



## **2014 TAGITM Excellence Awards**

Voter Line Wait Mobile Application, Collin County

Popular elections mean long lines. How can a county conduct an election, manage long voter line waits and minimize voter frustration? Collin County, Texas experienced its largest voter turnout ever during the 2012 Presidential Election. The county's solution to this problem was to integrate GIS, an on-line line wait dashboard, QR codes and mobile devices. However, the real story began in 2009 with electronic poll books and Vote Centers.

The State of Texas granted Collin County "Vote Center" status in 2009. Voter Centers allow citizens to vote at any polling location on Election Day as they do during Early Voting. Collin County has had electronic poll books since the mid-1990s. Electronic poll books permitted the Election department to extend the ability to vote at any polling place with access to your particular ballot style without the burden printed poll books. Traditionally, voters would vote at designated polling locations. The Vote Center concept allowed voters to cast their ballots on the way to work, during lunch, while running errands, etc. without having to go to their designated voting precinct. Yet, Vote Centers introduced a new challenge of longer line waits at convenient locations.

The Election department anticipated that the 2012 Presidential would have very long lines at certain locations. They asked Collin County IT to help with a solution to reduce line waits and to make the voting process more efficient. The Elections and IT departments developed a street light style, line wait dashboard that voter could see line waits online before heading to the polls. Green locations indicated that voters had less than twenty (20) minutes to wait; yellow meant twenty-one to forty minute wait (21-40) and red was over forty (40) minutes. The online line wait dashboard site also integrated with GIS for online polling locations and routing capabilities. The county recognized that lines would grow at popular locations during peak hours. With line waits in mind, the county enlisted GIS and IT development to build a mobile application to identify line waits in real time. Their solution was to integrate GIS, the online dashboard and QR codes.

QR Codes were placed at popular polling places. The voter was given the option to scan the QR code with their smart phone to find polling sites with shorter lines while waiting. The QR code would call a mobile GIS application on their smart phone showing a map displaying some of the other sixty-seven (67) polling locations and their line wait times. The voter could use the mobile application to navigate to a polling site with a shorter line.

Collin County originally used the QR code signs during the final days of 2012 Presidential Early Voting in order to test the concept for Election Day. Twelve (12) popular polling sites were chosen for the QR code signs on Election Day. Many voters used these QR codes to find shorter lines during the election. The QR codes and the mapping mobile application contributed in processing over 100,000 voters on Election Day.

Collin County Elections has used the green, yellow, red line wait dashboard for several elections. The addition of the QR code application has given the county's citizenry a unique option to choose to their polling place in real time to go vote. Collin County voters now have a convenient and powerful tool to make their vote count.