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UA Lab Pilots E-Citation Program to Police Departments

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. – The University of Alabama’s CARE Research & Development Laboratory is piloting locally a municipal version of its electronic citation application and ticketing process, known as E-Citation. Piloting to city police departments is the latest phase in developing the program that allows law enforcement officers to send tickets electronically to the Administrative Office of Courts.

Deployment began in July with a small number of Tuscaloosa Police Department officers. Additional officers were added to the pilot in August. Tuscaloosa was chosen for its convenience to UA researchers and also because the Tuscaloosa Police Department had most of the needed equipment.

“We deployed to the Tuscaloosa Police Department first and then later we included some University of Alabama Police,” said Dr. Allen Parrish, professor of computer science and director of CRDL. “The Tuscaloosa Police Department and the UA Police have been very interested in the project and very cooperative.”

Parrish says there are several advantages to using the E-Citation software, including:

- Faster ticket issuance keeps officers safer by spending less time on the side of busy highways
- Eliminating illegible data
- Minimizing entry errors
- Eliminating multi-ticket copying errors
- Eliminating redundant data entry by multiple agencies
- Producing statistical summaries

“We are very pleased to pilot the municipal E-Citation program,” said Tuscaloosa Police Chief Ken Swindle. “This new technology provides us the opportunity to perform citation tasks with increased safety as well as speed and accuracy.”

The courts are equally excited about the pilot program because the system eliminates data entry of the tickets by the court clerks. Once the officers transmit the tickets electronically to the Administrative Office of Courts in Montgomery, the tickets are in the system and the individual court clerks can access and view those tickets and never have to input the ticket information.

“I feel Tuscaloosa is privileged to be a part of this project. The system is working wonderfully. It is a major time saver and a much more efficient process,” said Tuscaloosa Municipal Court Judge Madelene L. Hollingsworth.

Syscon, a Northport based company, provides the records management system for the Tuscaloosa Municipal Court. Syscon has partnered with UA’s CARE Research & Development Laboratory to interface their system with E-Citation in order to provide a total solution to the Tuscaloosa Municipal Court.

E-Citation was developed by UA’s CRDL in 2003 and sponsored by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Partners in the program include the Alabama Department of Public Safety and the Administrative Office of Courts.

Phase one of the program took place at the Alabama Department of Transportation trucking weigh station in Heflin. Phase two expanded the project to four Alabama counties, including Baldwin, Cleburne, Madison and Mobile. Motor Carrier Safety Unit troopers in those counties worked with laptops and driver’s license scanners in their cars.

The project was then granted statewide permission by the Alabama Supreme Court and state troopers began using it in additional counties. After the city pilot in Tuscaloosa, the program will gradually expand to other Alabama cities and municipalities. Eventually, CRDL plans to deploy E-Citation to all other state troopers in Alabama.

UA's CARE Research & Development Laboratory uses leading edge technologies to offer products and specialized software development services in a variety of areas, particularly traffic safety and law enforcement. A few of the current projects include E-Citation, CARE, and the annual Highway Safety Plan for the state of Alabama. For more information about the E-Citation project, visit the CRDL Web site at <http://care.cs.ua.edu/>.

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