



Transportation Technologies, Inc.

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Intelligent Communications System Helps Alleviate Traffic at National Institutes of Health

Bethesda, MD - A custom-engineered intelligent communications system from Quixote Transportation Technologies, Inc. (QTT) has been installed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to advise motorists of traffic congestion leading to and from the campus; parking lot availability; special events and weekend or after-hour activities on its 300+ acre campus in Bethesda, Maryland. The installation is unique in that QTT traditionally engineers systems for the transportation industry, and has adapted its technology to solve a transportation challenge at a government agency facility for the first time.

The NIH is one of the world's foremost medical research centers, and the Federal focal point for medical research in the United States. The NIH, comprising 27 separate Institutes and Centers, is one of eight health agencies of the Public Health Service, which, in turn, is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

NIH has in excess of 75 buildings on more than 300 acres in Bethesda. Approximately 20,000 to 25,000 people enter the campus from several points on a daily basis. This includes employees, other support staff, guests and visitors.

This kind of volume and traffic can cause special challenges to the NIH's Office of Facilities Planning.

Tom Hayden, Traffic Management Specialist in the Office of Facilities Planning, explains that for the past few years, a transportation team has been looking at the major traffic and parking lots situation on the grounds, because of a growing challenge to get timely information to employees who were coming and going.

"Most of our traffic is from the two main arterials linking the Capital Beltway to D.C., which are Wisconsin Avenue (Route 355) and Old Georgetown Roadway," Hayden said. "We used a variety of sources, including e-mail and daily newsletters to advise visitors and employees as to which roads were open, which entry points were available, where there was parking available, and even the best way to get in and out of NIH in the event of an incident which may have caused extreme congestion at one particular entry.

"But for this to have been effective, we needed to know of a situation well in advance. Sometimes information and conditions changed before we could even get communication out, and it was obsolete when a person saw it."

The investigating team was interested in an integrated system where they could use variable messages signs (VMS), portable signs with flashing beacons, and advisory radio to update traffic as to road and parking lot conditions.

The answer came in the form of an Engineered System from QTT, headquartered in Durham, North Carolina, and consisted of three variable message signs; three portable signs with flashing beacons; a highway advisory radio station; plus software that controls all of the hardware devices.

The system is controlled by DR2000 software developed by QTT. This user-friendly and practical graphic software controls not only the advisory radio station, but also all the VMSs and flashing beacons. There are two primary workstations currently in place for the system, one located in the NIH's Emergency Communications Center and the other in Hayden's office.

According to Hayden, there are multiple options available to control the system, including manually from a site, via a touch-tone telephone, or automatically through the DR2000 software. The system is also upgradeable to integrate any number of other hardware components that become necessary in the future.

"The key is for us to get timely information so that we can get it on the system," Mr. Hayden added. "So far, the NIH Division of Police has been involved in keeping us informed and the system has been met with favorable response by employees. The system is set up so that "routine" traffic and general information is maintained by the Division of Facilities Planning. In the event of an emergency broadcast, the Emergency Dispatchers have access to the system to record broadcast messages."

Homeland Security Benefits

Another potentially major advantage to the NIH is that in the event of a security or terrorist concern, the system can and will be used to provide very detailed information to people already on and coming into the campus as to what to do in an emergency or evacuation situation.

Quixote Corporation (www.quixotecorp.com) through its wholly owned subsidiaries Quixote Transportation Safety, Inc., Quixote Transportation Technologies, Inc. and Quixote Traffic Corporation, is the world's leading manufacturer of energy-absorbing highway crash cushions, truck-mounted attenuators, intelligent intersection control systems, computerized highway/advisory radio transmitting devices, electronic wireless measuring and sensing devices, weather monitoring stations, fixed and variable electronic message signs, flexible post delineators and other highway safety products and services.

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