

DEVELOPING A SMART CITY ROADMAP FOR ATLANTA

Torri Martin, Director, SMARTATL, shared the City of Atlanta's approach to smart city transformation.

Atlanta has a population of 750,000 but every day that swells to around 1 million as people flock to jobs in the city. This creates big challenges for the city and its citizens. And that's where Atlanta started, by surveying its citizens to ask them about their pain points – the importance of citizen engagement was one of the key themes that emerged during the Smart City InFocus event.

Interestingly, overarching patterns emerged, but issues' rankings varied in different locations in the city, depending on how people there were affected by them. From this exercise, Atlanta was able to map its primary smart city objectives (see below).

ATLANTA'S SMART CITY OBJECTIVES



Making it happen: Breaking silos




What makes Atlanta smart? "We (the city) collectively leverage a strategic and data-centric approach to improve mobility, public safety and sustainability, ultimately enhancing citizen wellbeing and fostering the economic growth of our city," Martin says.

Atlanta has recently established a centralized smart city initiative and Martin is the dedicated Director. "We quickly realized that a lot of our departments were working in silos, so we created my office within the Atlanta Information Management department and so I have responsibility over all smart city projects."

A data-driven approach

Atlanta is focused on how it can use data to achieve its primary aims and has identified three key applications for data generated. They are to be: "descriptive, prescriptive and predictive".

DATA SHOULD BE:

Descriptive	Prescriptive	Predictive
Situational Intelligence <i>What's going on, anywhere and everywhere</i>	Real-time Optimization <i>Use advanced computing to make things as good as possible, in real-time</i>	Preventative Maintenance <i>Predict problems and opportunities in time to take action</i>
		
RIO 30 departments in 1 unified control center	DALLAS 1-40 Integrated Corridor	Equipment remotely reports its own condition. Send a crew to equipment most likely to fail

Martin and his team are also exploring the opportunities offered by fostering an “economy of data”. This includes looking at ways to allow citizens to interact with data and establishing a culture of working with businesses, entrepreneurs and startups to help with developing solutions.

“The city doesn’t have limitless resources so we are looking to actively partner with startups and the business community to help solve that issue,” he said.

In partnership with Georgia Tech, the City of Atlanta is developing a ‘store’ to house all the data collected from smart city technology. “We’re setting up a governance structure around data, we’re developing APIs that help us interface with the business and local community. We’re also developing good formats for the citizen to utilize this information.”

The ability to monetize data in this new economy was another common theme throughout the event. As part of this process, Atlanta’s use of data is governed by Georgia’s Open Record Laws,” he said. “So the city has to be creative when looking at ways to monetize data.”

Step by step

In terms of the steps to becoming a smart city, Atlanta refers to ‘6Cs’: Capture and communicate, collaborate and crunch, configure and control.

The city tests solutions before scaling up deployments. “Before we deploy city-wide we like to take a smart intersection to a smart corridor to a smart district. Right now we are identifying about five smart districts in the City of Atlanta, which will be used as a test lab for companies and the city to test technology.”

One key testbed area in the city, for example, is North Avenue, a major corridor that includes businesses and residential areas.

The power of partners

Martin spoke about the power of partnerships in smart cities, both with internal departments and citizens as well as with vendors and suppliers. “The City has limited resources to address all of these problems so we are really working with vendor partners to help us navigate all of this.”

He added that public-private partnerships “have been a tremendous asset to us in helping build a smart city strategy.”

Benchmarking maturity

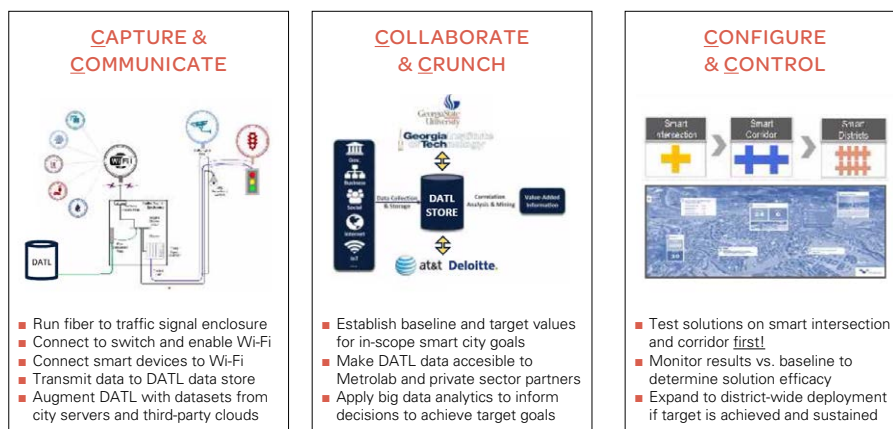
Finally, Martin shared how the City of Atlanta has used TM Forum’s Smart City Maturity and Benchmark Model to create a comprehensive roadmap. The exercise, which involved leaders from all the major departments in the city, was a chance to “really sit back and really reflect on what we were doing.”

“There were a lot of great questions that we hadn’t really thought about or not from that perspective. The Maturity Model gives us a great benchmark to say ‘this is what we started out from and by deploying these technologies and working with companies like TM Forum this is what we were able to achieve’.”

Martin concluded by saying, “We’re at the beginning [of our smart city transformation]. We’re new to it, but we’re looking to make great strides.”

Watch this back-stage video interview where Martin outlines what his role involves, its challenges and rewards, what a typical day looks like and what keeps him awake at night.

THE 6 Cs OF BECOMING A SMART CITY



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