

Maintenance Innovation State of the Practice

Maintenance Innovation: Work Order Communication Improvement Efforts

Description: State departments of transportation (DOTs) strive to provide excellent customer service. Public requests for information or services may be received through a variety of different platforms and agencies have varying procedures to address requests and track their resolution. Providing responsive yet efficient service requires a balancing of available resources and operational priorities.



(Source: South Carolina DOT.)

Requester Name/Agency: Bill Collier, Virginia Department of Transportation

Date of Request: March 4, 2024

Query: Virginia DOT developed a survey that examines how state transportation agencies address requests for work in these topic areas:

- Policy guidance for responding to citizen requests.
- Methods of receiving citizen requests for service.
- Delegating requests to appropriate staff and responding to requests.
- Volume of requests received and turnaround time.
- Public complaints and challenges with citizen request process.

The survey begins on page 6.

Summary of Responses:

Six state DOTs responded to this query: Illinois, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, South Carolina and Utah. No respondent reported having formal policy guidance on the timelines and/or content of the responses to citizen requests for work. None of the respondents have a level of service agreement for customer requests. Responses regarding the remaining topic areas are summarized below.

Illinois Department of Transportation

Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:

- Calls to district or central offices.
- Email.
- Online submissions to [Illinois DOT Questions/Comments Submittal Form](#).
- Online requests can be received anytime; phone calls are answered only during business hours.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Phone calls are returned if requested.
- Emails are automatically acknowledged.
- Follow-up responses are usually manual when work is complete.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Front desk staff at either the central or a district office receives requests and routes them to the appropriate IDOT staff.

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- Unknown.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- It is assumed complaints over delays in responses are sometimes received.
- If the resolution involves a significant project, the requestor receives an explanation of the expected timeline and challenges. A temporary solution is sought until a permanent resolution can be achieved.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- Unknown.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Potential Change: Improve ease of navigation to online question/comment form.

Mississippi Department of Transportation**Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:**

- Calls to 1-866-521-MDOT(6368).
- Online submissions to [form for public questions](#).
- Requests accepted at any time.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Requests are automatically acknowledged, and the responder drafts an email that the system sends back from a generic address to which the customer cannot reply.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Internal staff route the comments, questions and requests through divisions out to districts and monitor the response and feedback through closure.

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- Turnaround time varies; staff try to be as responsive as possible and let the requester know the issue has been assigned and a response is pending.
- Work requests are not given a timeline.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- Not addressed.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- Unknown.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Potential Change: Link public requests to direct work orders.

New York State Department of Transportation**Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:**

- Calls to a local facility, regional office or 1-800-POTHOLE for pavement potholes, which is monitored by a phone service.
- Requests accepted at any time.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Call backs are made upon customer request.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Phone calls received by local, regional or statewide offices are emailed to the appropriate responsible party.

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- Unknown.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- Complaints are likely to occasionally occur, and attempts are made to educate the requestor about the time involved in performing maintenance or operations tasks.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- Unknown.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Challenge: The volume of work—of which the public is unaware—cannot always be accommodated.

Ohio Department of Transportation**Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:**

- Calls to 614-466-7170.
- Online submissions to [Roadway Defect or Damage Incident Reporting Form](#).
- Requests accepted at any time.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Customers are called back after they submit a service request.
- There are no automated responses when customers use the online system.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Requests are received through the Department's [Help & Contact Center](#).

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- Unknown; the agency lets customers know requests will be handled in a timely manner.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- The public does not complain that work requests are taking too long.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- The agency averages about 280 calls per week. The busiest periods are 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., while slower periods are 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Challenge: Problems may be reported that are outside of ODOT's jurisdiction.

South Carolina Department of Transportation**Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:**

- Calls to 855-GO-SCDOT.
- Online submissions to [Contact SCDOT](#), a website which includes:
 - Phone and email contact information.
 - [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - [Freedom of Information Act request](#)
 - [Work Request](#)
 - Form to inquire about services or information.
- [SCDOT county offices map](#) and contact information.
- Phone calls generally taken from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; email requests accepted at any time.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Customers are called back as needed; sometimes the work is completed with no additional contact.
- Online emails get automatic responses acknowledging submittal and again when the request is closed or completed. Any additional contact is situationally dependent.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Call center has approximately 12 people answering calls all day and requests are tracked. If the person answering the call or receiving the email cannot handle the request, they forward it to the county unit—often the managing engineer—or foreman for additional information or to resolve the request.

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- The goal for calling a customer back is 48 hours. Another goal is to resolve 85% of requests in 30 days. While this goal is accomplished across most of the state, meeting it in urban areas can be more difficult.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- While there are some negative and unhappy customers, the agency has improved customer responsiveness and provides a thorough service.
- It is time consuming to communicate back to customers, and some can be very belligerent, but customer service is a priority at SCDOT.
- A public relations office assists with public image, responding to media and providing public information.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- Online work requests exceed 110,000 per year.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Challenge: Added work may not align with other routine priorities.

Utah Department of Transportation

Methods of Receiving Service Requests from Public:

- Calls to Central or Regional offices.
- Online submissions to [Contact UDOT](#), a website including:
 - [Click 'N Fix](#), a location-based app for reporting issues.
 - A fillable form to submit questions.
- Calls answered during business hours. Emails and Click N' Fix requests received at any time and answered during business hours.

Methods of Communication Back to Customer:

- Phone calls get a call back to 1) acknowledge receipt of request, 2) when “gameplan” is made and 3) when request is complete.
- Click 'N Fix and email requests get an automatic acknowledgment of request receipt, and manual emails when a “gameplan” is in place and when the request is complete.

Responsibilities for Receiving and Assigning Requests:

- Phone and email requests handled by Front Desk staff at Regional or Central offices.
- At Central Office, Click N' Fix requests handled by Front Desk staff. Each region has a coordinator—in some cases a front desk staff—for Click N' Fix requests.
- Requests are routed to appropriate department, as necessary.

Average Turnaround Time for Resolving Requests:

- Question or request typically acknowledged the day received.
- Questions usually answered within 72 working hours.
- Informal rule is to have a "gameplan" email or phone call to requestor within 7 working days, at most.

- Time for longer projects varies before final email or phone call to customer.

Average Volume of Requests Received Monthly or Annually:

- Approximately 40 “Contact UDOT” inquiries, 40 “Click N' Fix” submissions and about 500 phone calls received each year. Regional offices receive around 60 Contact UDOT's inquiries, 60 Click N' Fix submissions and about 500 phone calls per year.

Addressing Customer Complaints:

- Some customers complain that completion of work requests is taking too long.
- Explanations of expected timelines and challenges are provided and attempts are made to find temporary solutions until permanent resolutions are achieved.

Challenges or Potential Changes to Work Order Communication Practices:

- Challenge: The volume of public requests can become overwhelming for regional office coordinators who have many other duties.
- Potential Change: A full-time dedicated citizen response position, similar to UDOT Central Office Front Desk position, would benefit regional offices.

References

[Questions/Comments Submittal Form](#), Illinois Department of Transportation, 2017.

[MDOT Feedback](#), Mississippi Department of Transportation, undated.

[Help and Contact Center](#), Ohio Department of Transportation, undated.

[Roadway Defect of Damage Incident Reporting Form](#), Ohio Department of Transportation, undated.

[Contact SCDOT](#), South Carolina Department of Transportation, 2024.

Related Resource: [County Offices](#), South Carolina Department of Transportation, 2024.

[Contact UDOT](#), Utah Department of Transportation, 2024.

Related Resource: [Click 'N Fix](#), Utah Department of Transportation, undated.

[IIM-OD-15-03 Communication Regarding Maintenance and Operations Requests](#), Virginia Department of Transportation, May 5, 2015.

From the policy:

PURPOSE:

- The purpose of this IIM is to ensure excellent customer service through the provision of accurate and timely information.
- To achieve this goal, the IIM
 - optimizes communication processes and information flow to and from the public through the CSC, TOC's, Residencies, Maintenance, and Operations.
 - outlines responsibilities for AMS work order request use, enhancements to the AMS system, and ensures the accuracy of data regarding AHQ and jurisdiction maintenance responsibilities.

Survey Request – VDOT’s Work Order Communication Improvement Efforts

Background

VDOT actively encourages drivers with work requests to call 1-800-FOR-ROAD or utilize <https://my.vdot.virginia.gov>. Both of these tools efficiently route citizen requests to the Customer Service Center (CSC) for distribution to the appropriate work group for acknowledgement, work to be completed, and response back to the requestor.

Service requests from the CSC flow from their system to our enterprise MMS [maintenance management system] (named Highway Maintenance Management System, or HMMS for short).

HMMS is the system where work orders are created and managed by field maintenance forces, to include some functionality to provide responses back to the citizen(s).

Problem Statement

VDOT is looking to improve both the timeliness and the quality of the communication(s) back to citizens that have made requests for service.

We hope we can gain some feedback from other DOTs about how they are handling their citizen requests for work.

Survey Questions

1. Does your organization have formal policy guidance on the timeliness and/or the content of the responses to citizen requests for work? (See VDOT’s most recent policy guidance from 2015, which is dated and currently under revision.) If so, can you please share that information/guidance back with us?
2. Does your organization use any of the following methods to receive citizen requests for service: (Please indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each.)
 1. A 1-800 phone number to a call center.
 2. By email.
 3. By text.
 4. Using an online system. (Like [myVDOT](#). If you have an online system, please also provide a link or copy here)
 5. By other methods? (Please share any other methods you use.)
3. Who receives requests for service from the public, and how is it assigned appropriately to the field forces for investigation and action taken? (As appropriate; not all requests will require work to be performed.)
4. For communication(s) back to the customer: (Please provide a response for each.)
 - Do you accept requests from the public 24/7/365?
 - Do you call customers back when they submit a request for service?
 - Do you provide pre-prepared, automated responses using an online system?
 - What is the average volume of requests received monthly and annually?
 - Do you know the average turnaround time for resolving issues reported by the public?
 - If so, please share that information as you are able.
 - Does the public ever complain that the work requests they submit are taking too long to be completed?
 - If so, have you done anything to try to further educate them about the time involved in performing maintenance/operations tasks?
 - Do you have a level of service agreement or provide customers with expectations for how long it will take you to respond?

5. Last, general questions: (Please provide a response for each.)
 - What are the challenges that you face now with communicating with the public or resolving requests that are submitted?
 - If there was something you could change/add to improve your current system what would it be?
6. Please provide a point-of-contact name and their contact information, for use if we want to follow-up with someone about responses provided in this survey.