

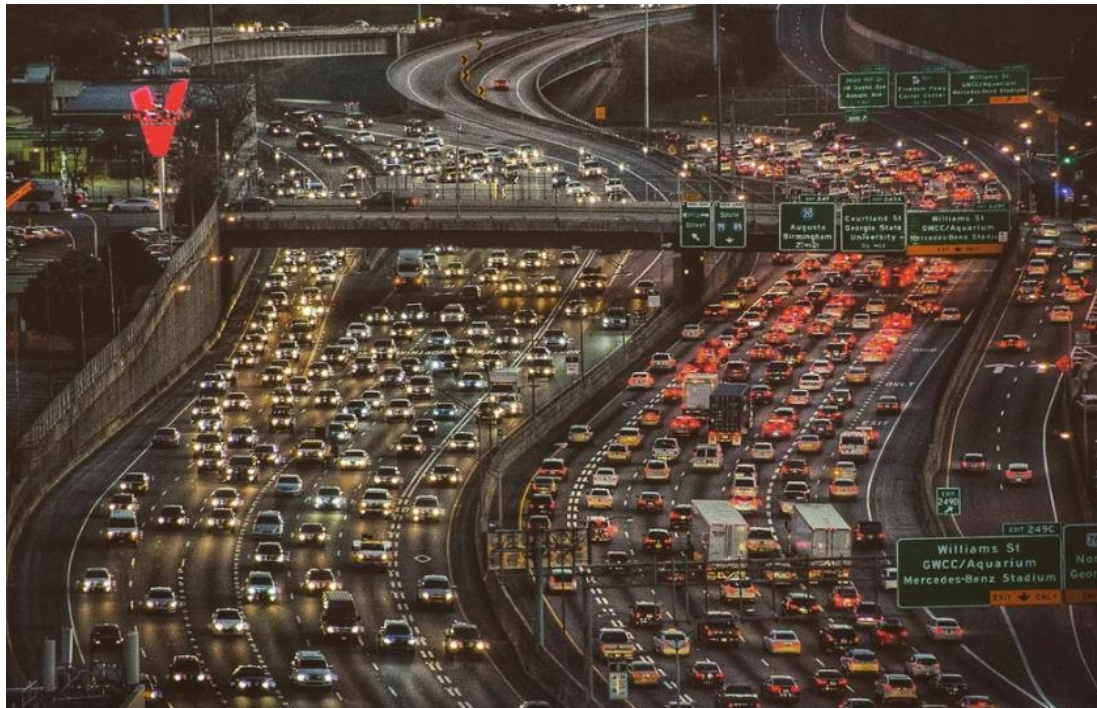


Georgia Department of Transportation

# The HERO Program at 25

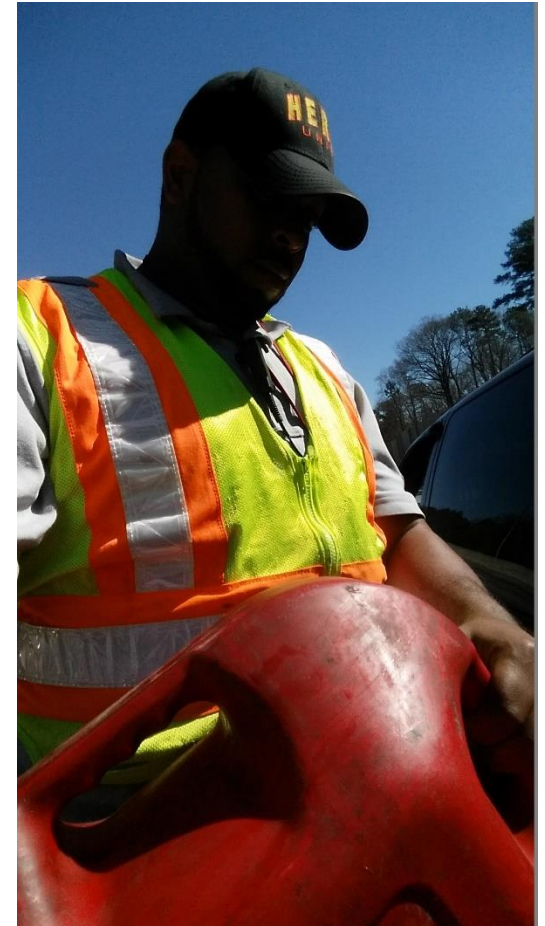
Andrew J. Heath, P.E.

State Traffic Engineer



# 25 Years of Experience...

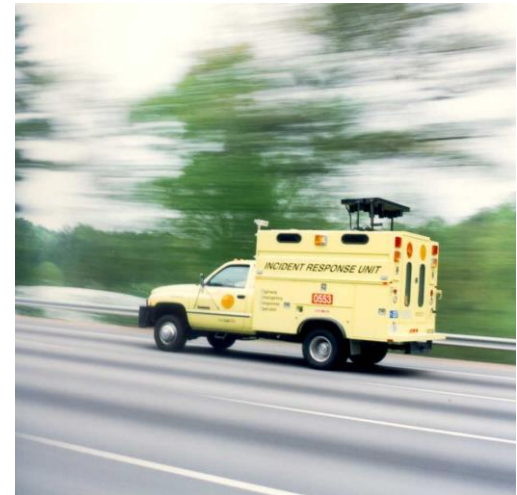
- Manpower
- Coverage philosophy
- Managed Lanes Operations
  - 75 Express
  - Northwest Corridor
  - Master Operators
- HERO UAS Flight Operations
- TRIP Program



# In the Beginning ...

## HERO in 1994

- 12 operators
- 7 routes
- 24/7 weekdays; 6AM to 10PM over weekends





# HERO Today

## Coverage philosophy

- Effort to develop routes of similar “size”
  - “Size” is focused on expected quantity of assists; not lane mile coverage
- Maintaining 10 minute emergency response time
- **72,981 assists in first 8 months of 2019**



# HERO Today

## Managed Lane Operations

- 75 South Express
  - Sweep & Reversals
- Northwest Corridor
  - Sweep & Reversals
- Master Operators
  - New Position reflecting new Responsibilities



# HERO Today

## Flight Operations

- Pilots
  - 2 fully certified pilots
  - 1 in training
- Have all airspace permissions through FAA
- Pilot phase – envision support role
- Used in Dorian Contraflow



# HERO Today

## Towing Recovery & Incentive Program (TRIP)

- Proven response to large, commercial vehicle incidents; National Leader
  - Performance-based Incentive (Up to \$3,500)
  - Multiple providers by territory
  - Prequalification standards & Specific Activation Criteria
  - 25 TRIP activations in August 2019





# HERO Tomorrow

- HERO Expansion
- TRIP Expansion
- Facilities



# HERO Tomorrow

## Expansion

- MMIP Operations
- Top End
- SR 400

**LEGEND:**

Project

○ Project Limits

*Map is not to scale*



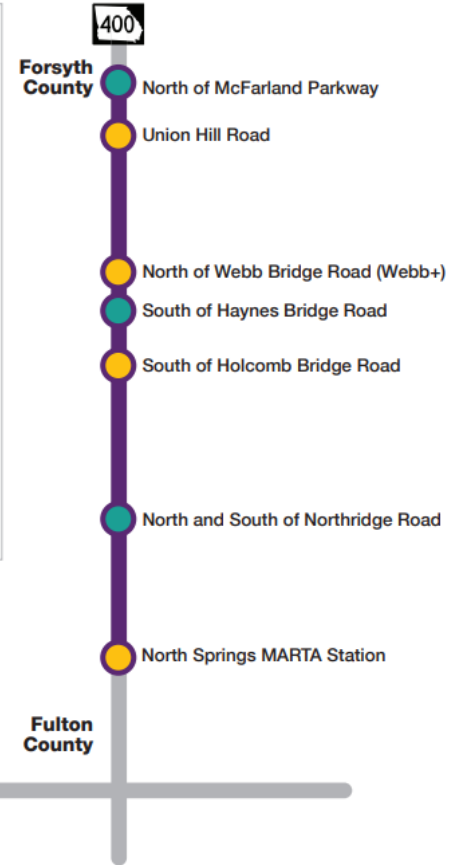
**LEGEND:**

Project

○ Direct Access Ramp

○ Direct Merge at Grade

Project Length: 16 miles  
*Map is not to scale*



# HERO Tomorrow

## TRIP Expansion

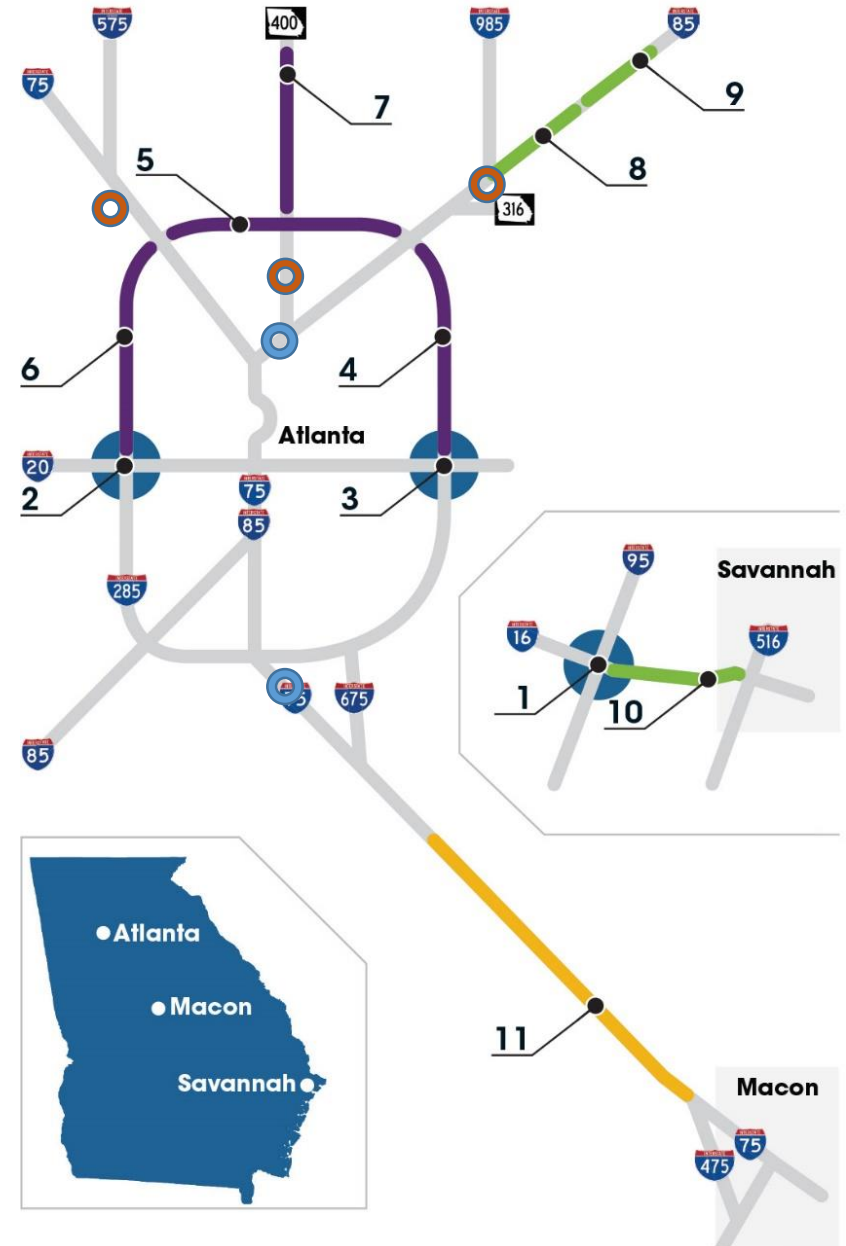
- Statewide Need
  - Incidents occur statewide
- Challenges
  - Towing Industry ability
  - GDOT Resources
- Leverage TIME Task Force



# HERO Tomorrow

## Facilities

- New HQ to replace Plasters Ave
- Satellite Locations
  - Forest Park - MAU
  - Cobb Area Office Location
  - Gwinnett – GSP Post
  - SR 400 – Old Toll Office



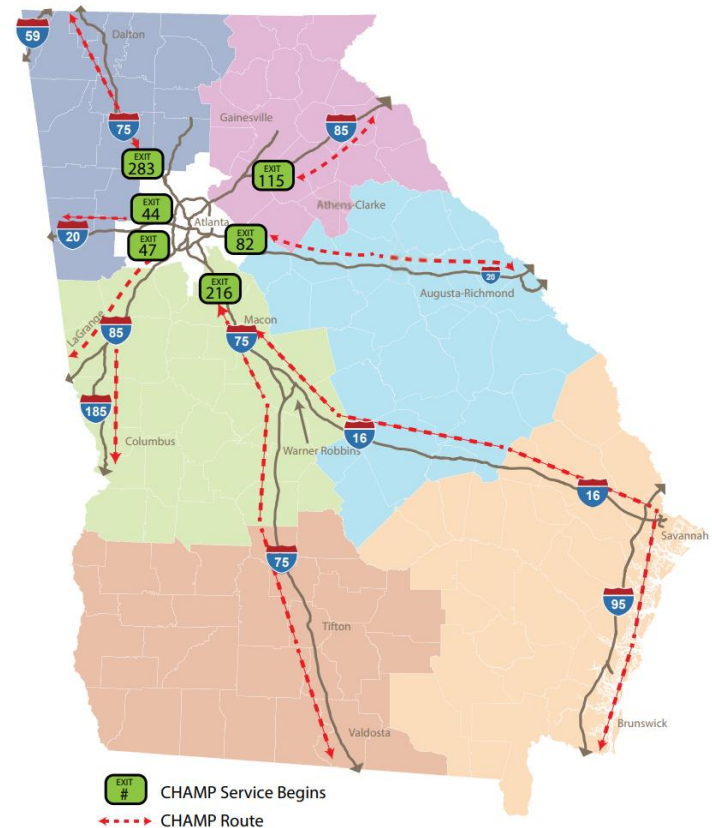
# A Brief CHAMP Update

## Turning 3 already!

- 88 employees
- 20 Routes
- 6AM to 10PM operations
- Dispatchers Located in Districts



Coordinated Highway Assistance  
& Maintenance Program



# A Brief CHAMP Update

- Approx. 12,000 assists/month
- Approx. 20 minute response times



Tony Thornton, a CHAMP supervisor for District 2 and 5, removes rubber debris from the roadway after an 18-wheeler shed a tire on I-16 West/PAYTON TOWNS III

## Clearing the lane: GDOT CHAMP program aims to keep traffic moving

By PAYTON TOWNS III  
Senior Reporter

When driving on the interstate, anything can happen or appear out of nowhere.

Cruising down I-16 West, Tony Thornton spots a large piece of debris in the right lane. Slowing down, and pulling to the right side of the road, he activates his warning lights and a sign to let other motorists know they need to move a lane over.

He calls in the location of the debris on the radio and gets out of his work truck.

Thornton stops a good distance away from the debris, which turns out to be a recently-blown tire from an 18-wheeler. He then walks down the side of the road while keeping an eye on the traffic going by at approximately 70 mph. Seeing that it is clear in the right lane, Thornton grabs the tire and walks back to the truck, getting the debris out of the way.

This is just one of the many duties of those who work for the Coordinated Highway Assistance & Maintenance Program (CHAMP), a service provided by the Georgia Department of



GDOT CHAMP units are tasked with clearing obstacles from Georgia Interstates, among other services that help keep motorists safe on the road/PAYTON TOWNS III

Transportation. Thornton, a CHAMP supervisor for District 2 and 5, said this is the third year of the program.

District 2 covers a stretch of I-16 from mile marker 30, around Bledley County, to mile marker 90. It also includes I-20 from mile marker 82 to the South Carolina line and the Bobby Jones Expressway near Augusta.

District 5 stretches from mile marker 90 on I-16 to I-95, and I-95 from South Carolina to Florida.

"They have pretty big sections that the operators and managers have to cover,"

said Kyle Collins, GDOT district communications specialist. "Pretty much all three supervisors have two districts each."

From January to May this year in District 2, CHAMP operators have worked 33 accidents, assisted 533 motorists, helped 287 motorists with vehicle maintenance, worked 142 abandoned vehicle cases and cleared 881 pieces of debris from the interstate.

"I like getting the chance to get out and help people," Thornton said. "I was once

CHAMP  
continued on 6A



## COORDINATED HIGHWAY ASSISTANCE AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (CHAMP)

By Georgia Department of Transportation

### IN THIS CASE STUDY YOU WILL LEARN:

1. Georgia DOT leveraged longstanding collaborations, partnerships, and resources to develop and operate CHAMP.
2. The communications team in Georgia was an essential part of the rollout, both internally and externally.
3. CHAMP now has 51 vehicles equipped with push bumpers, message boards, and other traffic control devices.

### BACKGROUND

The state of Georgia's continued population growth, along with a growing need to monitor and respond to highway incidents and emergency maintenance needs, prompted the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to consider expanding its existing roadway safety and maintenance patrol on all interstate highways. GDOT's popular Highway Emergency Response Operators (HEROs), a program launched in 1996, respond to traffic incidents and stranded motorists on metro Atlanta highways.

In considering expanding the service, GDOT referenced a national survey of major metro areas and other southern states, such as Tennessee and Florida, about their use of contracted highway safety patrols. Data from that survey and local research helped the department, its district offices, a team of consultants and community leaders plan extensively for a similar statewide service. By October 2016, Georgia DOT had solidified plans for deploying the Coordinated Highway Assistance and Maintenance Program (CHAMP) to cover interstates outside of metro Atlanta.



### WHAT IS CHAMP?

CHAMP, the Coordinated Highway Assistance and Maintenance Program, is Georgia DOT's roadside assistance and maintenance program covering

Georgia interstates outside of metro Atlanta with the exception of short stretches of I-59 and I-24. CHAMP is integral to the department's statewide road safety program.

### CHAMP has:

- 88 employees: 57 operators, 24 full time dispatchers, 4 managers, and 3 supervisors.
- Patrols on 20 interstate routes outside metro Atlanta in Georgia 16 hours daily and on-call 24/7 on I-20.
- An operator patrolling an average 51-mile section of the interstate during an 8-hour shift up to four hours on-call.
- 51 trucks equipped with push bumpers, message boards and other traffic control devices.

Georgia DOT sponsors CHAMP as a complimentary service to the public. Operators do not accept tips or payment for services from motorists.

### PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

A team of cross agency, public safety, and local governments joined forces on planning a program unique to their region. Data from a national survey and local research helped the department and its partners plan extensively for an expanded state safety patrol. CHAMP provides support for GDOT's maintenance crews whose supervisors and executive management team had previously received incident calls (unrelated to their regular jobs) creating a backlog in their regular duties. Essential to this plan was developing incident-priorities for the new operation.

### Concerns for CHAMPs to address in priority order:

1. Lane blocking incidents
2. Shoulder blocking incidents
3. Routine maintenance issues
4. Motorists requiring routine assistance

Additionally, program managers and partners met with GDOT's

# Questions?



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