



# NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Muffet Robinson (407) 481-5672 x306

## MOVE IT.....Yes You Can!

**January 16, 2004** (Orlando, FL) - Two region wide initiatives to reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility in Central Florida were announced today by METROPLAN ORLANDO, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP). Since traffic incidents, not volume, account for more than half of the region's congestion, both initiatives - the "Tri County Area Open Roads Policy" and the "MOVE IT...Yes You Can!" campaign - involve the quick clearance of traffic accidents and incidents from area roads.

The Tri County Area Open Roads Policy is an agreement between FDOT, FHP, the police and fire/rescue officials in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties and all 19 municipalities in those counties to clear all incidents from the roadway within 90 minutes of the arrival of the first responding officer. This commitment of all the region's emergency responders – a first for the entire country – is modeled after the Open Roads Policy adopted in November 2002 by FDOT and FHP. It is based on the philosophy that our highways will not be closed or restricted any longer than is absolutely necessary and treats as URGENT the restoration of the safe and orderly flow of traffic following a motor vehicle crash or other incident that has blocked traffic on regional highways.

"MOVE IT...Yes You Can!" is an effort to inform the public that they can move their vehicle out of the travel lanes if they are involved in a minor traffic accident. In fact, by Florida law, drivers MUST make every reasonable effort to move a disabled vehicle or have it moved so as not to obstruct the regular flow of traffic.

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By moving their vehicles off the roadway, citizens will help improve response and clearance times at accident scenes; lessen accident-related congestion and delay; reduce subsequent crashes; and improve safety conditions for emergency responders. Between 13 and 33 percent of crashes are caused by earlier accidents; and injury to those who respond accounts for 59 percent of police casualties alone within the State of Florida.

This new campaign is another example of the heightened regional cooperation, coordination and communication to reduce the delay and inconvenience caused by incidents on our roadways. It was developed jointly by a subcommittee of local law enforcement, fire & rescue, transportation agencies and private companies that has been meeting regularly since a July Executive Forum convened by METROPLAN ORLANDO Board Chairman and Orange County Commissioner Ted Edwards to identify opportunities to better manage incidents on the region's roads. Understanding that many citizens still think they are "not supposed to" move their vehicle off the road after a traffic accident, the subcommittee decided to take steps to dispel the myth through public education and information.

"The Tri County Area Open Roads Policy addresses the commitment of regional agencies to help relieve traffic congestion due to incidents on our highways," said Chairman Edwards who made the announcements with FHP Troop D Commander, Major Cyrus Brown, and FDOT District 5 Operations Director, George Gilhooley. "MOVE IT...Yes You Can! will let our residents and visitors know what they can do, and in fact MUST do, to be part of the solution to our traffic woes."

The announcements were followed by a second Executive Forum on Traffic Incident Management, where law enforcement, fire and rescue officials from throughout the region discussed further ways to improve the cooperation, coordination and communication between agencies and organizations to safely reduce accident-related traffic congestion.

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