



# The Future of 511 Phone in the North/West Passage States

*National Rural ITS Conference*

October 22, 2018



# Outline

- NWP Overview
- Background
- Project Summary
  - History of 511 Phone Service
  - NWP State 511 Phone Services
  - Trends for NWP 511 Phone Service
- Future of 511 Phone
  - NWP States
  - Other States



# North/West Passage Overview

- North/West Passage has been a Transportation Pooled Fund since 2003
- Members
  - 7 States from Washington to Minnesota along I-90 and I-94





# North/West Passage Overview

- States share common challenges
  - Commercial and recreational travel corridor
  - Extreme weather conditions
  - Road closures and transportation management
- North/West Passage vision is to develop effective **methods for sharing, coordinating, and integrating** traveler information and operational activities across borders

- Since the advent of 511 in 2001, traveler information dissemination has changed:
  - Web sites have evolved and added new dynamic information (e.g. travel times, speeds, images)
  - Mobile applications provide information en-route
  - In-vehicle navigation or infotainment systems provide real-time information
  - Third-party services are popular with travelers (e.g. Waze, HERE, Google Traffic)



# Background

- 511 phone has decreased in use nationally and in the NWP states
- States are considering how 511 may change:
  - Change phone service
  - Deemphasize phone in marketing
  - Reduce funding for phone
  - Discontinue phone service



# Background

- This project assessed:
  - Trends in 511 phone use in NWP states
  - The plans for 511 phone in NWP states
  - Why other states either discontinued or did not implement 511 phone service
    - Kentucky
    - Missouri
    - North Carolina



# Project Summary

- Interviews
  - Interviews/surveys were conducted with all seven NWP states
  - Two non-NWP states were interviewed
  - One non-NWP state was used as a case study
- Data Collection
  - Call volumes by year, month and day
  - Call system characteristics
  - Costs to provide 511 phone

# Project Summary

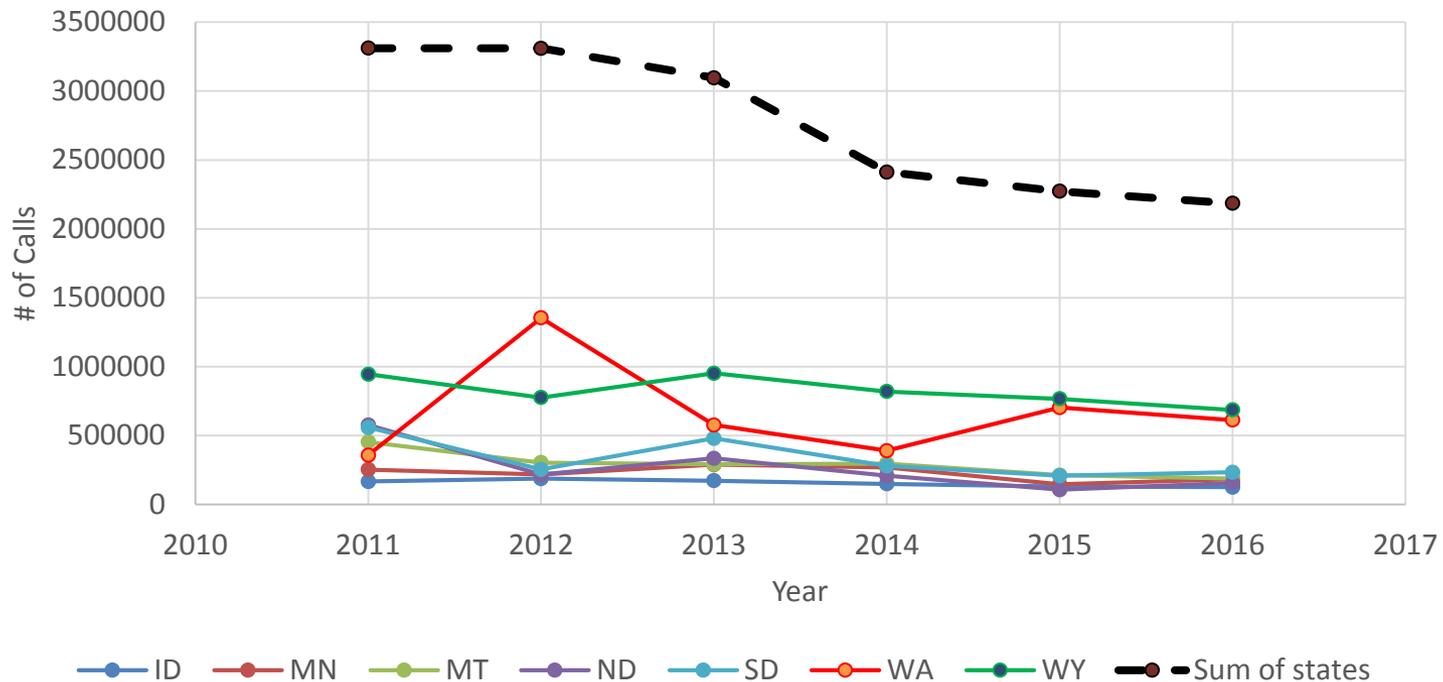
- NWP 511 Phone Services

State (National 511 #)	Traffic		Weather		Commercial Vehicle Specific Info	Transit	Tourism	Other
	Traffic Conditions	Incidents	Weather Conditions	Winter Road Conditions				
<b>Idaho</b> 1-888-432-7623		✓		✓	✓	Transfer / Contact		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides seasonal load restrictions</li> <li>- accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>Minnesota</b> 1-800-542-0220		✓		✓	✓	Transfer / Contact		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>Montana</b> 1-800-226-7623		✓	✓	✓			Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>North Dakota</b> 1-866-696-3511		✓		✓			Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides seasonal load restrictions</li> <li>- Provides commercial vehicle information in traffic information but not through a specific "trucker" menu</li> <li>- Accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>South Dakota</b> 1-866-697-3511	✓	✓		✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Provides commercial vehicle information in traffic information but not through a specific "trucker" menu</li> <li>- Keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>Washington</b> 1-800-695-7623	✓ <i>Congestion in metro areas</i>	✓	✓	✓		Transfer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides ferry info</li> <li>- Provides express lane info</li> <li>- Provides mountain pass weather information</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>
<b>Wyoming</b> 1-888-996-7623		✓		✓			Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides commercial vehicle information in traffic information but not through a specific "trucker" menu.</li> <li>- Accepts caller comments</li> <li>- Voice or keypad input</li> </ul>



# Project Summary

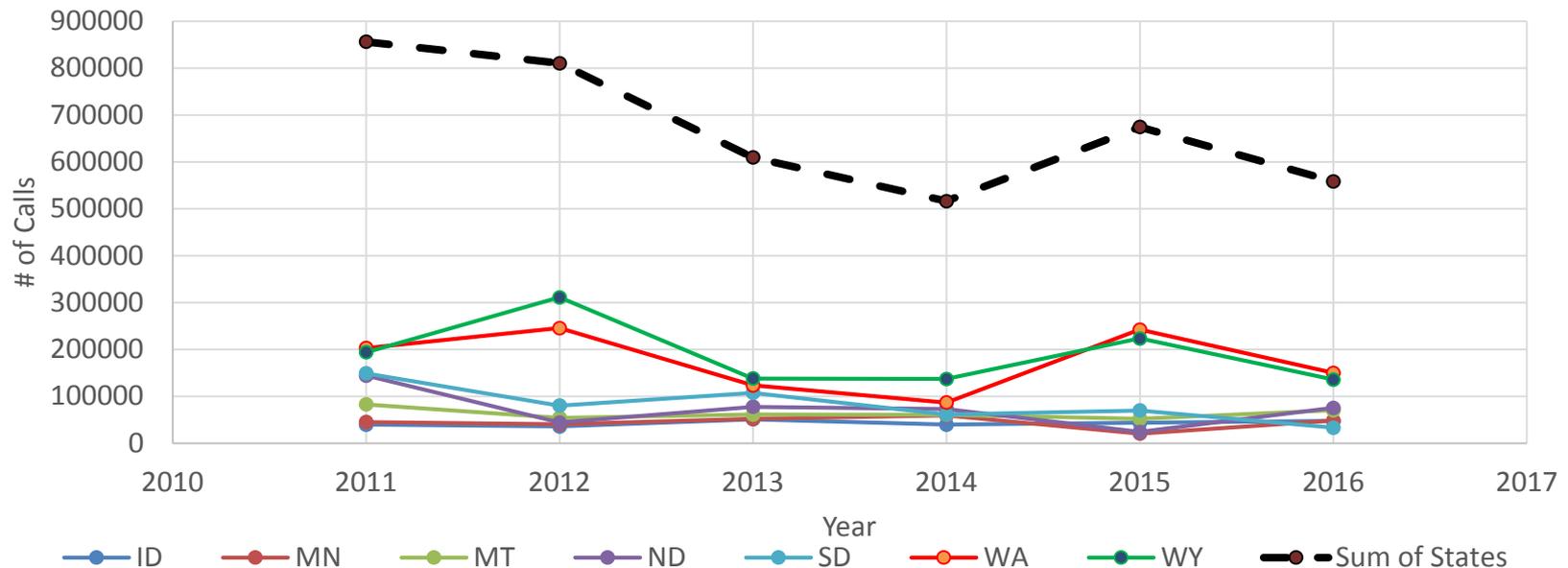
- NWP State 511 Phone Use by Year
  - Decreased 34% from 2011 to 2016.





# Project Summary

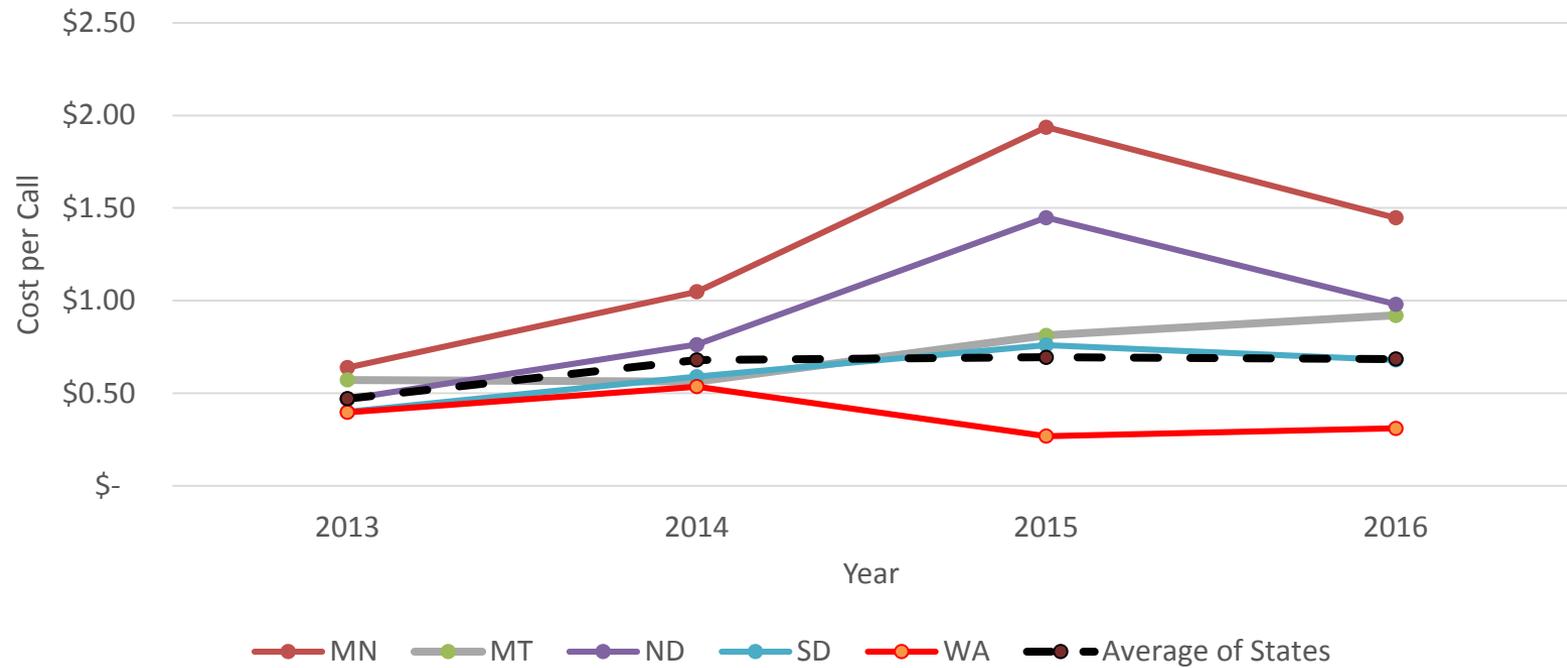
- NWP State 511 Phone Use by Peak Month
  - Decreased 35% from 2011 to 2016.
  - Higher volatility shows peak demand is still strong.





# Project Summary

- Cost per Call for NWP States 511 Phone
  - Cost per call has risen 45% from 2013 to 2016.





# Project Summary

- Changes in NWP State 511 Phone
  - States have updated advances in IVR and telecommunication technologies
  - South Dakota added alerts for potentially worsening road conditions
  - In general states have not invested in significant improvements
    - Investment is in other traveler info technology
    - Not significant demand from public for change



# Project Summary

- Role of 511 Phone in NWP States
  - Serves rural areas with limited Internet and Cellular Coverage
  - Is used by older populations that may rely on landline phones
    - NWP states are comprised of 14%-16% 65 or older
  - Peak time demand (i.e. winter storms) for 511 is still strong
  - Provides redundancy in case of disruption in Internet traveler information





# Future of 511 Phone

- Case Study – State that discontinued 511 Phone
  - Kentucky
    - Conducted a study of current traveler information options
    - Found travelers frequently use third-party information (e.g. Google, Waze)
    - Saw a steep decline in phone use (40% drop in previous two years)
    - Brought all traveler information data management in-house
    - Discontinued 511 phone and mobile application in 2016, shifted website to internal staff, at a savings of \$750,000
    - Teamed with Waze to provide mobile traveler information
    - Launched new traveler information web site



# Future of 511 Phone

- Interviews with States without Traditional 511 Phone
  - Missouri
    - Had ad-sponsored traveler information in urban areas
    - Service provided free to the state
    - Could not find a vendor to continue the ad-sponsored service on a statewide or local basis
    - Provide traveler info through web site and mobile app
    - Travelers can call a 24/7 customer service line



# Future of 511 Phone

- Interviews with States without Traditional 511 Phone
  - North Carolina
    - Discontinued IVR system in 2016. Did not want to deal with complexity and costs of procurement and operation
    - Uses inmates at women's prison during the day to answer calls
      - Inmates can view traveler information web site
      - Each inmate is paid \$1 a day
    - Customers are very satisfied
    - Because inmates can handle limited volume, NC has deemphasized marketing the 511 number



# Future of 511 Phone

- NWP States will Continue to provide 511 Phone
  - FHWA study indicates it is still an important traveler information tool
  - States have legislative and funding support for foreseeable future
  - 511 phone complements other traveler information strategies



# Future of 511 Phone

- NWP States will assess the impact of:
  - Generational shifts to younger, more tech-adept travelers
  - Shifting transportation patterns to transit, rideshare, decreased car ownership
  - Increased connectivity and access to Internet in rural areas
  - “Big Data” resulting in more tailored real-time information
  - Increased third-party traveler information
  - Connected vehicles and in-vehicle systems



# Contact Information

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