

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When and why was 511 initiated?

- A. Over the past decade, more than 300 travel information telephone numbers have sprung up across the country, as a way to deliver the real-time information collected by ITS systems to travelers and commuters to help them with their trip decisions. In 1999 the U.S. Department of Transportation petitioned the FCC for a three-digit dialing code to make it easier for consumers to access these travel information services. The FCC assigned "511" to the transportation community on July 21, 2000.

Q. How does the information available from 511 differ from the travel information I get on the radio and television?

- A. With 511, you can expect to receive considerably more route-specific information than you hear in a 30-second traffic news slot, and you will be able to access the information on demand, whenever you need it.

Q. What is the role of the cellular phone in making calls to 511?

- A. When 511 calls are placed from a cellular phone, we encourage motorists to put safety first.

Q. When will 511 service be available in my area?

- A. You may view the current information on which states and metro areas are planning or implementing 511 services on the 511 Deployment Status page.

Q. When will 511 service be available nationwide?

- A. A majority of states and metropolitan areas are expected to have the service by 2005. The 511 Deployment Coalition is working to facilitate deployments at the state and local level.

Q. Is there a charge for 511 service?

- A. Basic travel information (weather and road conditions, traffic updates, public transportation service interruptions, routes, fares, and schedules, etc.) will be free. Some 511 services may charge for additional, premium information such as tourist information, special events, parking locations and lot status, trip routing and planning, etc. The caller will be notified about any charges.

Q. How often is the information updated?

- A. 511 Deployment Coalition guidelines call for continual updates - every few minutes. Not all providers have achieved this goal yet, but over time it is expected that most services will provide timely information, which is the foundation of a quality system.

Q. Who is in charge of 511 deployment?

- A. States have the lead role in coordinating 511 deployments. National leadership is provided by the 511 Deployment Coalition. Led by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and including travel information experts from more than 30 organizations, the Coalition has developed voluntary guidelines for state transportation agencies to follow when they plan 511 service for their states or regions. Other leading member organizations of the Coalition

include the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America), and the U.S. Department of Transportation.