Online Vision Certification Service

Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA)

Category: Government to Citizen

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Nominator

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Executive Summary

In March 2013, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) launched the Online Vision Certification Service (www.egov.maryland.gov/mva/vision) as a proactive effort to further enhance alternative services to its customers with a primary focus on drivers aged 40 & over (40+), reduce branch office walk in traffic and customer wait times. Thanks to a public-private partnership between the MVA, the Maryland Ophthalmology and Optometry Associations and NIC, a government e-services provider, an online service was created so vision providers could submit their patient’s vision examination results directly to the MVA.

The focus of the 40+ is based on Maryland statute that requires drivers to have vision exam results, not greater than 12 months old, on file with the MVA in order to renew their driver’s license. Prior to implementing the service, this customer base had two license renewal options: 1) walk-in to an MVA Office and during their transaction, complete a vision screening conducted by an MVA Agent, or 2) a paper mail-in renewal after their vision provider completed a portion on the renewal application. With the implementation of the vision service, eligible customers now have two additional renewal options using an MVA kiosk or through the internet.

The Online Vision Certification Service has been overwhelmingly successful and Maryland drivers, vision providers and State government all reap benefits from this program. Since its launch, nearly 600 Maryland licensed vision providers have enrolled to use the service and have submitted over 11,000 eye exam results on behalf of their customers to the MVA.
Description of the Business Problem and Solution

The MVA wanted to add additional and easier options for customers aged 40+ to renew their driver’s license in lieu of walking into an MVA office which subsequently reduces the customer traffic and wait times at those offices. On average, the transaction time at an MVA office to complete a driver’s license renewal is a little over eight minutes.

According to Maryland statute, individuals age 40+ are required to have their vision results, not greater than 12 months old, on file with the MVA in order to renew their driver’s license. This legal requirement mandated these customers to either visit an MVA branch office, where an MVA Agent conducted the customer’s vision screening during the renewal transaction, or mail-in their paper renewal notice after visiting their vision provider to complete a section of the notice. The MVA wanted to create a more efficient process for these individuals to renew their driver’s license without having to visit the MVA.

Through a multi-agency, collaborative public/private partnership between the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Maryland Ophthalmology and Optometry Associations and NIC, a government e-services provider, an online service was developed so that authorized vision providers could submit eye exam results directly to the MVA’s Driver License System. When vision providers use this system, eligible MVA customers can renew their driver’s license online or at a MVA kiosk and can skip the trip to the MVA.

Initially, the MVA had to overcome a number of challenges to get the service online. John Kuo, the former administrator of the Maryland MVA, said he was concerned that the optometrists would not be interested in participating. But after early discussions, the association jumped on board quickly and provided valuable insights and support for the program.

Fraud was also a concern, but the MVA was able to collaborate with the DHMH, NIC and the optometrists to set up the program in a way that ensures the accuracy of the information collected. "The records come directly from the eye vision providers so there is no opportunity for fraudulent documentation to be submitted," Kuo said. "Each vision provider has a business identification number that is submitted as part of the registration to be part of the program."

The online vision service creates an electronic end-to-end process for individuals age 40+ to renew their license without the need to drive to and visit the MVA. The new process allows vision providers the ability to submit the vision exam results electronically which updates the citizen’s driving record information in real-time. The MVA customers can then go online or use a MVA kiosk to renew their license. Several enhancements have been made to the system since the initial launch in March 2013 to make it more convenient for vision providers and customers. These enhancements include the ability to add up to three office locations for each doctor and an online
search for MVA customers to locate vision providers that participate in the MVA’s vision certification program.

The application was developed at no charge to the state or the vision providers using the Maryland Self-Funded eGovernment Services master contract with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT). NIC provided the necessary infrastructure including server hardware and software, and a project team consisting of a project manager, web developer, UI/UX designer and marketing consultant at no cost to the agency to work with the MVA project team, stakeholders and subject matter experts. A marketing team was also established to develop and manage the marketing and public relations campaign for the project.

The MVA worked closely with the Maryland Optometrist Association early on in the development process to get their feedback and support on the new service. The association promoted the upcoming service to their members and encouraged them to use it for their patients which contributed to the high adoption rate of 25% within the first year of use. Additionally, the following tactics were used to market to the vision providers:

- Mailed letter from MVA to vision providers encouraging participation
- Placed ad in the publication for the Older Driver Symposium event
- Mail welcome letter and MVA Authorized Vision Certification Provider decal to each registered provider
- Conducted outreach to targeted associations and licensing boards (Optometry, Ophthalmologists and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene)
- Posted messages on social media channels and related websites
- Distributed press release locally and nationally to announce the service
- Conducted survey with providers
- Sent postcard to vision providers that haven’t enrolled in program

A marketing campaign to raise awareness among customers over age 40 was conducted to explain how to find an authorized vision provider and available options for renewing their driver’s license online or through an MVA kiosk.

- Posted information on MVA website about program
- Created online search of participating providers
- Created a mailing insert and enclosed with the renewal notices for customers
- Issued press release to announce the service
- Posted messages on social media channels and related websites
- Posted graphic on ‘Now Serving’ messaging monitors in MVA offices
- Governor O’Malley video encouraging customers to use the service that was posted on the MVA website and YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEhOG17qLak)

The MVA Vision Certification Service was nationally highlighted in a GovTech article published in August 2013 (http://www.govtech.com/internet/Over-40-Maryland-Drivers-
Can-Now-Renew-Licenses-at-Home.html) and won the Statescoop State Innovation of the Year Award. A podcast of an interview with the MVA was also published on Statescoop.com (http://statescoop.com/meet-statescoop-50-nominees-maryland-department-transportation/) and the MVA was recognized as a winner for the State Innovation of the Year category.

**Significance of the Project**

The online Vision Certification System increases the alternative options for performing transactions with the MVA in lieu of spending time visiting the MVA. By implementing alternative service delivery options for customers, the MVA experienced savings of approximately $600,000 in a 12 month period from customers conducting transactions online with the MVA. The Vision Certification Service is the latest addition to the MVA’s suite of alternative services and they anticipate continued savings from this new service.

Customers are realizing time and gas savings by using the online or kiosk license renewal system instead of mailing in their renewal form or visiting a MVA office. For every visit to the MVA, the average customer has to wait about eight minutes to complete their transaction. The MVA is now reporting increases in online renewals and a decrease in walk-in customers. The customer’s driver license renewal is processed quicker by paring the vision exam results with the driver license record electronically and the MVA employees can now be reallocated to serve other types of customers. Vision providers are also experiencing time savings by submitting the exam results online instead of filling out a paper form.

Each year, the MVA incurs a cost of over $200,000 to print and mail the paper license renewal notices to customers. In an effort to reduce this cost, the MVA has collected over a million email addresses from Marylanders so license renewal notices can be emailed to customers. A large portion of these notices contain information about the Vision Certification System for customers age 40+ so they are aware of their renewal options. Since July 2013, 258,872 renewals notices were mailed to customers of which 70% were for customers age 40+. These customers now have the opportunity to complete their transaction with the MVA online through the new system and can skip the trip to the MVA.

The new process improves customer service to both the MVA customers and the vision provider’s patients by providing a more convenient way to do business with the MVA. It also improves the office efficiency for the vision providers and the MVA offices by eliminating the paper renewal form process and reducing the amount of office visits.

The electronic end-to-end system is highly encouraged by the MVA for all customers and it has been well received by the vision providers across the state. Since the exam results are good for 12 months prior to the date of the driver’s license renewal, the vision providers have been encouraged to submit the exam results for all of their patients, even if they didn’t specifically request it so the results are in the MVA’s system when the customer needs to renew their license. Additionally, many vision providers
are promoting this service as a convenience to their patients and will submit the exam results electronically to the MVA without an appointment if the patient has been seen within the past 12 months.

In Maryland, there are approximately 2,400 vision providers that are eligible to use the new certification system.Projected adoption rates were set at 10%, based on low adoption numbers of a similar service offered in New Jersey. The service has been available for physician use for over a year now and boasts a 25% adoption rate of potential vision providers who can enroll to use the service. Since the launch of the system in March 2013, nearly 600 vision providers have registered to use the system and have submitted over 11,000 exam results to the MVA. The MVA has also seen an increase of online renewals conducted as a result of the electronic exam submissions.

Benefits of the Project

The MVA has received a very positive response from both the vision provider community and from its customers. A senior citizen who renewed her driver’s license online after her exam results were submitted recently said “It was such a pleasant experience! My ophthalmologist submitted my vision certification online. I then completed my renewal online and everything was processed without incident. I received my license in one week. The process was user friendly and very convenient. Thank you!” The MVA looks forward to seeing continued time and cost savings for their customers as a result of this new service.

The MVA has also been contacted by several other states about best practices and lessons learned from this project. They are encouraging all states to get the vision providers involved in the project early on to get their feedback which has been critical to the success of the Maryland service. The Maryland Vision Certification System represents a next-generation, best-of-breed eGovernment solution that can easily be reused in multiple states.

From a technology perspective, the Vision Certification Service creates a complete end-to-end system that seamlessly integrates with the state’s driver licensing system, the renewal application (online and kiosk) and data from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for the vision provider’s license information. The vision exam data submitted from the new system is updated in real-time and allows customers to renew their driver’s license electronically through the MVA’s online license renewal system without having to visit the MVA or fill out a paper renewal form.

The Vision Certification Services provides benefits to several groups.

- **Customers (age 40 and older):** The system provides over 350,000 individuals age 40 and older with an easy and convenient way to renew their driver’s license online or through a MVA kiosk without having to visit a MVA office or wait on a mail-in renewal form. These patients also have a more efficient experience at their vision provider’s office. If the patient has seen their provider in the past 12
months, they don’t even have to visit their vision provider’s office in order to get the results submitted to the MVA.

- **Vision providers:** The system provides a secure method for vision providers to submit their patient’s eye exam results electronically to the MVA. To advertise this new service to their patients, vision providers receive an official decal for their office indicating they are a *MVA Authorized Vision Certification Provider* which should result in an increase in customers. Customers can also visit the MVA website for a complete list of *MVA Authorized Vision Providers* ([https://egov.maryland.gov/mva/vision/ProviderListing/Index](https://egov.maryland.gov/mva/vision/ProviderListing/Index)). In a survey conducted of enrolled vision providers, 73% reported that they signed up to provide an enhanced service for their patients and 75% said the service has benefited their business.

- **Motor Vehicle Administration:** The service enhances the MVA’s alternative service delivery to their customers and reduces the printing and postage costs for renewal notices. The MVA can now assist customers with other tasks more efficiently and can allocate employee resources to other areas to better serve customers.

- **MVA walk-in customers:** Other MVA customers experience less wait times when visiting the offices when vision providers and 40+ individuals use this system.