

On Patrol



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OCTOBER 2006

CHECK
OUT OUR
NEW LOOK!

NEWS FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL

A Fond Farewell to an Important FSP Partner

by MTC SAFE Staff

In 1970 the state Legislature created the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and in 1971 Wes Wells took a job with the nascent MTC and began a 35-year relationship with the transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

This fall, Wes is retiring from MTC and his position as the Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways Program Manager. He has influenced many MTC programs but none more than the three operational projects that he initiated, built and managed: a pavement management program, which began in 1981; the call box program, 1991; and the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program, inaugurated in 1992.

Wes' success can be measured by FSP's growth. In 1992, the program had 13 trucks covering 49 freeway miles. Today the program boasts more than 75 trucks patrolling over 450 freeway miles. By the time Wells retires at the end of this year, FSP will have provided more than 1.5 million assists since the program's inception.

Some of Wes' essential contributions to the FSP program include the establishment of a review process whereby the number of trucks and length of each beat is adjusted according to need, the introduction of pick-



Wes Wells

up trucks into the fleet to reduce costs, and the addition of flatbed tow trucks in certain areas.

Wes is responsible for setting up Interstate 880's benefit-cost ratio model, which eventually became the standard used for the statewide program's bi-annual evaluation. The model currently shows that in 2004, the Bay Area FSP program reduced congestion delay by 4.5 million hours and saved 6.7 million gallons of fuel. The model also assesses annual air quality benefits, and estimates significant annual reductions of reactive organic gases, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide as a result of the program.

Part of the success of FSP — and the ability to measure that success — is thanks to Wes Wells' effective leadership, innovation and management. Thank you Wes, from all of us, and best of luck in your future endeavors!

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CHP Safety

by Sgt. Chris Childs, CHP

In a perfect world, on cold and rainy days tow truck drivers and highway patrol officers could hang out at the local coffeehouse or hole up at home in a soft armchair by the fire. In reality, regardless of the weather, we have to dredge up enough vim and vigor to go to work instead. Taking certain precautions and using wet-weather driving techniques will keep us from ending up on a freeway shoulder, or worse. Here are several ways service personnel can prepare for the inclement weather that will soon be upon us:

- Exercise extreme caution during the first rain. After a summer of warm and dry conditions, oil and grease from passing cars accumulates on roadway surfaces. These slick substances will wash away with continued rainfall, but for the first few hours the roads are dangerous.
- Brake earlier and with less force than you normally would. This allows drivers behind you to see you stopping sooner, and it helps you maintain control of your truck.

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Quarterly Awards

January – March 2006

by Karin Betts, MTC Public Information

Driver of the Quarter

Congratulations to **Jitendra Gill** of A-One Towing in Richmond for his impeccable 100 percent accuracy rating with assist data, which contributed to his selection as FSP driver of the quarter. Gill patrols the 13.5 miles of I-580 that run through Oakland and San Leandro from Harrison Street to the State Route 238 junction. Gill also is commended for his motorist survey return rate that, at 31 percent, is three times the quarterly average, and for the respect he has earned from his CHP partners.

Beat of the Quarter

Beat 32 in Santa Clara County runs for 16.5 miles along State Route 85 from I-280 to Cottle Road and, according to Dick's Automotive owner Steve Sgarlato, includes "several busy junctions and tricky merges, especially where 85 crosses Routes 17 and 87." The beat's FSP manager Ken Carter and the two full time drivers Dave Griswold and Nick McMahan are to be praised for the Beat's 98 percent excellent service rating.

Contractor of the Quarter

All Ways Tow & Transport in Fremont was selected as FSP's contractor of the quarter because of its highly-rated beats, and its employees' readiness to step in and help MTC and other partners whenever there is a need. All Ways handles Beat 14 and Beat 18, covering over 17 miles of I-880 (from



Jitendra Gill

the State Route 237 junction in Santa Clara County until Alvarado Niles Boulevard in Alameda County) and several miles of State Route 84 west of I-880. Owner/manager Kim Skinner and Norman Stovall are familiar faces to all the FSP partners.

ATTENTION TOW COMPANIES:

EVER THOUGHT ABOUT
JOINING THE BAY AREA
FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL
(FSP) PROGRAM?

Some of the benefits include:

- being part of one of the most popular public programs on the California Highways,
- helping to improve and even save the lives of hundreds of motorists every day absolutely free of charge,
- helping to reduce congestion and vehicle emissions on the crowded Bay Area freeways,
- getting to partner with agencies like the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to provide a much needed and desired public service, and
- often being the first to respond to accidents/incidents that occur on the highways, and thus being seen as the "Guardian Angels of the Freeways."

Want to learn how to join this prestigious program? Visit

www.mtc.ca.gov/jobs

or

www.fsp-bayarea.org

in October to download a Request for Proposals (RFP). Then simply fill out the forms and return them to MTC.

If you have questions about the FSP service, or need help filling out the RFP forms, please contact FSP Project Manager Danielle Stanislaus at 510.817.5737 or dstanislaus@mtc.ca.gov.

First Quarter 2006 Statistics Summary (January through March 2006)

Total number of assists = 32,426

Percentage of assists involving people = 56.1 percent

Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.85

Percentage of motorist survey returns = 10.2 percent

Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 95.8 percent

Average motorist wait time = 9.3 minutes



Henry Davidson

Quarterly Awards April – June 2006

by Karin Betts, MTC Public Information

Driver of the Quarter

Henry Davidson of Palace Garage in San Leandro drives one of the two tow trucks on Beat 22, patrolling I-580 from Santa Rita Road east of Dublin up and over the Altamont Pass to Grant Line Road outside Tracy in San Joaquin County. The 16 miles of the beat sees its share of accidents, and Davidson attributes this to the topography. “People love to fly down that hill, especially eastbound,” he says. And Davidson values his work. “It feels like an important job — they call us the freeway angels.”

Beat of the Quarter

Lupe Lima, owner of Lima Tow in Campbell, has always liked the customer service aspect of the FSP program, and that affinity has created results. **Beat 19**, Lima Tow’s beat in Santa Clara County, has a great assist rate of 1.29 assists per hour per truck.

The beat has two tow trucks and a pick-up, operated by two full-time drivers and 4 part-timers on split shifts (including both Lima’s husband and son). The beat runs for 20 miles along I-880 and State Routes 17 and 237, and has several tricky spots including the morning commute southbound I-880 onto northbound I-280 connector and the p.m. southbound I-880 at U.S. 101 connector.

Contractor of the Quarter

The second quarter’s contractor award goes to **B&A Bodyworks & Towing** of Hunter’s Point, San Francisco. B&A operates Beats 6 and 11 in San Mateo and San Francisco counties, including sections of Route 92, U.S. 101 and I-280 and I-80. Rich Bilafer, owner of B&A, also got kudos at the FSP annual awards this year when he won the Golden Paperclip Award for continuous submission of neat, timely and accurate paperwork.

CHP Safety

(continued from page 1)

- Make sure your wipers are in good condition. If the rain is falling so heavily that it obscures your vision, pull over and wait it out.
- If you begin to hydroplane, be sure not to brake or turn your wheel. If you must brake, do so with extreme caution until the tread portion of your tires comes back into contact with the roadway surface.

- Make sure your rain gear is in good condition. A dry pair of boots and protection from the rain make all the difference in your comfort level and in your ability to stay healthy through cold, wet conditions.

With careful planning and vigilant driving, we can maintain our high level of public service while doing the most important thing on any given work day – getting home safely!

Upcoming Events

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

8:30 a.m. Tuesdays at MTC, MetroCenter

November 14, 2006
December 12, 2006
January 9, 2007
February 13, 2007
March 13, 2007

Tow Contractors Meetings

11 a.m. Tuesdays at MTC, MetroCenter

November 14, 2006
January 9, 2007
March 13, 2007

Quarterly Driver Refresher Training

11 a.m. at CHP, Dublin
December 7 & 8, 2006
11 a.m. at CHP, Oakland
December 14 & 15, 2006

Certification Class

7 a.m. at CHP, Vallejo
October 25-27, 2006


Second Quarter 2006 Statistics Summary (April through June 2006)


Total number of assists = 36,058
Percentage of assists involving people = 57 percent
Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.91
Percentage of motorist survey returns = 9.4 percent
Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 95.8 percent
Average motorist wait time = 9.4 minutes


The Public Speaks


Motorists continue to mail, e-mail and phone in praise and descriptions of their experiences with the FSP program. Here are a few recent comments.

Voicemail


 (3/9/06) "I was helped by your Freeway Service Patrol this morning. I was having car problems and pulled off the freeway. I had only been there for eight minutes when your driver showed up. AAA told me that it would take them 45 minutes to 1 hour to get there, which I was not happy about. I was crying and upset, then your driver pulled up and explained to me who he was, and he calmed me down. It actually turned out to be a wonderful experience. I didn't know that this program existed, now I just love it. I hope you guys are able to keep it going. Thanks you so much for this wonderful service."


 (5/23/06) "Yesterday I got a flat tire on the freeway, which was very frightening, but before I knew it somebody came to my rescue. I wanted to tell you how wonderful he was. His name was Robert, and he did a fantastic job of changing the tire. I just wanted to say thank you."


 (5/27/06) "I was on Highway 101 at the Peninsula Avenue overpass, and I pulled over to the side of the road because it was very windy and I had a loose chair in the back of my truck. FSP Driver Bennett Crawford pulled up behind me, offered me some duct tape, and helped me to secure my chair. I just wanted to call and let you folks know that he helped me. Thank you."

 (7/12/06) "I was stranded on Interstate 880 in San Jose, and I had two teenagers in the car with me, which did not help the situation. I was not there five minutes before an FSP driver named Jason pulled over. I am so grateful for him, and for his beautiful smile. I did not even know about the service until he showed up to help us. He did a wonderful job, and I just wanted to call and thank you for the service."


E-mail

 (1/11/06) "I wanted to thank Doug Grafmiller for his help in fixing my flat tire last month. Freeway service is a great idea. He and his co-worker fixed my flat so fast, it was no more than five minutes. I still was able to make it to work on time because of them!"

 (7/14/06) "I just wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude and deep appreciation to the driver who helped me. I had an unexpected flat tire on my way to work this morning and was pleasantly surprised to see a tow truck pull up behind my car just minutes after the flat. I had no idea this service existed! He quickly changed my tire and got me on my way. Additionally, he was extremely courteous and professional – a true beacon of light during a very stressful moment. I hope this program is well funded and that the drivers are well compensated for providing such an excellent public service. They are true 'everyday heroes' and I am very grateful."

 (8/22/06) Officer Baller from the Castro Valley CHP called to compliment the work of Juan Diaz at the scene of an accident this morning. Juan not only assisted in flipping an overturned vehicle from the accident, but also translated the information from one of the involved parties for the CHP officer taking the report. Officer Baller didn't want Juan's professionalism and eagerness to help to go unrecognized.

Letters

 (7/23/06) "I want to thank FSP for a job well done. I'm grateful for your kindness. Please extend this service to cover more freeways. What pleased me the most was the smile on the driver's face, and the CHP, Caltrans and MTC logos on the door of the tow truck. I said to myself, 'This tow service is stopping just to help me.' And thank you so very, very much to the tow driver. Your attitude filled my heart with hope. Again, thank you!!!"

**How do you like our new look?
Contact Danielle Stanislaus at
510.817.5737 with comments
and story ideas.**

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