Electronic Communication from Oregon Courts to the Driver & Motor Vehicle Services Division: A Feasibility Assessment

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A system of electronic communication and data transmission for driver convictions, suspensions, and vacates between the Oregon courts and DMV would greatly improve efficiency for all parties.

Objectives
- Assess the feasibility of electronic transfer of driver convictions, license suspensions, court clearances and vacate data from Oregon courts to the Oregon DMV.
- Recommend possible implementation steps.

Problem Statement
The Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) is a division of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the primary record holder for nearly 4 million registered vehicles and the driving privileges of 2.7 million drivers. Administering these driving records requires coordinating information exchange between law enforcement, courts, and the driver records administration system. Presently nearly 810,000 transactions are sent annually from the Oregon court system to the DMV using a nearly entirely paper-based process (see figure). The court system in Oregon that adjudicates driver transactions include approximately 135 municipal, 30 justice, and 27 circuit courts. When a citation is received at the court from law enforcement, it is generally entered into the court’s case management system. Once the violation is adjudicated, the information is mailed to the DMV which then enters the citation data on the driver’s record. Suspensions, vacates, and clearances of the driver’s record are handled in a similar manner. As a result of decreasing budgets, many government agencies are considering ways to provide more efficient services. One such method is to increase automation of previously manual tasks and to integrate these services across agencies. An electronic system of data transfer between the courts and DMV would greatly improve use of resources.

Research Description
A state of the practice review which included interviews with lead staff at similar deployments in other states and Oregon was conducted as part of this research. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with DMV and circuit court staff in the relevant departments (processing, customer service, and information technology). To gather data on the municipal and justice courts, a survey was sent to assess the level of interest and technical capabilities of these courts. The survey was a mail-back format with phone follow-up. The survey had a very successful (90%) response rate.

Using the results of the survey and interviews, the research assessed the potential institutional and technical barriers to implementation. The research then quantified the potential cost savings for both the courts and DMV over a ten-year period based on current and forecasted transactions and the required labor to process them.
Key Findings
• The research did not find any legal or administrative rule restrictions that would prohibit the DMV from accepting driver record transactions from the court system.
• There is no existing regular communication forum between the courts and DMV regarding the issue of data transfer procedures.
• The technical challenges of the system do not appear to be substantial, however, the current workload and demand on information technology staff in all government agencies is a limiting factor.
• The existing system used by the circuit courts (Oregon Judicial Information Network – OJIN) appears to be a usable method (with some modification) to transfer data electronically to the DMV.
• Electronic data transmission can have a number of benefits for both DMV and the Oregon court system. These benefits include, but are not limited to, improved data accuracy and reduction in staff time. This research estimated that approximately $8 million dollars could be saved over a ten-year implementation period, primarily in reductions (see figure). DMV will accrue the majority of benefits and may need to lead implementation to be successful.

Recommendations for Implementation
• Form a coordinating committee to oversee implementation of a new electronic data transmission system (include DMV, circuit, and municipal court representation).
• Identify a timeline for supporting a dual paper and electronic system.
• Develop a standard file transfer format for interchange of data. First, the efforts should focus on working with the Oregon Judicial Department to use OJIN.
• Based on test deployment with the municipal and justice courts, a system to accept transactions from the variety of court software can be implemented. A standard file specification will need to developed as well as “hub” where the data transactions can occur. Sufficient systems engineering should include redundancies and error checks to limit the possibility of data loss.

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