

## 3-D Imagery Helping Stations 'Beat The Traffic'

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*By David F. Carr -- Broadcasting & Cable, 3/5/2008 3:05:00 PM*

TV stations in the Palm Beach, Fla., and Hartford, Conn., markets are among the latest to embrace a traffic-report-graphics tool called "**Beat the Traffic**" that displays traffic flows on a 3-D map, letting reporters make use of fly-over effects to zoom from one scene of congestion to another.

A relative upstart in the market for travel-reporting technology, Beat the Traffic is a product of **Triangle Software**, which developed it with the support of the National Science Foundation's Small Business Innovation Research program. Already in use at about 18 stations from Atlanta to Alaska, the system made its debut in February at WPBF, an ABC affiliate in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., and just this week went live as part of a new morning show from WTIC Fox in Hartford.

"I think this technology is going to be a pretty hot topic of interest at [the] RTNDA [Radio-Television News Directors Association] and NAB [National Association of Broadcasters shows] this year," WPBF news director Joseph Coscia said. "It's very dynamic, very 3-D in terms of the animation and very clear and easy to read." In short, it gives traffic reporting some of the graphical razzle-dazzle typically found in weather reports, he added.

Beat the Traffic uses global-position-satellite data gathered from monitoring units placed on commercial vehicles to determine where slowdowns are happening. The service also supplements the GPS data with information from other sources, such as state police and departments of transportation, according to Triangle CEO Andre Gueziec. "Much like the weather companies, we get data from a variety of sources," he added.

In addition to providing on-air traffic graphics, the service gives stations the ability to offer personalized Internet traffic reports through [BeatTheTraffic.com](http://BeatTheTraffic.com).

WPBF previously subcontracted technology reports, including on-air talent, from Metro Networks, a unit of Westwood One. Coscia said other services he considered also included a traffic reporter as part of the package. But in conjunction with the introduction of Beat the Traffic, WPBF also hired its own first full-time traffic reporter, Nathalie Pozo, to cover both the morning and evening commutes. "She becomes a personality integrated with the in-studio anchor team, and I did it as much for that as anything," Coscia said.

Besides doing the stand-up report in front of the graphical display, Pozo designs the graphics herself. Although she is still learning the software, she said she has so far found it easy to use. "I'm able to insert a lot of little animations. We had a school-bus accident, and I was able to put a school bus in our graphic. There are all sorts of things we can do to pinpoint for people where those trouble spots are," she said.

WTIC in Hartford brought in Beat the Traffic for its new Fox 61 Morning Show and used it for the first time Monday, which was the show's premiere. "It went great -- no glitches, flawless," news director Bob Rockstroh said.

The station evaluated several other products and services, of which Beat the Traffic was the last to give a presentation, he said, adding, "We were trying to launch this morning show, and we wanted to be a little innovative and have a fresh look. So we really, really liked the uniqueness of program. It gives our traffic reports a completely different look from the other stations in the market."

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