



On Patrol

Volume 10 Number 2

News From the San Francisco Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol

May 2002

The Public Speaks

Motorists continue to send and phone in praise and descriptions of their experiences with the FSP program. Here are a few recent comments.

Letters

“Last week I was returning home at about 5:30 a.m. The commuter traffic was very heavy and it was dark and raining. My car hit an object on the road that blew my right front tire. When the police arrived, they called the Freeway Service Patrol. I am writing this to thank Mr. Virgil Evans for his thoroughness, strong sense of responsibility, and diligence. The situation was potentially very dangerous. He did his job quickly and professionally, and fulfilled the goal of your service to relieve transportation delays associated with the heavy commuter traffic at that time in the morning. Please thank Mr. Evans for me for his fine work.”

E-mail

“On Monday, Feb. 11, my car broke down and needed to be towed from Highway 17 to Campbell. K.Carter, Beat 16, very quickly spotted

my car and stopped his tow truck to assist me. He was a most welcome sight. I am quite impressed with this program and its efforts to make our highways safer.”

“(3/1/02) ‘I was stranded early this morning with mechanical problems on Interstate 680. Your drivers were so considerate and helpful I had to let you know. Within five minutes of my having to pull over, two trucks stopped to assist me. The drivers looked at the engine for obvious problems, and were willing to tow me if needed. I had already called AAA, but one of your drivers stayed behind me until the AAA tow truck arrived. It was reassuring to have him there. Thank you again for your program. Your drivers went beyond the call of duty!’”

“(3/18/02) ‘Thank you, B. Halder! This was the driver who assisted me with changing a flat tire this a.m. on eastbound Highway 24. I have a 9-

month-old who was in the car with me and I was a little worried about the oncoming traffic with her in the car. B. Halder was courteous, friendly, and just plain old ‘saved the day’ for me. You should be proud to have this employee represent your service.”

Voicemail

“(2/8/02) ‘I ran out of gas recently on Interstate 280 north. Glenn Calub showed up to assist me. He was so efficient, I didn’t even have to get out of my car. He came around to the passenger side, asked me what I needed, gave me some gas and sent me on my way. I just wanted to say thank you for such a wonderful service.’”

“(2/16/02) ‘I just wanted to say that Dave Watson is wonderful. I was stuck on the side of the road and I needed some help fast. I was there for only two minutes when my guardian angel appeared. I can’t say enough about your wonderful service.’”

FSP Partners

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Roadrunner Tow, Fairfield
Marcus Bell and Michelle Inskip
Yarborough Bros. Towing, Santa Rosa

Increasing Benefits, Reducing Costs

by Wes Wells, MTC SAFE

Given today's economic climate, the ability of the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) to improve and grow is directly related to documenting the enormous benefits the FSP provides as compared to the program's costs.

Under the governor's draft budget for FY 2003, the FSP program is in line to receive an additional \$5 million for new service, but these moneys are contingent on a competitive process in which the new funds will go to those areas with the highest benefit-to-cost ratios.

For the FSP program to succeed in the increasingly tough competition for state funds, the benefits have to exceed the costs, preferably by at least two to one. In the last round of calculations, the Bay Area and Los Angeles tallied average benefit/cost ratios in excess of 10-to-one, but if we want the FSP program to expand, we will need to keep these ratios high.

Quantifying Benefits and Costs

"Benefit," as it applies to the FSP program, measures how effectively the FSP reduces motorist delay. Three factors affect this: first, how quickly the incident is detected; second, how quickly it is cleared; and third, how long it takes the built-up queue of traffic behind the incident to get back to free flow.

The savings in motorist delay are based on the dollar value of those motorists' time — about \$10 per hour for motorists and roughly double that for truck traffic, since the latter takes into account the cost of delayed deliveries.



As program benefits go up and costs come down, the FSP increases its chances of garnering new funds for service expansion.

California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Caltrans in support services. These include salaries, benefits and associated overhead for officers, dispatchers and program administrators, as well as costs for consultants, equipment and operations.

Your Role in Keeping Benefit-to-Cost Ratios High

Everyone has a part in this process. MTC SAFE, which is responsible for procuring and contracting with the private tow companies, should strive to assure that the best contractors are selected for the most competitive price — lower costs improve the ratio. Contractors should bid for contracts at the lowest possible price while still providing quality service — they influence both the benefit and the cost. The drivers should make sure that all incidents are detected and cleared as quickly as possible — the more delay is reduced, the higher the benefit. The CHP needs to provide quick dispatch response and effective driver training and field supervision, to help the drivers do their job. And Caltrans can affect the benefit/cost ratio by precisely determining where, when and how much service needs to be deployed.

Inside:

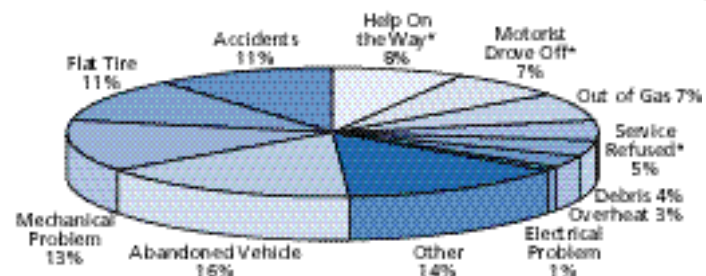
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2001 Bay Area FSP Statistics

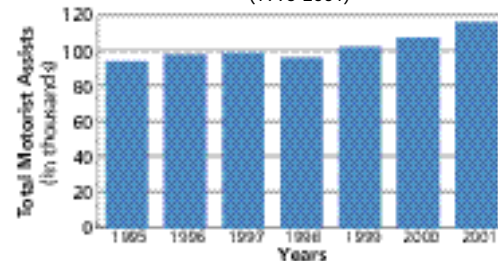


Average Time Waiting for FSP to Arrive
9.76 Minutes

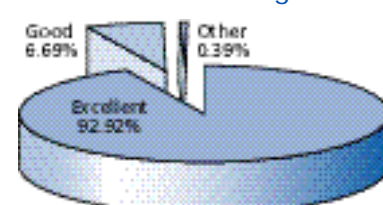
Types of Assists



Total Assists (1995-2001)



Service Rating



* no service rendered

Quarterly Awards for July through December 2001

by Réka Goode, MTC Public Information

Beat of the Quarter

The two contractors who have won the award for Beat of the Quarter for the third and fourth quarters of 2001 could be seen as opposites — one is from the North Bay, the other from the southern part of Alameda County; one is a newcomer to the Freeway Service Patrol program and the other an old-timer — but both have been in business for more than two decades and both are dedicated to the goals of the FSP.

Roadrunner Tow of Fairfield has only been an FSP contractor since July 2001, but by the end of its first three months with the program the company had already won its first award — the Beat of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2001.

The beat for which the firm was honored is Beat 29, on Interstate 80 between Vallejo and Fairfield in Solano County. Jim Inglebright, president and owner of Roadrunner, noted that having the beat “basically in my back yard” was a plus. He also feels an affinity with the FSP because, in his words, “There’s a standard of professionalism that the FSP expects, and that’s what I demand of my drivers.” Owner of the company since he was 18, Inglebright says, “I’ve been towing all my life.”

Inglebright gives the credit for his company’s success to a characteristic he also values in the FSP — teamwork. He cited the leadership of his company’s manager, Karl Offermann, as being a key element in this effort.

Chevron Tow Service in Fremont has had a long history with the Freeway Service Patrol, starting as an FSP contractor in 1994. Since then, the company has won a dozen “Driver of the Month” awards, two “Driver of the Year” awards, one “Golden Paperclip” award and three “Contractor of the Year” awards (sharing one with Yarbrough Bros.) Now the firm can add one more: Beat of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2001.

The beat for which the company won the award is Beat 18 — the stretch of Interstate 880 between Fremont and Milpitas. It is one of five beats that Chevron currently covers, the others being 3, 21, 23 and 26.

Norman Stovall, FSP supervisor for Chevron, has driven Beat 18 for more than three years, and Kim Skinner, president of the company, praises him for his dedication to the FSP program.



Norman Stovall

The company as a whole has “always been very involved with the FSP,” she noted. In existence since 1975, the company currently operates nearly 50 trucks, and employs 60 drivers and other staff.

Driver of the Quarter

Kevin Mullette is the latest Chevron Tow driver to be honored by the FSP. Named “Driver of the Quarter” for the third quarter of 2001, Mullette



Kevin Mullette

can empathize with the motorists that he helps as part of his FSP duties: His first contact with the program was when his car broke down on Interstate 880 and he was rescued by the FSP. “I’ve loved the program ever since,” he said, “and wanted to be part of it.”

A tow truck driver for two years, more than half of that time as an FSP driver, Mullette patrols Beat 26 on Interstate 580 in the Oakland/San Leandro corridor. His favorite part of the job is “being able to help people for free, and getting them off the freeway safely and in a timely manner,” he stated.

Two drivers tied for the title of “Driver of the Quarter” for the fourth quarter of 2001: **Chino Alcantar** of Courtesy Road Patrol and **Francisco Cruz** of Redhill Towing.

A tow truck driver for three years, two of them with Courtesy Road Patrol of San Jose, Alcantar currently drives Beat 22 on Interstates 580 and 680 in Alameda



Chino Alcantar

County. But he was changing a tire on Beat 8 (Highway 101 in Santa Clara County) last December when he had an uncomfortably close call. A vehicle sideswiped Alcantar’s truck and the car he was working on — a situation that could have had deadly results if Alcantar hadn’t parked his truck in a safe position. It reinforced Alcantar’s feeling that common sense and paying attention are key elements to being a good FSP driver.

Despite scary moments, Alcantar still loves the program, he says. “It’s a good feeling to know you’re doing good for others,” he stated.

Francisco Cruz has been with Redhill Towing of San Rafael for six years, the last year and a half as an FSP driver. He currently drives Beat 13 on Highway 101 in Marin County, but has had experience on three beats in the East Bay — 1, 4 and 5. Of the four, he says that Beat 4 on Interstate 880 in Oakland is the busiest, but all beats have their busy moments, especially when it’s rainy.



Francisco Cruz

Like Alcantar, Cruz has reason to be aware of the dangers of his job. Recently, while he was waiting for the CHP to provide a break before he ventured into the roadway to clear debris, a car hit the debris at high speed, spun around and came to a stop on the shoulder just five feet from where Cruz was sitting in his truck. Even so, Cruz says he’s still “grateful for the opportunity to be part of the FSP program.”

Tow Contractors’ Profiles

by Réka Goode, MTC Public Information

Three new tow companies are gearing up for Freeway Service Patrol duty, buying trucks and getting drivers trained in time for their starting dates — two of them this summer and one in the fall.



Butch Weir, terminal president of Great America Towing

Great America Towing based in San Jose, is actually not so new to the FSP, since the company covered Beats 9 and 10 in the South Bay for five years early in the FSP program’s history. Great America will start again with the FSP in early July, this time patrolling Beats 8 and 21, one in Santa Clara County and the other in Alameda County. Beat 8 is one of the beats whose morning hours are being increased to contend with continuing peak-hour congestion in the San Jose area.

Butch Weir, terminal president for the company, noted that Great America had had a good experience the last time the firm was affiliated with the FSP. “We’re glad to be back,” he said. “It makes you feel good that you can help people who are stranded.”

Tony Pandal, chief financial officer for **A-One Towing** is looking for-



Tony Pandal, CFO of A-One Towing

ward to getting his trucks out on the road for the FSP in mid-July. With offices in El Sobrante and Berkeley, the company will be patrolling Beat 26, on Interstate 580 between Oakland and San Lorenzo. In business since 1995, the firm will have three of its drivers certified to drive for the FSP, and will operate one flatbed as well as a tow truck as part of the program. Pandal noted that his com-

pany was interested in the FSP for a number of reasons: “We’re in it for the experience, to learn something new, and to help clear congestion.” He also feels that the FSP is an extension of what A-One Towing already prides itself on — good customer service.

Palace Garage in San Leandro is new to the FSP, but the company’s owner is not. Bill Hemenez was an FSP driver in 1992, when he worked for Hank’s Towing, his father’s company. Hemenez is the fourth owner of Palace Garage, which has been in busi-



Bill Hemenez (left), owner, and Dennis O’Hara, manager, of Palace Garage

ness since 1925, and is the third oldest AAA contractor in the nation. Palace Garage will be covering Beat 4 in the Oakland/San Leandro corridor along Interstate 880 and Highway 238, starting in November. “It’s a real advantage that we’re not too far from the beat,” Hemenez said. “Our response time is less than 10 minutes.” Another advantage he cites is his company’s varied experience and its well-trained drivers.

Upcoming Events

Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

8:30 a.m. Tuesdays
MTC MetroCenter
May 14
July 9

1999 Harrison Street, 17th floor
June 11

Tow Contractors’ Meetings

11 a.m. Tuesdays
MTC MetroCenter
May 14
July 9

Quarterly Driver Refresher Training

11 a.m.–1 p.m.
CHP, Oakland
June 6 and 7
CHP, Dublin
June 20 & 21

Proficiency Testing

7 a.m.–4 p.m.
CHP, Vallejo
May 13
August 5

Certification Class

7 a.m.–4 p.m.
CHP, Vallejo
May 15–17
August 7–9

Congratulations to

Radiah Taylor, MTC SAFE,
and her husband, **Paul Victor,**
on the birth of their daughter:

Veronika Kimani Victor
born March 31, 2002

The Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol program is pleased to announce



“Best in Tow”
10-Year Anniversary Event
Tow Truck Rodeo,
Awards and BBQ

Saturday, August, 17, 2002
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Location to be announced