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# Science Blog

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**From:** [Virginia Tech](#)

## **Virginia Tech Center For Transportation Research Teams With SHENTEL To Develop Traveler Information Systems**

(Blacksburg, Va., Feb. 23, 1999) The Virginia Tech Center for Transportation Research, in partnership with SHENTEL Service Co., has been selected to lead the development of a comprehensive advanced traveler information system (ATIS) for the Shenandoah Valley region of Virginia, and then to expand that model statewide. Support for the initiative, valued at more than \$900,000, is being provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), SHENTEL Service Company (a subsidiary of Shenandoah Telecommunications), and the Virginia Intelligent Transportation Systems Implementation Center.

The Shenandoah ATIS, called "Travel Shenandoah," will be an integrated traveler information service, providing comprehensive, timely, accurate, and useful information on traffic and travel conditions, traveler services, tourist destinations, and emergency services to travelers, potential travelers and those serving travelers in the corridor, explains project co-director Aaron Schroeder, a researcher with the Center for Transportation Research. VDOT and the State

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Police will be able to use Travel Shenandoah to help manage I-81 traffic incidents, including disruptions from construction as I-81 is widened.

Potential information delivery mechanisms include the Internet, kiosks, cellular phones, PCS/digital wireless phones, pagers, changeable roadside advisory signs, radio, and cable TV, says Schroeder.

"We are very excited about this project here [at VDOT]," says J.R. Robinson, VDOT's director of Intelligent Transportation Systems. "Travel Shenandoah represents the most comprehensive effort to date in this country, I think, to provide traffic and traveler services information in a mostly rural area. It also supports VDOT's efforts to work more with the private sector to bring better services to the citizens of Virginia," says Robinson.

Travel Shenandoah is as a public-private partnership that includes VDOT, VTC, the Virginia Tech Center for Transportation Research, the Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission, SHENTEL Service Company and its affiliates (providing telephone, cable, wireless, internet and pager services), the Shenandoah National Park, and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association. This public-private partnership structure will serve as a model for future regional participants across the rest of the commonwealth, says Schroeder.

"Travel Virginia," the broader, statewide project being led by the Center for Transportation Research, calls for the development of a network of regional partnerships, structured in a similar fashion to Travel Shenandoah, across the commonwealth.

"We are really enthusiastic about this project, which has the potential to further enhance the commonwealth's reputation as a world-class tourism destination," says Gayle Morgan Vail, interim president of the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

The primary responsibilities of Virginia Tech's research center include facilitating the partnerships that need to be established to make Travel Shenandoah and Travel Virginia a success, and to design and build a "traveler information clearinghouse" upon which these systems will draw. The clearinghouse will draw data from VDOT, the Virginia State Police, the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, the Shenandoah National Park, and other sources. "This data will be processed, integrated and stored in the

The image shows a vertical interface for Microsoft Live Search's xRank Musician feature. At the top, it says "Microsoft Live Search" in a green header. Below that, "xRank Musician" is displayed in green text. A search bar contains "Jonas Brothers" with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, a green text prompt reads "Track your favorite artists' popularity!". There are three artist entries, each with a photo and an xRank score:

- The first entry shows a photo of a woman with long blonde hair and a green upward-pointing arrow next to the text "xRank: ↑".
- The second entry shows a photo of three young men (the Jonas Brothers) and a red downward-pointing arrow next to the text "xRank: ↓".
- The third entry shows a photo of a woman with dark hair (Rihanna) and a green upward-pointing arrow next to the text "xRank: ↑".

Small orange triangles are visible above and below the bottom-most entry.

clearinghouse to provide a 'one-stop,' easy access point for all travel-related information in the project area," says Schroeder.

The primary responsibility of SHENTEL (and other regional private-sector partners in their areas) is to act as a traveler information "franchisee" by accessing clearinghouse data and providing a public delivery system. For example, in the Travel Shenandoah project, information will be disseminated to the public via SHENTEL's existing telecommunication channels, which include the Internet, cellular, PCS and land-line phones, pagers and cable TV. According to Christopher French, SHENTEL president, "This effort is a natural match between the extensive and advanced network of Shenandoah Telecommunications Company's communications systems, our Shenandoah.com web site, which already serves as an online gateway to information about the northern Shenandoah Valley, and our role of helping customers easily obtain and use information."

Regional partners will also have the responsibility of gathering detailed local travel information data for the clearinghouse. In addition to providing a distribution mechanism for clearinghouse data, the local franchisee will also provide a mechanism for local traveler service and tourism entities to participate in the regional and statewide traveler information system.

SHENTEL's parent, Shenandoah Telecommunications Company, is based in Edinburg and provides a variety of advanced, high quality telecommunications services to the four-state region from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania to Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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