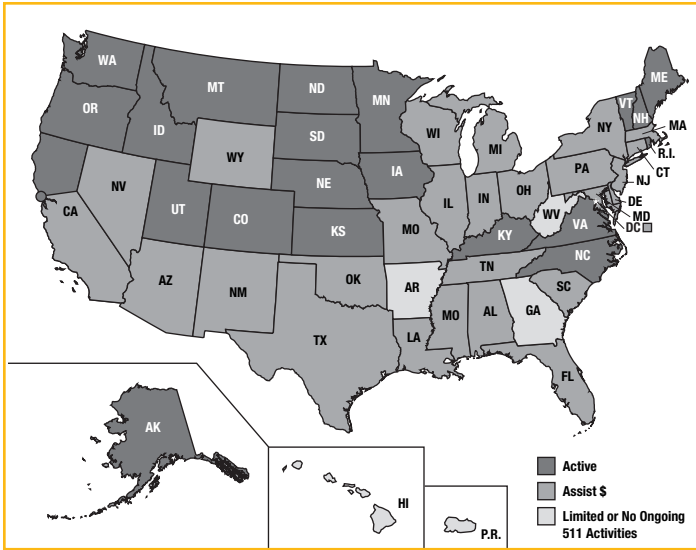
USDOT is facilitating national implementation of 511 systems to make real-time traveler information more widely available to motorists. It is working with a 511 Deployment Coalition that includes the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, and the American Public Transportation Association.

#### *What Federal assistance is available for implementing 511 systems?*

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) offers technical assistance through its division offices in every State. FHWA also provides other assistance and information related to guidance, standards and a model deployment project in Arizona at <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/511>.

#### *How do States fund 511 programs?*

Implementation expenses for 511 systems, like other traveler information services, are eligible for regular Federal-aid highway funding. Local or State transportation funds also are used to pay for



The status of 511 deployments as of November 22, 2005.

**Deployment Statement**

The 511 system provides an easy-to-remember, three-digit telephone number that enables transportation agencies to provide multimodal travel information. Travelers with easier access to real-time information about travel conditions and modes are able to make smarter decisions regarding their intended trips and can avoid traffic congestion, thereby helping to improve the overall performance of the transportation network.

**Deployment Goal**

By 2006, half of the country is expected to have 511 access. By 2010, 511 will be available nationwide.

**Deployment Status**

More than 90 million Americans, or 32 percent, now have access to 511 services. Since 2001, systems have been deployed in all or parts of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. Other States are planning to implement 511 systems.

**Additional Resources**

The 511 Deployment Coalition has developed quality and service guidelines for 511 systems. The guidelines and other tools for 511 deployment are available at <http://www.deploy511.org> and at <http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/511>.

511 systems, and in general, are the only funds used to pay for day-to-day system operations.

*How does a typical 511 program work?*

A 511 system relies on intelligent transportation systems technologies to collect and disseminate traveler information. Callers access the service by dialing 511 from any telephone. They hear a menu of available information on highways and public transit and indicate their choices by using the telephone's touchpad or, for systems with voice recognition technology, by voice. Some 511 systems offer premium services such as personal routing instructions or reservation services, which may involve additional charges.

**Benefits**

- Provides an easy way to obtain travel information anywhere in the country.
- Helps travelers make better decisions on travel routes and modes.
- Promotes safety by directing motorists away from incidents and congestion.

**Successful Applications: Research shows 511 increases use of traveler information services**

Research indicates that public demand and use of telephone services for traveler information increase when systems use 511 instead of other numbers. Systems that have converted existing telephone numbers to 511 have experienced a 300 to 500 percent increase in call volume.

One study showed that 45 percent of San Francisco, CA, travelers who received information from the area's Travel Advisory Telephone System changed their travel plans, compared to 25 percent of travelers altering their plans based on television or radio broadcasts.

**For more information, contact:**

**Robert Rupert, FHWA Office of Operations**  
**Phone: 202-366-2194**  
**E-mail: [robert.rupert@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:robert.rupert@fhwa.dot.gov)**

**Mac Lister, FHWA Resource Center**  
**Phone: 708-283-3532**  
**E-mail: [mac.lister@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:mac.lister@fhwa.dot.gov)**

**To request additional copies of this publication, contact:**

**Carin Michel, FHWA Resource Center**  
**Phone: 410-962-2530**  
**Email: [carin.michel@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:carin.michel@fhwa.dot.gov)**

**TaMara McCrae, FHWA Corporate Research and Technology**  
**Phone: 202-493-3382**  
**Email: [tamara.mccrae@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:tamara.mccrae@fhwa.dot.gov)**