

PPP, Inc.

# PROJECT Spotlight

# INPROVING THE NORTHER NORTH



## **Improving the Visibility of Roadway Medians**



#### **The Problem**

Just 20 miles Northwest of Dallas is the evergrowing town of Flower Mound, Texas. Early settlers coined the affectionate name because of a 12.5 acre hill in town that blooms seasonally and to this day, the area is preserved for everyone to enjoy through a public private partnership.

Community leaders pride themselves on maintaining a small-town atmosphere while embracing and fostering a dynamic culture of growth.

However, preserving a country atmosphere residents appreciate and expect can be a challenge when population is growing by double digits annually.

Back in the 1850's Flower Mound was a religious camp that steadily evolved and incorporated in 1961. However, in 1974, the town saw an influx of residents mostly due to the opening of the Dallas Fort Worth Airport. The affordable real estate and comfortable country living suburb was a draw to many. This style of living still exists today, and city council has made the conscious decision to keep that character. As a result, few streetlights exist in Flower Mound. While that's welcome to some, it rarely is a good thing for night time driving safety. As a result, medians can be dark and dangerous. Mika Clark, Signs and Markings Supervisor, was recently looking for a better marking solution for medians that wouldn't fade, chip and create a maintenance headache like paint.

"I hate paint for median curbs; dust collects, it gets dirty and the beads fall off. Dotting curbs with Reflective Pavement Markers (RPM's) wasn't a very good solution either" says Clark.

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#### **The Solution**

Of course, lighting was one option to brighten medians, but that came at a cost of 66 million dollars and city council decided it was cost prohibitive for a community of 75,000 people.

In 2016 Clark and his associates visited the American Traffic Safety Services Association Expo. That's when they experienced what came to be known as "The dark booth." Not nearly as sinister as it sounds, it was a creative 10x10 booth display constructed by Professional Pavement Products (PPP) that inside, showed the retroreflective effects of some of their signature products. Participants were given a flashlight and invited inside to a space void with light. When they switched their flashlights on, the reflective elements of the MedianAlert™, returned with a brilliance that many related to LED lights.

This was the solution that Clark was looking for.

Being a good steward of taxpayer funds, he searched the open market for a comparable product and did the normal due diligence to evaluate quality and price. "I did find a similar product, but when I received the sample, it was clear it was junk. I could tell it wouldn't last and it reminded me of a giant temporary sticky tab" Clark said. Still being cautious, he asked PPP to send a sample for evaluation through the "See-It-To-Believe-It" program unique to PPP. The program allows agencies to try products for free in exchange for completing a short survey. Monika Thompson, manager with PPP sent Clark 3-4 samples to try.

"I gave some thought about where to put these Median Alerts so that they would be recognized. There is an intersection locally that doesn't have any overhead streetlights nearby and I thought it would help drivers when leaving night time church services." Clark says. The strategy paid off because a member of city council saw it and called the transportation office the next day asking if he could get one at another high collision risk intersection. Clark obliged. I just kept installing them where I got the requests and then POW!

I had already decided that we wanted the Median Alert at many of our intersections, so my plan was to use some of my \$250,000 budget to phase them in over a number of years. I didn't anticipate that they would become so popular that city council would order them installed at ALL of our 600 medians. My phased in schedule was immediately accelerated and the funds came from other city sources, not my budget." Clark explains.





"The Median Alert project turned out great, but it didn't come without its challenges. First, it's not cheap. These are well made products and at nearly \$40 per unit, it adds up quick. We have 10,000 Median Alerts in service now so that's a significant number for us.

Overall, I think it is money well spent. Our streets are safer, and it made my job easier. The council loves it, and the public is pleased.

I can tell it worked well because the complaints stopped coming." He said with a playful smirk.

"It's a success because they work remarkably well in low light areas. We tested each one by doing 'night drives' with my crew. In fact, we have each one cataloged with GPS coordinates. Our plan is to put the Median Alerts on an inspection schedule quarterly just like we do with our other equipment in the field. "

Clark has proven himself to be an innovative forward thinker, which can be quickly identified by the way he designs and buil ds his facilities and equipment. He is constantly looking for better ways to do things for his residents.



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