



## Mobile devices in the field score big: Smith Seckman Reid, Inc. and the Appia® service

**Needs analysis:** Consulting firm Smith Seckman Reid, Inc. (SSR) was selected for a complex heavy highway project in Tennessee that was to be constructed across an area with sensitive environmental concerns.

**Product implemented:** SSR chose Info Tech's Appia® service since it is web-based, allows for real-time online collaboration and field data collection on a tablet. **Results:** The software improved efficiency, kept inspectors in the field and allowed for successful completion. The project achieved Audubon International Silver Signature Certification for accomplishments in sustainable design, construction, and management.

Consulting firm Smith Seckman Reid, Inc. is no stranger to large construction projects, so when the firm was selected for the Wolf River Boulevard project in southwestern Tennessee, they were up to the task. The project involved approximately two miles of four-lane roadway with shoulders and bike lanes, two bridges with protected pedestrian crossings, five oversized box culverts to encourage 'critter' crossing, one pedestrian underpass, and two new traffic signalized intersections. The project was further complicated by the fact that Wolf River Boulevard is enrolled in Audubon International's Silver Signature Sanctuary green certification program. The program blends wildlife habitat conservation, water use efficiency and water quality preservation, and other areas of environmental protection with human use of the project.



The project, which was funded 80% federally and 20% locally, was managed using the Appia service, a construction administration and inspection application from Info Tech, Inc. At the time, SSR was new to the Appia service. The Appia team provided two days of in-person, hands-on training in both field operations and project management. After that, the SSR team was ready to go.

Since the Appia service is web-based, it can be accessed from any device that has Internet connectivity and does not require a software install. This was an immediate benefit to SSR.

"Other construction management software we use has to be installed on every machine," said Nick Taylor, Project Manager for SSR. "This process in itself is burdensome not to mention all the software updates that follow. Plus we have to be on the machine the software was installed on to use the program."

The ability to use the Appia service in the field was also a key benefit. SSR's inspectors used iPads for daily work reports.

"The iPad allowed the field staff to enter daily work reports in the field which saved valuable time that it would have taken them to come into the office to enter their reports," Taylor said.

"In addition, if the office staff found an error while reviewing the daily work reports, a phone call was made to the field staff and the error was corrected right away. The use of the iPad in the field around progress payment time was a lifesaver more than once."

This was particularly helpful for the two sub-consultants that SSR had on the Wolf River Boulevard job providing specific inspection services. SSR simply granted them access to the Appia service and with basic training they were able to record daily construction activities on their own.

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*"The field inspectors weren't required to leave the construction site as much," said Taylor. They were able to enter their daily reports on-site. The office staff and the stakeholders are able to log on and access up-to-date project information without traveling to the field."*

*"The Appia team has provided the best customer service I have ever experienced," Taylor said. "They are very personable and you can tell that your concerns are important to them. There has never been a time when I have called or sent an email for support and not received a resolution instantly or in a timely fashion."*



Taylor points to the reporting capabilities of the Appia service as a game-changer for this project. He notes that the Insufficient Materials Report kept the communication lines open. They used the Insufficient Materials Report when preparing the monthly progress estimates. This report allowed them to easily view what pay items did not have sufficient material test reports. They sent that report to the contractor where they could see what material test reports needed to be submitted in order to receive payment.

Taylor indicated that the Item Overrun Report was pivotal as well.

“The client was a big fan of the Item Overrun Report. Each month we provided this report to the client which documented the running total for each contract item. This report provided key information to the client and helped them make important financial decisions relating to the project.”

The project was large and it was a success. In the end, more than one hundred change orders were executed. The final cost was \$19.6 million, including a 5% overrun attributed to escalation in fuel and bituminous costs and additional work items. It was determined that the resulting work met the criteria set forth by the Audubon International Silver Signature program and it achieved a Silver Certification for



accomplishments in sustainable design, construction, and management. It is the first roadway in the world to receive this recognition.

Overall, Taylor feels the Appia service improved efficiency for all users and even stakeholders.

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Introducing new technology is always a gamble, but SSR says the team behind the Appia software made the transition smooth.

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Taylor concluded, “The Appia team has set the bar for service after the sale.”



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