

Personalized 511 Services

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As the breadth and depth of information on state and regional 511 have grown, it has become increasingly difficult for average users to “drill down” to the information they need for their route. In this welter of information, how can users find what they need to make travel decisions? In 2010, three mostly rural states took major steps toward implementing personalized services on their statewide 511 systems. The Idaho Transportation Department, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and Kentucky Transportation Cabinet have pooled their funds to create a system that allows users to create personalized accounts on their 511 traveler information web sites. Users are asked to create a username and password. Once their account is activated, users can store pre-defined routes and areas/polygons on a Google Map. They can then save these “trips” for future reference. When they return to the site, they can click on one of the saved trips to view a list of events currently affecting that area. For origin/destination routes, events are printed in the linear order in which they will be encountered. This feature is particularly useful for users who find maps difficult to read. These 3 agencies are also implementing a text messaging and emailing notification feature for personalized 511 accounts. Users can schedule alerts during predefined periods for each of their saved trips. Taking this one step further, the system will also be able to receive requests from users on demand. For example, a user can text the name of one of their saved routes and receive immediate updates for that route for a period that roughly equals the route’s drive time. The next stage of development is to personalize the 511 telephone experience itself, using caller ID to recognize users with personalized 511 accounts. When such callers are recognized, the system will offer custom reports for the routes/areas that the user saved to their accounts. This feature is currently being designed and developed for the Sacramento regional 511 phone system.