

2007 NASCIO Recognition Awards

Category: Digital Government: Government to Business (G to B)

trucking.idaho.gov

Executive Summary

Because the commercial motor carrier industry is heavily regulated, trucking firms are required to order and/or pay for a dizzying number of licenses, permits, endorsements and taxes through state and federal government agencies all year long. Often, motor carriers don't know how to start or where to go to stay in compliance with transportation industry laws, especially when they can vary state by state.

The Idaho Transportation Department, the Idaho State Tax Commission, and the Idaho State Police developed trucking.idaho.gov, a trucking “vortal”—short for “Vertical Industry Portal”—featuring information and online services designed specifically to help motor carriers quickly get and stay on the road. The vortal features links to and between online state and federal transportation-related services and information, including:

- Temporary trip permits
- Hazardous materials endorsements (paperless)
- International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) applying/filing/paying
- Overlegal permits
- Full fee license renewals
- Commercial driver's license record searches
- Road and weather reports
- Maps
- Food and rest stop information
- Idaho rules and regulations
- Safety Issues

From trip preparation to final destination, trucking.idaho.gov encompasses virtually every aspect of trucking operations and helps streamline the way motor carriers conduct business with Idaho government. The site serves as a central web destination for trucking related business and information in the State of Idaho. Its resources cross state agency boundaries, and a simplified web address adds to its user friendliness. Trucking firms and their drivers can conduct business among multiple state agencies with just one username, with the choice of either charging billable services to a credit/debit card or receiving one unified bill per month.

A. Title: Trucking.idaho.gov

B. Concise description of the business problem and solution, including the length of time in operation

Prior to Idaho's trucking portal launch in March 2004, motor carrier companies rolling within and through the Gem State had to jump between multiple pages on different agency sites to find pertinent government services and information. It was like driving to various specialty stores around town to buy items on a shopping list. Trucking.idaho.gov acts as a virtual "super center" for trucking companies. The central hub concept provides instant access to countless state, federal and industry resources. The site's scope even extends beyond Idaho state boundaries, linking to the transportation sites of neighboring states and Canadian provinces.

The portal's major user groups are trucking firms, companies with trucking fleets, and trucking reporting services. Business types range from Idaho "mom and pop shops" with one commercial truck, to international firms with thousands of trucks and trailers. More than 5,500 Idaho-based motor carriers travel the state's 70,000-mile roadway transportation systems year-round, with thousands more out of state vehicles passing through the state every day. The website's cross boundary integration and innovative architecture helped turn trucking.idaho.gov into a mainstay of innovative trucking resources for firms headquartered inside and outside of Idaho.

Among the vortal's resources, billable services are accessible through the state's enterprise-wide "Single Sign-on" login application and trackable through the state's unified billing service. As the name implies, users only need to enter their username and password once to access a host of state services. For example, a trucking firm can renew its full fee vehicle registrations through the Idaho Transportation Department, and then enter the State Tax Commission's International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) application without re-entering a username and password. Regardless of which service or information link users click, the trucking.idaho.gov "skin" wraps each page for a consistent look and feel throughout.

Just as with online transactions, information exchanged during the Single Sign-on process is transferred over a secure and encrypted connection. To ensure added flexibility, the Single Sign-on system features different levels of secure access. For example, companies can designate a person to monitor their respective account's user activity and billing reports online. Thanks to the system's unique customization, it's possible for users to have a high access level in one application, but a lower level in another.

The Single Sign-on system also ties into Access Idaho's multi-agency subscriber billing system, which allows businesses to pay for their full fee renewals, hazardous material endorsements, trip permits, UCC searches, UCC filings and DLR searches on a single, unified monthly bill. One customer payment can be divided and distributed to the proper state agencies through the unified billing system. Each respective company, via a comprehensive back-end billing system, can securely monitor their transaction activity and history online at anytime.

C. Significance of the project to the improvement of the operation of government

The trucking site was the first of its kind for the Gem State and is arguably the most robust state motor carrier site in the nation. Its success has motivated other Idaho state agencies to collaborate and create other portals.

As the number of Idaho e-business applications for truck drivers increased, the state recognized a need to tie all these processes together in one place. One of the best functionality attributes of trucking.idaho.gov and its bundling of online resources is success in eliminating inequities among users. Everything about the site is designed to be simple enough for occasional users, yet powerful enough to handle the everyday needs of frequent users, regardless of company size or geographic location. The site's versatility is also ideal for third-party reporting service firms that make hundreds of trucking related transactions annually on behalf of multiple motor carriers.

What started as a site for e-business turned into a site with a wide range of information needed by truckers to effectively run their businesses. To ensure customer satisfaction from the start, user testing conducted prior to the site's launch proved valuable in establishing a logical, business-centric design and architecture. In addition to being easily accessed from the state of Idaho's homepage, the trucking portal links transportation-related online services together for seamless transfers between different agencies.

To put their money where their collective mouths are, the three agencies are voluntarily and aggressively marketing the portal. One of the most successful strategies involved distributing credit card-size reference cards (over 50,000 to date) that prominently feature the URL as well as important transportation-related phone numbers. One side lists numbers for the Idaho road report, the One Stop Shop (for registrations), the Idaho State Police's commercial vehicle safety department and statewide emergency dispatch, the port of entry headquarters, the overlegal permit office, the vehicle titles office, and to the Tax Commission (for International Fuel Tax Agreement inquiries). The other side lists the locations and phone numbers of Idaho's 10 ports of entry.

The Idaho Transportation Department distributes the cards at their Commercial Vehicle Services office, all ports of entry statewide, and at all eight motor carrier seminars statewide. The Idaho Tax Commission gives the reference cards to new customers, and the Idaho State Police supplies them to its field officers for distribution.

In addition, ITD included 13,250 trucking.idaho.gov flyers in all of their annual hazardous materials endorsement and full fee license renewal packets, their International Registration Plan (IRP) mailings, and their statewide motor carrier seminars. The State Tax Commission sent 250 flyers with their new International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) packets.

The Idaho IRS office requested links on several trucking.idaho.gov pages directing truckers to information about filing and paying the federal heavy vehicle use tax (Form 2290). To create awareness about the newly added links and help curb foot traffic and calls to their eight Idaho offices, the IRS asked for 200 trucking reference cards to distribute.

In July 2005, the state created and launched an online application on trucking.idaho.gov that allows motor carriers and other businesses to order plastic yellow trucking reference cards for free. Since then, nearly 85 companies have ordered almost 5,000 of the wallet-size cards for distribution to drivers, office workers, and customers

D. Public value of the project – include benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agencies or the state – also include documented outcomes such as realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (with summary calculations), or cost avoidance data

The following examples illustrate how the site's services benefit state and its customers:

- The Idaho Transportation Department saves \$.83 for each endorsement purchased online--a savings of more than \$117,000 since 2004.
- The adoption rate for online Full Fee license renewals (trucks and trailers licensed in Idaho) increased from 11 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2006. The jump in the online adoption rates has eliminated the need for the Idaho Transportation Department to hire temporary help to process annual renewals. Online Full Fee renewals take a few minutes to process versus 20 to 30 minutes for mailed renewals.
- Because users are not required to perform calculations manually, the full fee renewal app virtually eliminates math errors. With a 99 percent accuracy rate, it boasts a far better track record than mailed and faxed renewals. The Idaho Transportation Department is saving money and containing costs by reducing employee workload and decreasing response times.
- The State Tax Commission experienced a 17 percent reduction in paper filings and a near zero error rate on electronically filed International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) forms. The IFTA application erased the number of mathematical mistakes made by users, resulting in significant time and cost savings to the Tax Commission.
- The hazmat permit database is shared by the Idaho Transportation Department and the Idaho State Police to streamline enforcement throughout the state.
- Since Idaho Information Consortium guarantees payment for each transaction and bears the responsibility of insufficient funds, each state agency's fiscal risk is eliminated. Thus, agencies do not have to expend human resources and taxpayer money "chasing" delinquent accounts.
- The site generated a 50 percent increase in various trip permits in one year, which in part, can be attributed to the ease in obtaining such permits online.
- One trucking firm estimated that they save \$20,000 per year using the state's hazmat renewal service, which is entirely paperless (no hardcopy permits are needed).
- Billing via monthly statement, is available for users who have signed up as subscribers. Each account will accommodate payments from \$1.00 to \$1,000,000. This payment method allows businesses to "float" their expenses until the next month and frees them from paying bank or credit card fees.

The state periodically solicits feedback from users through customer visits and by attending trucking association meetings to maximize customer satisfaction. Here are some customer comments about trucking.idaho.gov:

Charlotte Galbraith, transportation coordinator for Western States Equipment in Boise, ID, is a big fan. She visits trucking.idaho.gov at least once a month to renew licenses for Western's own fleet vehicles (full fee) as well as their rental vehicles (vehicle license registration).

"I took care of our full fee renewals from home on a Thursday night, and the stickers arrived the following Monday morning," exclaimed Galbraith.

"It's so simple and convenient," continued Galbraith. "The online application makes it very easy to check VINs (vehicle identification numbers) and plate numbers. What's more, I can track my transactions with the handy online billing reports and pay with one check at the end of the month."

Western States also uses trucking.idaho.gov to access the state's online International Fuels Tax Agreement (IFTA) filing and commercial driver's license search.

Galbraith said the online services save her time because she can sit at her desk and take care of everything instead of filling out paperwork and waiting for processing.

Public utility Idaho Power is another frequent user of trucking.idaho.gov. Idaho Power's fleet analyst, Marilyn Robertson, manages a majority of the company's 1,364 vehicles with the help of the trucking portal and its linked services.

"Any transaction I can do online, I will use (trucking.idaho.gov), said Robertson. "Definitely, it is a timesaving for me."

Robertson uses trucking.idaho.gov to access many of the state's transportation services, like full fee renewals, hazmat, overlegal permits, and driver's license record searches.

Robertson particularly likes the online billing option available with the services linked to trucking.idaho.gov.

"By having the fees online, I am able to import the dollar amounts to my database and have my software do all the work for me. By the time my invoice arrives, I have the detailed accounting in place and the fees match."