

511 Case Study Overview – The State of Minnesota

Of the many transportation and tourism related phone information systems currently operating in Minnesota, two have been identified as most relevant in terms of near-term plans for 511 conversion:

- Winter and Summer Road and Weather Conditions: The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) through the Office of Maintenance has implemented a statewide toll-free and a local Twin Cities number to access road conditions. These numbers are 1-800-542-0220 and 651-284-0511. The telephony equipment was recently upgraded from 19 incoming lines to 47 to reduce the number of missed calls. In March 2001 the system was upgraded from human operator voice-recorded information to a system that converts text to speech through concatenation of prerecorded words and phrases.
- Minnesota Condition Acquisition and Reporting System (Mn/CARS): Through a pooled-fund project with Iowa, Washington and Missouri, Minnesota has developed and implemented Mn/CARS. Mn/CARS is an Internet-based application used by Mn/DOT Districts and the Minnesota State Patrol to enter data about road conditions, restrictions and incidents. Mn/CARS data is integrated into a database that is then accessible to travelers through the Winter and Summer Road and Weather Conditions numbers.
- Road and Weather Information System (R/WIS): Mn/DOT has implemented a statewide system of R/WIS sensors to collect real-time road surface and weather conditions. This system is then used to provide real-time road-related weather reports and forecasts. The current weather reports and near-term forecasts are then integrated into a database that is accessible to travelers through the Winter and Summer Road and Weather Conditions numbers.

511 Vision

The short-term vision for 511 in Minnesota is to provide statewide cellular access to the Winter and Summer Road and Weather Conditions information system. The long-term vision is still being developed. The final long-term vision will include input from tourism, transit, freight, parking and other transportation information stakeholders. The long-term vision will also explore the appropriate public and private roles to assure long-term sustainability and quality of service.

Ongoing Activities

- Mn/DOT has created executive and technical groups to manage 511 implementation.
- Mn/DOT is informally contacting cellular providers for purposes of enabling 511.
- Mn/DOT is coordinating with other N11 stakeholders (211, 711 and 911).
- A workshop is planned for mid-2001 to get stakeholder input to an overall Minnesota vision and deployment plan for 511.
- An evaluation of the Winter and Summer Road and Weather Condition system from a traveler perspective is planned for the spring of 2001. The evaluation will look at both information content and menus used to access the information.

For Further Information

- <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/guidestar/511proj.html>