

Budget Opening Statement

Good morning, Madam Chair/Mister Chairman, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to address the challenges facing the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission and our plans going forward.

First, I want to note that I have the privilege of leading some of the hardest-working people in the state of New Jersey. As I review the steep challenges ahead of us, I am conscious of the fact that there are extraordinary women and men in our offices and agencies, dedicated to serving the people of New Jersey to the best of their ability. I owe them a debt.

Our challenges.

You've all heard about REAL ID, and new federal requirements for the licenses and IDs that we issue. Most of you know that, starting October 2020, you cannot use a New Jersey license or ID to fly unless it is a REAL ID document. We'll still offer standard licenses and IDs, but as of October 1, 2020, you can't use that document to fly.

At this time, 42 are issuing REAL IDs. We are not.

Since I took over last year, I've learned a lot.

Our IT group had done a tremendous job over the last few years, laying all the technical groundwork for REAL ID. However, we've learned three important lessons from the experience of other states.

1. REAL ID transactions are much longer than regular transactions, for two reasons: (a) every document must be scanned; and (b) people ask many, many questions at the desk.
2. The resulting customer volume can range from twice the normal levels to, as Maryland recently reported, TEN TIMES normal levels.

3. Every single Motor Vehicle Administrator we interviewed reported that their agencies weren't adequately staffed or prepared to handle the volume when they started REAL ID.

For these reasons, I made a decision not to start issuing REAL ID until we made changes that would minimize the impact to our customers.

Specifically, unless we complete our "REAL ID Readiness" projects, we will not have the capacity to handle the demands of REAL ID availability.

First, we need to finish the systems upgrades we started in November, with our new front-end portal in all agencies. These upgrades will reduce our downtime and process customer transactions faster in the agencies.

Our mainframe technology provides maximum security for our information, but we need to integrate it with more reliable and flexible systems. For example, the web-based Systems User Portal we rolled out in November is a platform for REAL ID, so not only are we ready for the final software implementation, but our employees are already trained on the basic interface.

Over the next six months, we will complete the following additional upgrades:

1. Each of our 39 agencies has a server that is at end-of-life. We will replace EVERY ONE of them over the next five months.
2. We will replace over 1200 PCs as well as keyboards and monitors throughout those 39 agencies.
3. We're installing faster, more reliable driver testing software.
4. We're replacing our point-of-sale payment system, in which outdated credit card scanners cause frequent outages, with cloud-based technology that expands our ability to scan not only credit cards, but eventually licenses or QR codes that can link to and upload a customer's completed application.
5. We're launching a queuing system, in which the customer gets a ticket, and follows overhead screens to the open window. This system will track wait

times for each stage of a transaction and allow managers to speed customer flow. This system is piloting in Trenton and Delanco today, and in Phase 2 will allow us to schedule REAL ID appointments.

Second, you shouldn't have to go to the agency for every transaction. By the end of May, we will have launched an improved website that is not only easier to use, but allows customers, for the first time, to renew their standard license, or to replace a lost or stolen license OR registration, all online.

It will also have a REAL ID microsite at REALIDNJ.com that tells you everything you need to know, and allows you to sign up so that you are notified when the agency nearest you starts offering REAL ID.

Finally, we've requested an increase in staffing.

A 2018 review of agency staffing discovered that, on average, only about 60% of "windows" (stations) are staffed at any point in time. That number drops to 35-50% on Saturdays and in the first hour after opening every day. Most working people who can't take time off work will try to come in at those times, and we aren't serving them well.

I was astonished to learn this. Our overtime budget is 5 times what it was just four years ago – but we are still stretching too few employees to cover the requirements.

In order to get to 100% staffing of windows, we are requesting 209 additional full-time and 80 additional part-time staff.

We will also be consolidating our hours, moving to one shift during the week rather than two, which means all employees will be present at opening time, and until closing time. Specifically, starting July 6, Motor Vehicle agencies will be open weekdays 8am-4:30pm. In addition, to serve those who cannot visit during standard business hours, MVC Saturday hours will be extended, from 8am-3pm, and will use part-time employees to staff the windows at 100 percent instead of 50 percent, to serve more customers in less time.

When our customers walk in the door, we should be ready for them. They deserve more than 50% service.

We are confident that each of these initiatives will prepare us for the launch of REAL ID later this year. I look forward to working together to achieve that goal.

At this time, I'll take any questions you might have.