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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**New and Enhanced Services for Visitors, Businesses and I-Drive Employees
Orange County, Orange County Sheriff's Office,
I-Drive Master Transit & Improvement District efforts result
In COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) grant**

ORLANDO, FL--When we go on vacation or attend a meeting away from home, it's natural to relax, let our guard down, put our minds on auto pilot. After all, it is our well-earned vacation. Or in the case of meetings, a chance for a break from the routine. It's easy to assume that because we are in a vacation paradise, we don't need to think about our safety.

But being away from home and enjoying one of the world's top tourist destinations does not mean that it is okay to take a vacation from basic safety. In addressing this issue, the [International Drive Master Transit & Improvement District](#) (the **I-Drive District**) is taking some new steps to stop crime before it occurs in the I-Drive area, Orlando's famous tourist corridor. With more than 5.3 million visitors per year to the area and over 30,000 employees who work here each day, safety is always a top concern.

Orange County Government, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the I-Drive District have been awarded a \$750,000 **COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services)** grant to supplement a pilot I-Drive Public Safety Plan that was implemented in November 2008, that included additional law enforcement officers and additional hours of coverage.

The grant funding means 10 additional senior level deputies who will be specifically trained and dedicated to the tourist corridor. In addition to the new positions, there will be enhanced visibility in the area and increased hours of coverage. There will be more security checks and work with businesses, more interaction with visitors, solutions to crime problems and a quick response time to situations that may arise.

And there is more good news: the safety program, which is a public/private partnership, will cover 100% of the I-Drive area, serving the unincorporated boundaries of I-Drive Master Transit & Improvement District. This area encompasses 5,500 acres of accommodations, the [Orange County Convention Center](#), attractions, dining and entertainment and shopping.

In announcing the new grant award, Luann Brooks, executive director of the **I-Drive District**, says this is a proactive approach by the I-Drive business community, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and Orange County Government.

"The safety of our guests is tied to the economic vitality of the area and is the most important concern of this destination. This grant enables us to go the extra distance in protecting our guests and in working with business owners to address and resolve their specific issues. It also takes into consideration, the safety of the employees on I-Drive."

A survey by the Client Advisory Board of the **Orlando/ Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau** indicates that security is the top issue for convention participants.

Alan Villaverde, chairman of the I-Drive District and general manager of [The Peabody Orlando](#) next to the [Orange County Convention Center](#), says that preventing crime is extremely important to our travel industry.

“We know that this is a concern to visitors and convention attendees so when we put this initiative together, we looked at successful programs in other cities including Times Square in New York, San Diego, Austin, New Orleans Washington, D.C. and San Antonio. We feel that we have incorporated the strongest components into a plan for our area.”

What do visitors “see” as a result of this program?

The current pilot program is a proactive, increased presence from both law enforcement agencies through utilizing off duty personnel (City of Orlando and Orange County) that includes mounted units, bike patrols, and deputies on foot. The program is 100% funded by a special assessment tax paid by the I-Drive business community.

Captain Nancy Brown of the Orange County Sheriff’s Office says that the “increased presence will have an impact on area safety” and will enable patrols to be pro-active in the tourist corridor.

Orlando Deputy Police Chief Paul Rooney says that his officers attach “friendly” notices to cars warning visitors about vehicle burglary.

“Often visitors will leave their cell phones, iPods or shopping bags in plain view. We are committed to ensuring a safe experience and offer friendly reminders.”

For business owners, a “crime prevention specialist” works to assist with a wide range of safety issues. This is especially important to those businesses that do not have security on their staff.

Editor’s note: Created in 1992, the [International Drive Master Transit & Improvement District](#) it is a special taxing district formed under a public-private initiative with Orange County, the City of Orlando and the businesses of the International Drive Resort Area. Recognized as an outstanding example of cooperation between three distinct entities, this is the first district of this type established in Florida. Now used by other regions as a model, the district is comprised of three separate Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) that are jointly operated under this unique partnership by a Governing Board and an Advisory Board.