



511 Lessons Learned

Research and Planning

- Time and money spent on research and planning was extremely well-spent
- Due diligence and flexibility while planning and designing are critical to the system's success
- Stakeholder involvement pays big dividends
- Networking with other deployers produces a wealth of knowledge and experience
- Educate the transit agencies that 511 will lessen the workloads of transit operators
- Motorists want real-time weather, delay, and travel time information
- Utilize the efforts previously expended by others when planning a system (learn from their mistakes and their successes)

Telecommunication Providers

- Do your homework when working with telecoms—involve your Public Service/Utility Commission, and learn what questions to ask
- Telecommunication providers should be engaged early in the process
- Major telecommunication providers may require formal agreements and switching fees. There is no consistency between providers regarding the need for an agreement and their fee structure.
- Negotiate with wireless carriers. Let them know that 511 calls (and follow up calls) results in more cell phone minutes which equates to more money for the wireless company.

System Set-up and Deployment

- Contact your Utilities and Transportation Commissions early to see how much they want to be involved.
- Contracting with an Application Service Provider (ASP) is beneficial



- Be diligent and resourceful in finding “answers” to your issues, and find or create the business model that works for your agency
- Customer service is paramount—Comment Line is a valuable tool for customer feedback
- Test, test, test before you publicly deploy
- Funds for operations & maintenance
- Systems must be planned for bursting – call volumes exceeding port capacity
- Information content should be current
- Voice-only doesn’t work with cell phones all the time because of background noise. Systems should always have touchtone capability.
- IVR technology needs to provide option for key-pad input
- Bordering state issues and arrangements (design your system to be upgradeable and easily expandable)
- When designing your IVR system application:
 - Use historical data of like state size for call volume needs, if available
 - Evaluate fixed cost vs. usage contract
- You only have **ONE** chance to satisfy the user, make sure the information is correct, real-time, and clear
- 511 information must be from reliable sources
 - To provide real-time information
 - To provide 24/7 maintenance support
- Working together with the private sector is important for providing the best traveler information to motorists
- It may be difficult to get providers to do enhancements to the system once the system is built. Be sure that system enhancements are built into the contract.
- Get telecommunication providers to activate the entire state (even if you aren’t deploying a statewide system). In the long-run, this will save time and money!



Marketing

- “Soft deployment” approach provided time for agencies to work through system kinks prior to the official public launch
- A separate comment line where users can leave a feedback message is a valuable tool for user feedback and future planning
- Emphasis on educating users about system use and expectations is well received
- Hire a professional Marketing group
- Budget appropriately (20% minimum of entire contract cost should go towards marketing)
- When marketing to stakeholders (i.e. transit), be in-tuned to their needs, be flexible, have open communication, and be prepared before approaching them. This must be a consistent effort!
- Educate transit agencies that 511 will increase the efficiency of its operators and possibly reduce costs by reducing operator call volume.
- Design advertising billboards to fit location
- Marketing and awareness plans need to be established
- Marketing budget must fit area and should be implemented completely before going live
- Marketing ideas – try and try again!

System Evaluation

- System evaluation/reporting for usage is very useful for making changes and updating the system
- Feedback loop for users (Web & IVR) is useful and should evaluate all aspects of the system
 - Transfers Attempted
 - Calls Attempted (no answer, call aborted, line busy, or no reason)
 - What callers use most