

What's Up - What's Coming

For registered users of the Fiscal Management Information System

December 31, 2008

Q: How Does FHWA Plan to Support National Training in Times of Constrained Finances?

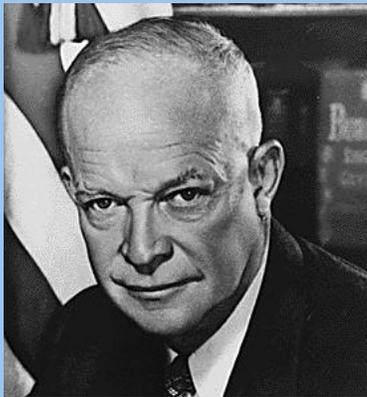
A:



Program Analyst Paul Smith prepares for the Multiple Demo IDs webconference on December 17, 2008 in a small conference room at DOT HQ in Washington, DC. Please see story on Page 8.

IN THIS ISSUE: FMIS Reports to be Decommissioned, P. 2 ● A Pioneer of the Traffic Signal, P. 3 ● On the Horizon, P. 3 ● The Growth of Webconferencing, P. 4 ● New Feature! *Cline's Corner*, a column by Editor Eric Cline, P. 5 ● States Can Use Federal Webconferencing, P. 5 ● Training Available Next CY, P. 6 ● Multiple Demo IDs Calendar of Events, P. 7 ● Business Objects XI Training Schedule, P. 7 ● Multiple Demo IDs Rollout, p. 8 ● FMIS System Updates, P. 9

"HAPPY HOLIDAYS!"



Heard that a lot this season? FHWA-related fact: President Dwight Eisenhower (whose legacy is the interstate highway system) helped popularize the phrase “Happy Holidays” by signing it on official greeting cards from the White House.



FMIS Team Contacts

For assistance, users may email the FMIS Team at FMISTEAM@dot.gov. Individual members of the Team may be contacted by telephone or email:

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All FMIS Reports Up for Review, Decommissioning

FMIS Users Urged to Speak Up about Reports They Want to Keep



A review of all FMIS Reports will take place during CY2009. Program Analyst Jatona Hatcher will lead the effort to evaluate all reports in FMIS to ascertain the effectiveness of selected reports. During the review, the dates of which are not yet scheduled, all current FMIS reports will remain available to all users. At the end of the review period, Reports may be marked for decommissioning if they are determined to be:

- at the end of their lifecycle (i.e., the fund the report was meant to track is closed and expended)
- used infrequently
- never used
- creatable using other reporting tools (i.e. Business Objects XI or Free Form Reporting)

If a FMIS user has a report that he/she uses on an infrequent basis, and would like that report to continue, that user should contact Jatona Hatcher. This communication can be as simple as sending an email to Jatona.Hatcher@dot.gov saying, for example: “Jatona, I use [report number] every quarter to get some numbers I can't easily get elsewhere. Please consider keeping this report active.” 

FEATURED ON THE FHWA WEB SITE

An occasional look at what our
agency puts on the web



Visitors to DOT headquarters in Washington, DC will be delighted to see some of the portraits outside the building paying tribute to heroes of transportation history. The photo images, with explanatory text, are done on some narrow glass windows visible from the sidewalk on M street. There are portraits of Robert Goddard (inventor of the liquid-fueled rocket), aviatrix Amelia Earhart, and others. One of the people on the wall is Garrett Morgan, one of the inventors of the traffic light. His story is also told on the FHWA web page "An American Inventor" at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/education/gamorgan.htm>. A son of former slaves, he had only an elementary school education, but was hungry for knowledge, and even hired a private tutor as an adult to quench his thirst for information. Although other inventors had ideas for traffic signals, Morgan is credited with patenting the first three-position traffic signal (Go, Stop, and Stop For All Lanes, this third position allowing traffic to stop in all directions before a new lane was allowed to Go). It was one of this restless intellectual's many inventions.

It's just one of the interesting things you can find on the FHWA web site! 



The new Congressional District table is being finalized in FMIS. This will be distributed to the Divisions during the second quarter of FY2009.



The revised versions of the **M79A** and **L04A/B** reports will debut in January. The M79A will now closely align with the W10A report. This has been in the works for some time. The target date is by the end of January.

M79A – Federal Highway Programs: There are two major changes:

(1) Active number of projects will change. If a Program Code is active within the FY, the report will populate even if the unobligated balance is -0-. The Active Project Count will continue to include all detail lines within a project. A footnote will be added to indicate that **Active Project Count** does not count by Federal Project Numbers (also known as the Header records).

(2) Lapsed Funds located at the end of the report will be updated to display all Program Codes that were lapsed as of FY07.

The L04A/B report has had a longstanding issue that is being corrected. The FMISL04A Report is not capturing all the transactions to a State's Limitation. The types of transactions that are not currently being reflected are "Other" and "Prior Year Returns." This causes the report to reflect an inaccurate Total Limitation Amount and to differ from the W10A Report. Currently, this report is unavailable

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Webconferencing is the Future ... and Present

From in-house training sessions to visits by the leader of the free world, it seems everything is being done with webconferencing these days.

As recently as CY2005, the FMIS Team made four major visits to Divisional offices. In CY2008, partly due to budgetary issues, the FMIS Team did not make even one. At the same time, an important training program and a crucial informational conference took place – without a single FMIS Team member leaving Washington D.C. headquarters.

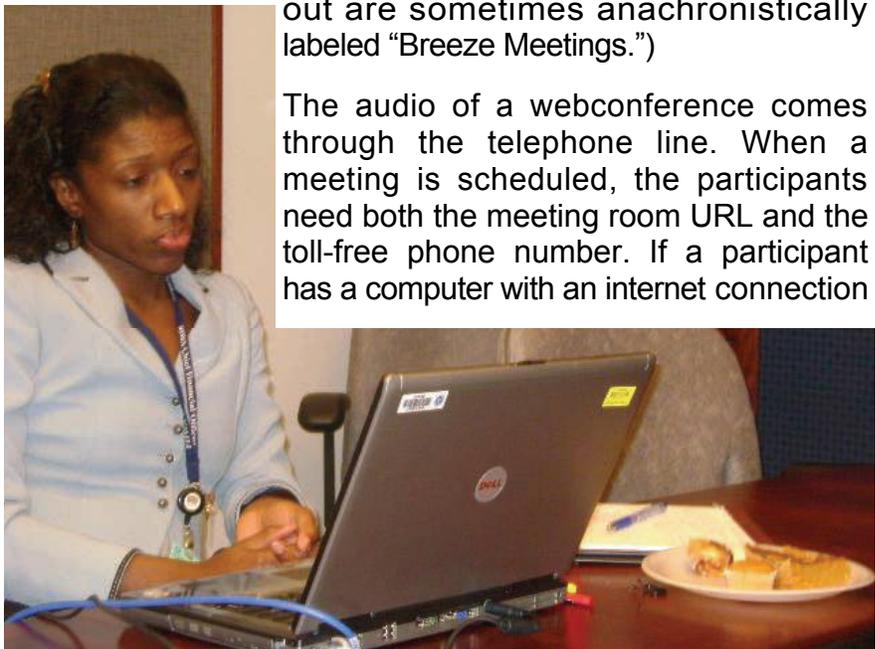
In spring of 2008, the Business Objects XI training sessions, held from February through May, were done entirely online. The lectures were done in a conference room, and even attendees who were in the same building logged on from their desks, because the training was not designed to have a live classroom component. More recently, the Multiple Demo IDs informational webconference was held on December 17 (see story on Page 8), with a repeat session to be held on January 8.

In another example of the growth of virtual presentations, President George W. Bush visited DOT HQ on November 18 to make an address. The majority of employees could not attend the speech, which had limited seating, and so a live video of the President's remarks was streamed to anyone in the building who wanted to see it. This was not a true webconference, because it was a one-way transmission; but this use of technology highlights the fact that it is about access. People who never could have participated in an event otherwise can participate due to

the expanded arena.

The specific product used by the FHWA for webconferences is Adobe Connect Pro. The predecessor to this was Macromedia's Breeze Meeting. When Adobe purchased Macromedia in 2005, the corporate parent began the process of rebranding the acquired company's products. (Not everyone has gotten the word; some meeting notices that are sent out are sometimes anachronistically labeled "Breeze Meetings.")

The audio of a webconference comes through the telephone line. When a meeting is scheduled, the participants need both the meeting room URL and the toll-free phone number. If a participant has a computer with an internet connection

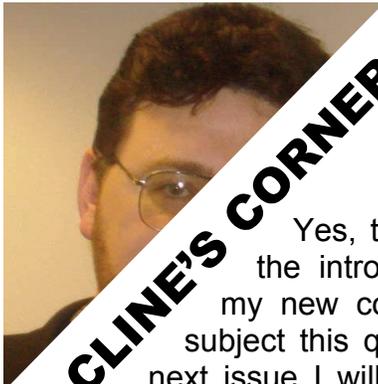


What's the per diem for that? FMIS Team Program Analyst Jatona Hatcher finds that webconferencing is as easy as pie ... pumpkin pie, by the looks of it.

and telephone, the only additional requirement to participate in an FHWA Web conference is the Flash Player browser plug-in – which is already installed on 98% of PCs world-wide.

According to the web site of the National Highway Institute, which is part of the FHWA, the use of webconferencing grew 61% in CY 2008. In hard numbers, the FHWA saw an

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Talk to Me...

Yes, talk to me! This is the introductory version of my new column. I have no subject this quarter, but starting next issue I will answer questions posed by you, the readers.

I will also offer my own unsolicited musings on organizational effectiveness and the low comedy of life in an office.

Drop me a line at Eric.Cline@dot.gov if you have a specific subject matter you wish to see discussed. Your name and location won't be used without your permission.

In a classic textbook, *The Modern Researcher*, Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff wrote:

Students complain when they are assigned readings in poorly written books. They call the books "dry" or "dull" and imagine that the fault lies in the subject. But every subject can be made interesting, because every subject is interesting. It would never have aroused human curiosity if it were not.

In future issues of *What's Up – What's Coming*, I hope to serve as a bridge between you and our Subject Matter Experts in HQ, and answer your questions in an interesting way.

As the saying goes, "Watch this space for more!"



State DOTs Can Use NHI's Webconferencing

State governmental offices can directly request to the National Highway Institute (NHI) to set up and host webconferences, as long as they are working in support of an FHWA initiative. If a State employee is partnering with a division office, he/she can log on and submit a request directly. Remember, when submitting Web conference requests and requesting additional information, to identify the program/division office of FHWA that the requesting State office is supported by, or associated with, so that NHI knows to grant access to the system. Contact webconferencing@fhwa.dot.gov to get started. 🌲

ON THE HORIZON...

Continued from Page 3

for execution by users; it will be available as a self-executable report once the problem has been resolved. The report headers also will be changed to reflect the columns data.



Testing will be scheduled soon for Business Objects 4.0, which will eventually replace Business Objects XI as a reporting tool. The relatively brief duration of its predecessor may surprise some; FMIS 4.0 users moved from Business Objects 5.1 to Business Objects XI only on February 18, 2008. However, BO 4.0 will not be dramatically different from BO XI (unlike the move from 5.1 to XI). Moving to this version will merely solve some of the ongoing functionality problems in Business Objects XI. (Due to this compatibility, Business Objects XI training will take place: See Page 7 for the schedule.)



SPRING TRAINING

The FMIS Team will provide a broad range of training related to FMIS 4.0 functions this coming Calendar Year, including courses for:

- Business Objects (See Page 9)
- Ad Hoc Reports (Self-paced training tool will be available by summer of CY2009)
- Fund Control (tentatively scheduled for every Wednesday and Thursday March 11- April 2; details to be posted on FUNI).
- Multiple Demo IDs (See Page 7)

In this time of unprecedented cutbacks in State and

Federal training and travel budgets, the FMIS Team is committed to providing online training resources. A new level of online training was pioneered in the spring of 2008 with the introduction of Business Objects XI online training.

Now, that experience has been built upon. Expect to see self-paced introductory training modules that can be taken any time, day or night. Expect to see more advanced instructor-led courses with homework assignments. And expect to never see a bill for any of this training, because it will all be offered at no charge. 🇺🇸



Webconferencing is the Future ... and Present

Continued from Page 4

increase from 200 to 2000 Web conference events annually in the past five years, according to FHWA's Knowledge Application Team, which manages the webconferencing platform. Both HQ and Divisional offices have used this resource. State offices may also use it in certain instances (see story on Page 5). Those interested in getting started with it can send a message to: webconferencing@fhwa.dot.gov.

In short, all Division and State employees (even those who have never participated in an online meeting before) should expect to see more than a few webconferences in their future. 📧



January 8, 2008:

Multiple Demo IDs Webconference

January 30, 2009:

Acceptance Testing begins for RASPS

February 3, 2009:

Acceptance Testing begins for Projects

February 10, 2009:

Acceptance Testing begins for EDS

Acceptance Testing begins for Reports

March 30, 2009:

Last Date to Split/Combine Projects

April of 2009:

Reports Changes Implemented

Business Objects XI Training in 2009

To sign up for a class, email Jatona.Hatcher@dot.gov with subject line: "Business Objects Training." A form will be sent back via email to enroll.

Date	Day	Class	Time
January 13	Tuesday	Session I	2-3:30 p.m. EST
January 16	Friday	Session II	2-3:30 p.m. EST
January 21	Wednesday	Session III	2-3:30 p.m. EST
February 2	Monday	Session I	2-3:30 p.m. EST
February 5	Thursday	Session II	2-3:30 p.m. EST
February 11	Wednesday	Session III	2-3:30 p.m. EST
February 25	Wednesday	Session I	2-3:30 p.m. EST
February 27	Friday	Session II	2-3:30 p.m. EST
March 4	Wednesday	Session III	2-3:30 p.m. EST

Multiple Demo IDs Rollout

On December 17, 2008, the FMIS Team hosted an informational webconference on Multiple Demo IDs.

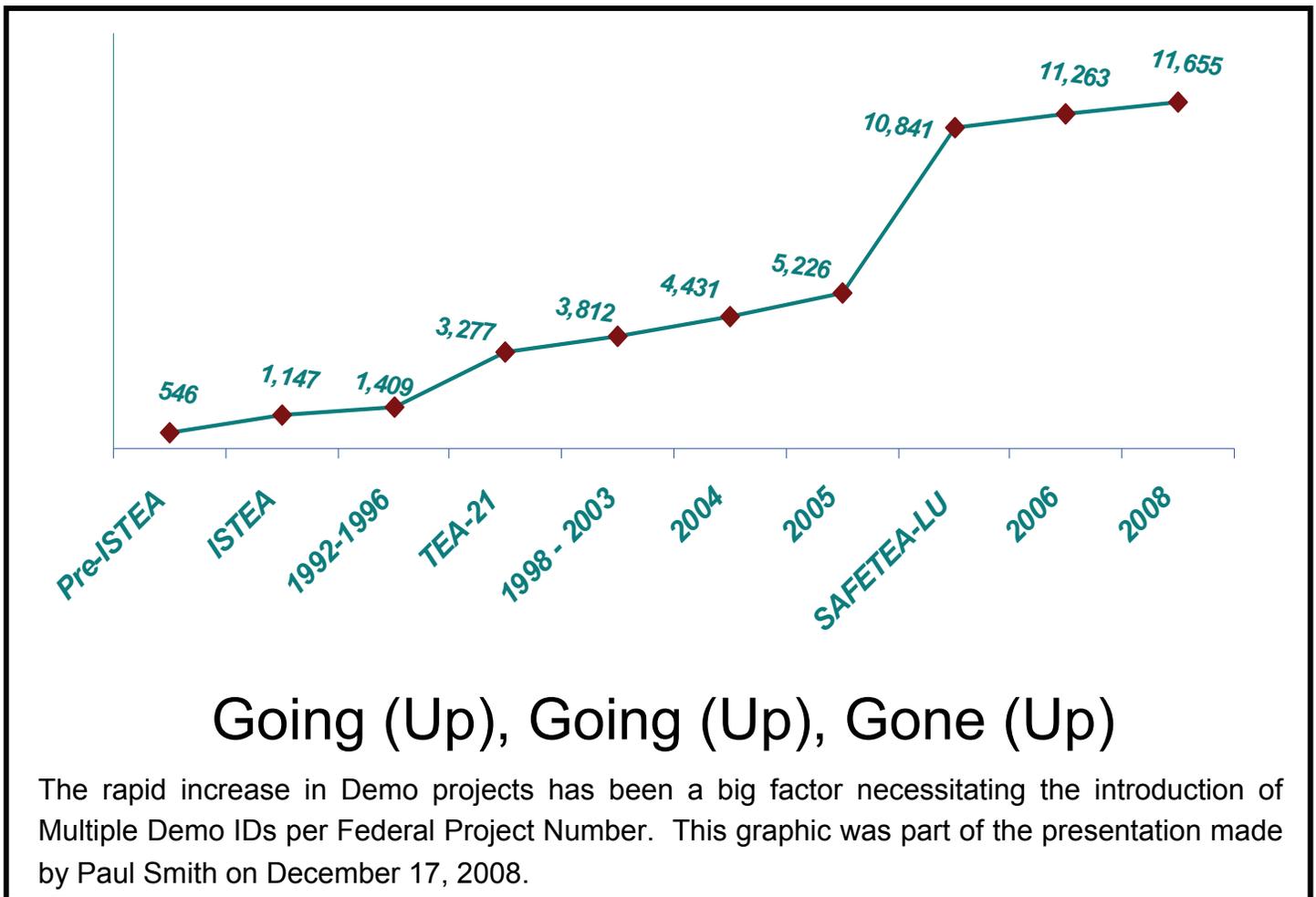
Program Analyst Paul Smith, the FMIS Team's go-to man on Demo project issues, was the leader. Using the capabilities of webconferencing (see article on Page 4), Paul explained the Multiple Demo IDs rollout process to Division and State personnel who attended online.

Rochelle Zellars-Crawford, of the Delphi Systems Team, also presented, explaining what the impact would be on the Rapid Approval and State Payment System (RASPS).

The FMIS system upgrade will allow more than one Demo ID per Federal Project Number. This change, necessitated by the rapid growth in Demo projects in recent years (see chart below), has a complex impact on Division and State transportation offices.

IT support contractors Phil Troutman and Sriram Rajagopalan attended the conference, both to gain information and to provide technical knowledge or correction if the situation warranted. Neither formally presented any material, although they took part in discussion during the Question and Answer session at the end.

On January 8, 2009, the webconference will be held a second time. To participate, register at http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/webconference/web_conf_learner_reg.aspx?webConfID=15820.



FMIS System Updates

Volunteers Needed



State and Division FMIS users are needed to assist in testing Multiple Demo ID project. Please contact Paul Smith at: Paul.D.Smith@dot.gov. Information on the project is found under "Multiple Demo IDs" on the FMIS FUNI website.



Currently, the FMIS team is revising the **N25A** and **N25B** reports (the reports on the obligation and expenditure data for Demos by Public Law). The reports are not available until further notice.



A new operator has been added to Business Objects XI, the not-equal-to operator (\neq).



Clarification to FMIS 24-hour availability. FMIS is unavailable on Sundays, even though users may have intermittent periods of availability.



The FMIS Team has implemented a new policy for TEST and MAINTENANCE (MAINT) areas of the FMIS system. Under the old policy, TEST and MAINT were refreshed on an ad-hoc basis. Beginning on or about December 1, 2008, FMIS MAINT will be refreshed every Monday and the FMIS TEST refresh schedule is posted on the FMIS FUNI website on a six-month basis. The FMIS Team will accept adhoc FMIS TEST refresh requests on a case-by-case basis, with the hopes that users will plan their testing around the scheduled dates. For any questions or concerns, please contact Jatona Hatcher at 202-366-2846 or at Jatona.Hatcher@dot.gov.

