



# Bringing down barriers to ensure seamless travel across state lines – Southern Traffic Incident eXchange (STIX) Program

## The beginning...what is STIX?



The Southern Region (Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) of the I-95 Corridor Coalition began sharing traveler information to inform motorists about traffic conditions when crossing state lines on April 1, 2008. This was a momentous milestone – crossing state boundaries to disseminate traveler information to the public. Prior to April 2008, millions of dollars had been spent by the respective states to address traffic reliability, mobility and safety only in their own states. Valuable traveler information was being gathered and disseminated to the traveling public like no other time in history but this information dissemination stopped at the state line. For the traveling public and for the commercial vehicle operators, the state line was nothing more than line on a map, a “Welcome To...” sign along the interstate and an upcoming rest area. But for the flow of traveler information, the state line represented an impenetrable wall. But on April 1, 2008 that wall came down in the southern region.

In coordination with the four states, the I-95 Corridor Coalition developed the STIX Program. STIX was created to enable interstate and interregional incident notification, information sharing and coordination between Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. Currently, all four states have a memorandum of understanding committing to participate in STIX.

## Where is STIX based?

The hub of the STIX Program is at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) NaviGator Traffic Management Center (TMC) in Atlanta, Georgia. As the central communication hub, the GDOT TMC receives and disseminates significant incident and traffic information to regional, district and/or state transportation



management centers for distribution to other responder agencies and to traveling motorists potentially impacted by these emergencies and events. For ease in communication, information is delivered via email ([stix@dot.ga.gov](mailto:stix@dot.ga.gov)) or telephone (877-HWY-STIX). One of GDOT’s key functions is to ensure that states receive only information that may impact their region and travelers. For example, an Atlantic hurricane may prompt contraflow operations that will impact motorists in neighboring states. STIX provides information to both states regarding hurricane operations and evacuation decisions for use in notifying the public and/or for emergency response/management decision-making.



## STIX noteworthy information dissemination activations

Since the Program's inception, there have been over 150 STIX activations. Noteworthy activations are included below that helped motorists make informed decisions and alert traffic responders on potential increased traffic volumes:

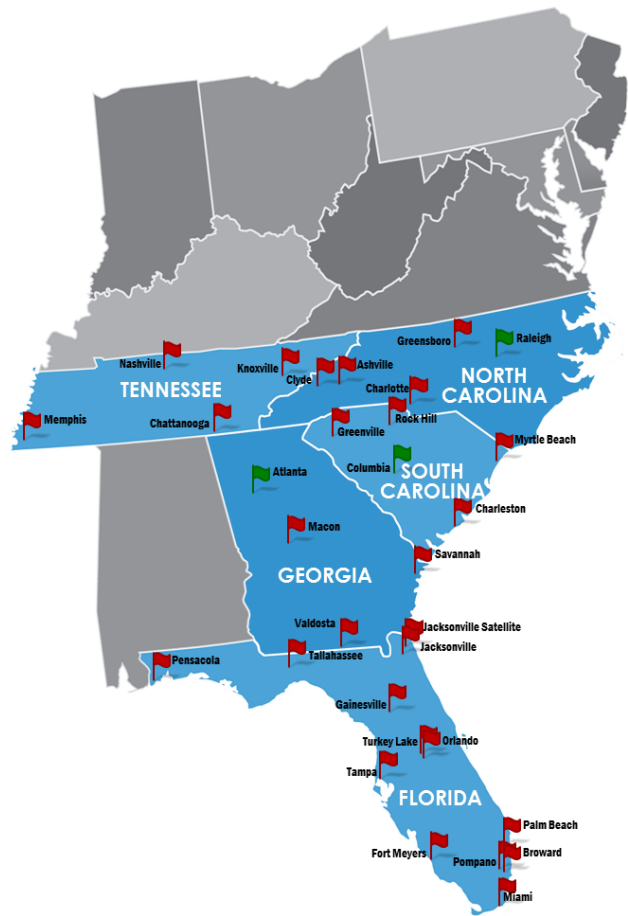
- In 2008, there were numerous activations affecting Florida and Georgia with the wildfires in Orlando, Florida that shut down parts of I-95, tropical depression Fay, Hurricane Gustav, and tropical storm Hanna.
- In 2009, there were major wildfires at the Georgia/Florida Stateline lasting for several days that shut down parts of I-75 and I-10;

Inauguration traffic planning with an estimated 1.8 million people traveling to Washington DC; Winter snow storm activity that majorly impacted Georgia, South

Carolina and North Carolina; several major fatal incidents that caused interstate closures near the state boundaries of South Carolina and Georgia; and rockslides in North Carolina that resulted in lane closures for months.

- In 2010, a 20' x 30' sinkhole on the Georgia/South Carolina state border caused lane closures and traffic detours for five days, road construction affecting South Carolina and Georgia, and large-scale incidents affecting Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

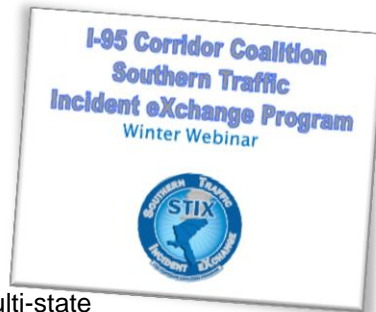
- In 2011, major tractor trailer incidents causing long closures, tornados causing road closures due to debris, bridge reconstruction, wildfires and chemical spills.
- 2011 also included the addition of Tennessee to the STIX program.





## How do the STIX members communicate?

The STIX stakeholders in all four states regularly meet face-to-face and via Webinars to maintain the channel of communications and share information. This relationship building has proved to be most effective during times of emergency-related events. The multi-state communication channel deploys several medium to stay connected:



- Regular monthly meetings with the STIX program management team and GDOT TMC Operations management and staff.
- Quarterly newsletters are distributed to all of the STIX stakeholders.
- An After Incident Review (AIR) to debrief the winter snowstorms occurred in Charlotte, North Carolina with representatives from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Transportation, South Carolina Department of Transportation, North Carolina Highway Patrol and South Carolina Highway Patrol.

- Visits to Florida as part of a continuing outreach effort to encourage the utilization of the STIX program and to facilitate face-to-face meetings among stakeholders. The visit began in Tallahassee where the group met with stakeholders at the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Traffic Engineering Research Lab (TERL) and included a visit to the Jacksonville Regional TMC, where the group met with Jacksonville TMC representatives and conducted a videoconference with other TMC personnel from the entire state. Recent Jacksonville STIX activations were debriefed.



- STIX representatives met in Columbia, South Carolina to improve coordination among the states. State representatives from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina included the State's ITS Coordinators, Incident Management Managers, State Operation Engineers, Safety and Systems Engineers, and TMC Operations Managers and Supervisors.





A Hurricane Evacuation Webinar was conducted among all four states to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. Representatives included GDOT State Maintenance Engineer, Highway Emergency Response Operators Manager, and TMC Operations Manager; NCDOT Statewide Incident Management Coordinator; South Carolina Safety and Systems Engineer and Statewide Incident Management Coordinator; and FDOT Statewide Traffic Incident Management and Road Rangers Manager. The Webinar included evacuation plans for each state, information sharing on state border situations, proper contact methods to share information during the hurricane.

- A Winter Weather Webinar was conducted with the same participants but included representatives from Tennessee.

## Undeniable benefits the STIX Program brings to the southern region

Since its inception in 2008, this program has promoted regional safety, enhanced traffic and incident management activities, and increased seamless mobility for both travelers and commercial vehicle operations. The STIX program facilitates improved services to the motoring public during major emergencies such as hurricanes, large fires, and other evacuations (including contra flow operations) and special events.

The STIX program has been a major success for not only providing a tool for information exchange but for building relationships between the different states, most notably the different traffic management centers. GDOT has taken on the lead, fostering and enhancing this critical program and is working on methods to further automate the notification process. Plans are also underway to include other Gulf Region States such as Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

For more information, please visit the project description page: <http://www.i95coalition.org/i95/Projects/ProjectDatabase/tabid/120/agentType/View/PropertyID/275/Default.aspx>

