

New Wireless System Reduces Paperwork, Maintains High Levels of Service

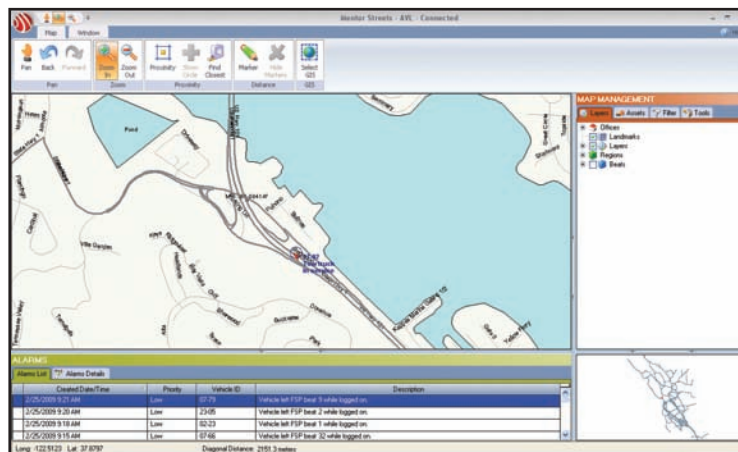
by Adrian Fine, MTC SAFE

In December of 2008, the entire Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) fleet of 90 vehicles started using wireless mobile data computers – a.k.a. Rangers – to submit information about daily operations.

Although the transition took a year, use of wireless-based data collection and fleet management technologies has already streamlined work for the FSP drivers and the three partner agencies that administer the program.

Statewide regulations require FSP service providers to collect data on their assists, a process previously done by hand-recording information on machine-readable daily shift records (DSRs) that were collected and sent to Caltrans for sorting and counting. Now, tow operators can use the touchscreen on the Rangers installed in their vehicles to enter details about an incident, such as vehicle type, service provided and highway location. This information is sent wirelessly to a central database that stores the data in complete, intuitive and searchable records.

Caltrans' Traffic Management Center (TMC) staff love the new system, because information is now more accurate and can be pulled up faster. Future changes to data collection also



A global positioning system (GPS) allows live remote monitoring of all fleet vehicles.

will be easier: changes can be set up in advance, and then deployed to the entire fleet at once.

Another improvement is that whereas drivers used to radio calls to the California Highway Patrol (CHP) informing them that FSP was “on scene” and dealing with a non-accident or non-fatal incident, now they can push the “on scene” button on their Ranger computers.

“I like the reduction in radio traffic,” said Steven Parker, a driver from Yarbrough Bros. Towing. “It makes it less noisy in the truck cab, so when there is an important call, you pay

Inside:	Page
New and Returning Contractors	2
Upcoming Events	2
FSP Statistical Summaries	2
Quarterly Awards	3
The Public Speaks	4

more attention.” CHP dispatchers in Vallejo also appreciate the reduction in radio air traffic.

The wireless data system also incorporates a global positioning system (GPS), allowing live remote monitoring of all the fleet vehicles. The GPS functionality allows the partner agencies to monitor fleet efficiency, making sure that all vehicles are patrolling their assigned beats at the right times.

“The wireless data system is a great tool for the FSP program because it helps ensure that public dollars are spent efficiently and effectively,” according

to Sze Lei Leong of MTC SAFE. “Also, being able to track our fleet makes it easier for the CHP to locate and respond to any tow operator who may need assistance.”

In the near future, MTC anticipates that locational data from FSP and Caltrans tow trucks will flow into the Advanced Transportation Management System, which acts as a regional clearinghouse for transportation-related information and assets. This would provide visual information to TMC operators on the whereabouts of reported incidents, and FSP and Caltrans tow trucks.

2009 Bay Area FSP Brings in Three New, One Returning Contractor

Every two years, Caltrans, CHP and MTC SAFE invite Bay Area tow companies to apply for FSP beats. For the 2009 round, 16 of the 35 beats were open for bids, and a total of 42 proposals were received. The procurement process allows the partner agencies to evaluate contractor performance, management and quality of tow service in order to maintain or recruit the best in the industry to be part of the FSP program.

After extensive evaluation, the partners accepted a total of 14 proposals from a pool of 10 tow companies. The contracts for these beats will begin in July of 2009.

In this round, three new contractors were accepted into the program: Myers Towing Service of Modesto, Courtesy Tow of San Jose and Sideline Towing of San Francisco. Atlas Towing of Redwood City, a prior FSP contractor, is also returning to the program. We would like to welcome these four companies to the Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol!

Founded in 1986, Myers Towing Service is an energetic family-run business. Owner and operator Hurshel Myers sees the FSP program as a rep-

utable way to expand business into the Bay region. Working with his wife, Tina, and son, Billy, Myers Towing will be operating beats 14 and 18, covering Interstate 880 from State Route 237 to Alvarado Niles Road.

Courtesy Tow, Inc. is run by Robert Sandoval, who has over 30 years of experience in the towing business. Courtesy Tow has been awarded beats 31 and 32, which serve U.S. 101 south of San Jose, and State Route 85. All of Courtesy's drivers are C.T.T.A-certified (California Tow Truck Association) and have at least four years of experience.

Founded in 2005, Sideline Towing is a relatively new addition to the Bay Area tow world. Nevertheless, owner Bismar Hernandez prides his company on their attention to safety, appearance and professional certification. These qualities make a great FSP contractor, and we wish Sideline all the best as they begin service on beat 20, which includes Interstate 380 and Interstate 280 south of San Francisco.

The partners are happy to welcome Atlas Towing back to the FSP program. Atlas Towing was an FSP

(continued on page 4)

Beats	Contractor
1 & 2	Redhill Towing & Autobody
4 & 26	Ken Betts' Towing
6	Atlas Towing Service
8, 19 & 23	Campbell's Towing
14 & 18	Myers Towing Service
20	Sideline Towing
21	Matos Towing & Transport
25	K&S Towing
28	Bill's Towing
31 & 32	Courtesy Tow

Upcoming Events

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

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

March 10, 2009

April 14, 2009

May 12, 2009

June 9, 2009

July 14, 2009

August 11, 2009

September 8, 2009

Tow Contractors Meetings

11 a.m. Tuesdays at MTC, MetroCenter

March 10, 2009

May 12, 2009

July 14, 2009

September 8, 2009

Quarterly Driver Refresher Training

11 a.m. at CHP, Dublin

March 18 & 19, 2009

June 18 & 25, 2009

September 17 & 24, 2009

11 a.m. at CHP, GGD

March 20, 2009

June 26, 2009

September 18, 2009

11 a.m. at MTC, Oakland

March 27, 2009

June 17, 2009

September 16, 2009

Proficiency Testing

7 a.m. at CHP, GGD

May 11, 2009

June 1, 2009

August 10, 2009

Certification Class

7 a.m. at CHP, GGD

May 20-22, 2009

June 10-12, 2009

August 19-21, 2009

Third Quarter 2008 Statistical Summary (July – September 2008)

Total number of assists = 38,947

Percentage of assists involving people = 51.9 percent

Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.97 (urban beats) & 0.88 (rural beats)

Percentage of motorist survey returns = 16.7 percent

Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 96.9 percent

Average motorist wait time = 8.9 minutes

Fourth Quarter 2008 Statistical Summary (October – December 2008)

Total number of assists = 29,375

Percentage of assists involving people = 51.1 percent

Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.77 (urban beats) & 0.73 (rural beats)

Percentage of motorist survey returns = 14.3 percent

Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 96.9 percent

Average motorist wait time = 9.0 minutes

Quarterly Awards Third Quarter, July – September 2008

by Adrian Fine, MTC SAFE

Driver of the Quarter

As both an FSP driver and a field supervisor for Palace Garage, **Ray Nelson** often does double duty while patrolling beat 4, covering State Route 238 and Interstate 880 from 238 to the Broadway exit in Oakland. However, that never stops him from smiling. Nelson has been FSP-certified since 1999, and in 2008, he won the coveted Public Choice award, which goes to the FSP driver with the most praise from the public. Nelson always works with a professional attitude and has a keen awareness that FSP is a regional program, not just a series of beats. During Quarter 2 of 2008, he marked up over



*Raymond Nelson,
Palace Garage*

500 assists, all without a single error or complaint. And nearly 30 percent of his people assists returned a survey, which is a good way for the partners to see what a great job Nelson is doing every day!

Beat of the Quarter

Palace Garage's **Beat 22** is, as driver Henry Davidson puts it, "the main artery into the East Bay area." And he's right: Beat 22 covers 17 miles of Interstate 580, from Santa Rita Road in Pleasanton to Grant Line Road near Tracy. This is a major route for big rigs, and all three drivers on the beat – brothers Henry and William Davidson, and Jeremy York – agree that trucks pose a special challenge. In the second quarter of 2008, beat 22 had near-perfect accuracy on their DSRs, 24 percent of their surveys returned, and a low motorist wait time of 7.7 minutes. On top of all that, the



*Steven Parker and
Nick Nohr of
Yarbrough Bros. Towing*



Palace Garage drivers Henry and William Davidson and Jeremy York

drivers on beat 22 recorded an assist rate of 1.23 assists per hour per truck.

Contractor of the Quarter

Yarbrough Bros. Towing, based in Santa Rosa, operates only one FSP beat, but they operate it with pride and professionalism. Drivers Steven Parker and Nick Nohr patrol U.S. 101 from East Washington to River Road, about 20 miles each way. Owners Robert and Michele Inskeep take care of all the paperwork and administrative issues. Together, this team is effective and it shows in their statistics. During the second quarter of 2008, Yarbrough Bros. recorded 650 assists, zero data errors or violations, a praiseworthy assist rate (especially in a rural area) of 0.94 assists per hour per truck, and a 100 percent excellent service rating.

Quarterly Awards Fourth Quarter, October – December 2008

by Adrian Fine, MTC SAFE

Driver of the Quarter

Richard Murray, a former marine, has been certified with the FSP since 2005, and can be found driving a Matos Towing Toyota Tundra service truck along the 21.5 miles of beat 21 – the longest stretch of any FSP beat. Patrolling Interstate 680 from Scott Creek Road in Fremont to Alcosta Blvd. in Dublin is no easy task – it is one of the busiest beats for motorist assists. According to Matos' FSP Manager David Schley, "Richard is a professional and a team-player, and he always has the safety and morale of his crew in mind."



*Richard Murray,
Matos Towing*

single tow truck. Damon Angle, one of the drivers on the beat, has been FSP-certified since 2006, and has proven to be an exceptionally reliable and professional tow operator. In 2008, he completed over 1,600 assists, and received an "excellent" rating from 98 percent of motorists. Henry Davidson, an FSP supervisor for Palace Garage, also is a regular driver on the beat. In the second quarter of 2008, Davidson and Angle were the only beat to achieve all 7 points on their report card, meaning they achieved or exceeded all of the goals for the program: low motorist wait times, zero violations, 20 percent survey return rate, and an assist rate above 0.75 assists per truck per hour.



*Karl Offerman,
Roadrunner
Tow*

Contractor of the Quarter

Operating beats 24 and 29, **Roadrunner Tow** ensures that Bay Area motorists can drive safely to Fairfield,

Vacaville, or on to Sacramento. With three tow trucks, the beats cover all of Interstate 780, and I-680 from the Benicia-Martinez Bridge to the Interstate 80 interchange. This stretch of road is bumpy and spotted with potholes. According to FSP Manager Karl Offerman, "Many of our assists deal with blown or worn tires." And sections of the beats have no shoulders, furthering the need for FSP to clear incidents quickly. In the second quarter of 2008, the two beats recorded a program high of 1.22 (beat 24) and 1.06 (beat 29) assists per truck per hour, and zero violations. Surveys from the beats were received from over 20 percent of all incidents, with an average rating of 97.5 percent. Motorists served by Roadrunner Tow are excited to voice their thanks!





*Damon Angle and
Henry Davidson,
Palace Garage*

The Public Speaks


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


VoiceMail


 (6/30/08) "I was assisted by one of your drivers, Xavier Nabalta, when I ran out of gas on the freeway. He was helpful and courteous, and I wanted to say thank you, and keep up the good work!"

 (10/23/08) "My car was stalled on the exit ramp of eastbound Interstate 580 and William Davidson of the Freeway Service Patrol helped me out. I was stranded on the off-ramp, could not exit the car, and I almost got hit twice. I appreciate the service that Davidson provided, and I just wanted to thank him for helping me."


E-mail

 (10/6/08) "This service is great! Today I had a flat tire on 101 and I pulled over, but before I could even get out of my car there was a Freeway Service Patrol truck behind me. They changed my flat and I was on my way. This is an amazing service and the gentlemen were really friendly. Way to go!"


 (11/9/08) "On November 3, my truck decided to quit just as I was getting on the freeway at the Stevenson south onramp. I coasted to the side of the freeway and considered what to do next. Before I could decide, Mike Nunes pulls up behind me. In no time I was hooked up, towed off the freeway and dropped off not five blocks from my home. Mike was extremely courteous and helpful in what could have been a bad situation. You've got a great employee here, treat him well. Thank you, Mike, and thanks to the Freeway Service Patrol!"

 (1/12/09) "I was assisted this morning on the side of Interstate 880 by driver Ray Nelson. He saw I needed aid and stopped to help. I understand it is his job and he gets paid to do it, but he helped

make a stressful and somewhat scary situation a lot easier. He was friendly, professional and efficient. He removed the shield that had partially fallen off the bottom of my car, put it in my trunk and gave me directions to get back on the freeway safely. He would not accept a tip. I truly appreciate this service and the great demeanor of Mr. Nelson!"

 (2/2/09) "Thank you so much to FSP. I had no idea this service existed until I got a flat on my way to work this morning. I had called AAA but the FSP driver showed up after only 10 minutes of waiting. He was friendly, quick and helpful. This is an incredible help to commuters and I am glad this service exists. Keep up the great work and thank you to driver Moises Reyes for his help!"

Letters

 (11/24/08) "This a thank-you note for driver David Ruiz. He was helpful, made me feel comfortable and treated me with total respect. He did a great service on my broken car. I am a 65-year-old lady and thank God there are young men of his caliber providing this service."

Contractors

(Continued from page 2)

contractor for many years, earning the coveted Contractor of the Year award in 1996. Founded in 1920, Atlas has shops in San Francisco and San Mateo. Atlas Towing will patrol beat 6, one of the program's busiest and most prominent beats, covering U.S. 101 from Foster City to the San Francisco city limits, and State Route 92 from the San Mateo Bridge to U.S. 101.

The FSP program bids a fond farewell to three of its current contractors: B&D Towing of Concord, All Ways Towing & Transport of Fremont, and A-One Towing of Richmond. They will be missed, and their years of service are appreciated.



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