

**SPR Research Project C-07-18:
511 Travel Information Service
Development & Documentation**

Final Report
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Telvent

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16. Abstract This report outlines the development and scope of the 511NY Travel Information Service. This information can be used to understand the foundations of 511NY as well as best practices used for establishing a statewide system offering real time traffic, transit and trip planner information.			
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Executive Summary

511 New York was deployed as a free, comprehensive travel information system geared to meet the multimodal needs of commuters, long-distance and local travelers, tourists and commercial-vehicle operators. The up-to-the-minute, comprehensive transportation information available to customers through this new 511 system strengthens efforts to improve mobility, allowing people and goods to move efficiently through New York State

Introduction

On July 21, 2001 the Federal Communications Commission designated 511 as the nationwide abbreviated dialing code for accessing travel information by telephone.

There are no federal FCC mandates or funding to implement a 511 system. Instead the federal government has given authority to government transportation agencies to take the lead role in implementing 511 Deployments.

A short phone call to 511 provides a traveler accurate, real-time road, traffic, and weather conditions. 511 originally began a phone service however, other electronic means of information dissemination, most prominently co-branded 511 travel information websites have allowed for a wider range of accessing travel information.

The goal of this project was to deploy 511 New York as a free, comprehensive travel information system geared to meet the multimodal needs of commuters, long-distance and local travelers, tourists and commercial-vehicle operators. The up-to-the-minute, comprehensive transportation information available to customers through this new 511 system strengthens efforts to improve mobility, allowing people and goods to move efficiently through New York State

Research

System development required the cooperative integration of existing databases into a single public source for multi-state, real time and static highway and transit information, as well as the coordination of information for call transfers, highway data points, voice recordings, and modal information.

Significant outreach to our transportation system operators, neighboring states and provinces, established regional coalitions, and transportation system management organizations was essential to obtaining support for comprehensive information provided through the 511 NY portal.

Findings and Conclusions

Key to the success of the system implementation was the ongoing participation and cooperation from transportation partners that operate systems in NYS, over which NYSDOT has no jurisdictional control. Significant outreach to our transportation system operators, neighboring states and provinces, established regional coalitions, and transportation system management organizations was essential to obtaining support for comprehensive information provided through the 511 NY portal.

Much of this outreach was critical for obtaining not only support for the system, but also to obtain the correct information linkages for 511 NY. The implementation of 511 NY also benefitted from the existence of two separate, established coalitions of public safety agencies that include transportation operators and providers, and coordinate regional transit and highway incident information, and construction information.

Statement of Implementation

511NY successfully launched in November 2008 in the downstate New York Region and became available Statewide in June 2009. Since the public launch the number of calls and web hits has steadily increased each month. The 511NY service has expanded to include a mobile website, a personalized service called MY511 and mobile apps for the Google Android, Apple iPhone and Blackberry. 511NY has also connected to the public through Social Media including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. Rideshare information, including carpool and vanpool matches, has also been made available through 511NY.

System development required the cooperative integration of existing databases into a single public source for multi-state, real time and static highway and transit information, as well as the coordination of information for call transfers, highway data points, voice recordings, and modal information. The result is a system that promotes sustainability by providing information that expands transportation choices and encourages the use of more efficient methods of travel. Users can access a first of its kind statewide and regional transit trip-planning feature, which includes over sixty transit operators' schedules and routes; as well as park-and-ride lot info; carpool, vanpool and rideshare referrals, and bicycling information. The system is a critical, single-point information source during transportation emergencies. With extensive outreach to transportation partners and neighboring states and provinces, 511 NY was successfully deployed at the ITS World Congress in November 2008, only 9 months after contract execution. Because of the unique, comprehensive multi-modal and regional nature of 511 NY, innovative federal funding for the system was identified.

511 NY was designed with a travel information gateway or 'portal' concept in mind. In addition to real-time traffic and transit conditions information, options are available to transfer calls to nearly 350 transportation agencies and partners for additional information not available directly through the 511 phone system, as well as to neighboring states and provinces with 511 and travel information phone numbers. Transfers available statewide include those for rideshare providers, public transportation, transit and ferry service providers, paratransit operators, airports, bridge, border crossing and customs agencies throughout the state. No longer will the traveling public need to remember separate phone numbers to reach these entities, they can simply dial the toll-free 511 and be connected to the information they need.

Due to the extensive capacity that web delivery of information provides, 511 NY is able to provide considerably more information through the web than on the Interactive Voice Response system (IVR) supporting the telephone system. A comprehensive, first of its kind, statewide transit trip planner includes all transit operators' schedules from across New York State, including subways, buses, ferries, commuter bus and rail, Amtrak, and other intercity bus lines, in addition to schedules for services provided between Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.

The 511 NY website allows users to customize the home page scrolling alerts to their preferences, select mode- and location-specific information through a number of interactive applications, and link out to a number of other transportation-related websites to obtain more detailed information. There are customized traveler pages with relevant resources for specific users of the transportation community, including bicyclists, tourists, commercial vehicle operators, and mobile device savvy users.

Commuters in the Metropolitan New York City (Metro-NYC) area travel between several states, including New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania, and create a unique need to provide coordinated information across those states so travelers can efficiently manage their travel. The implementation of 511 NY also benefitted from the existence of two separate, established coalitions of public safety agencies that include transportation operators and providers, and coordinate regional transit and highway incident information, and construction information. The two coalitions enabled an expanded coverage area to include Connecticut, New Jersey and the Province of Ontario, Canada. The coordination provided by these coalitions and the ability to link their databases to the 511 NY system helped establish a common message format from all of the member agencies.