



# Transportation Statistics

*more than counting cars* - - - - -

A lot happens between the intersection traffic counter and the transportation official signing off on federal highway funding.

Take the eight transportation districts in Florida. All collect and report statistics annually to the state Department of Transportation. Burns & McDonnell collects data for Districts Six and Four, which include the Miami and Fort Lauderdale areas.

Data collection includes traffic, vehicle classification, turning movement and pedestrian counts. Descriptive roadway information such as the type of road, its ownership, function and physical characteristics are noted. That data feeds into the state's Roadway Characteristics Inventory (RCI) program. Information about road conditions also feeds into the federal Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS).

"When you read in the newspaper that it will cost 'X' billion dollars to bring the nation's transportation infrastructure up to needed levels, Congress is using the HPMS data to determine that estimate," says Doug O'Hara, District Four statistics administrator.

## Key Information

The collection of such data is mandated by federal and state programs. Burns & McDonnell assisted in the completion of the

2000 Urban Boundary and Federal Functional Classification analysis. The repetitive nature of collecting data can lull one into believing the projects lack urgency.

"Even though it's routine work, it's important routine work," says Ernesto Polo, assistant planning manager for District Six. "Solid transportation statistics help maintain and build continuity within the transportation system. Burns & McDonnell is currently 'scoping out' resurfacing projects. In this initial phase, we establish the scope ... while addressing safety issues and, where possible, operational improvements. Project budgets and schedules are established as part of the scoping process."

## Personal Touch

As part of the statistics contracts, Burns & McDonnell provides on-site staff to assist in day-to-day operations, including data development and updating, quality control and construction plan review.

"Downsizing the government is a reality that we are facing," Polo says. "As managers, we must create the climate that enables us to respond to the challenges we face and we, therefore, employ consultants to help us accomplish the goals of the department."

The District Six Planning Office, including Burns & McDonnell staff, received a 2005 Team

Achievement Award for its efforts toward meeting its district responsibilities.

## Technology Integration

As the database of traffic and roadway information grows, computer applications are providing new ways to put the data to use.

For example, Burns & McDonnell is helping District Four develop a pilot project using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in highway data programs. Typically, roadway sections are identified by road name and mile posts, but the pilot will study advantages GPS may provide. Geographic Information Systems also are becoming a tool for RCI efforts.

## Long-Term Efforts

The gathering of statistics is a never-ending process. Burns & McDonnell has worked on RCI contracts since early 2004, but staff members are veterans of transportation department support.

"The ongoing nature of these contracts ensures a continuity that aids in the development of programs that make a difference in efficient transportation planning," says Jeannelia Liu, group leader for FDOT planning projects in the Burns & McDonnell Miami office. "Building transportation data over time will benefit everyone traveling the roads."

*For more information, contact Jeannelia Liu, (305) 476-5820.*