SKIP THE LINE

MOVING THINGS FORWARD

MISSISSIPPI DEPT. OF

PUBLIC SAFETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ✳

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Mississippi's digital government experience in two waves: a rapid switch to digital government services due to office closures, then the safe, organized reopening of government offices. Over 2 million residents are of driving age in Mississippi and in 2020 the Mississippi Department of Public Safety (DPS) introduced their Skip the Line program, consisting of enhanced digital solutions that, amidst a pandemic, provided continuity in service and greatly improved the citizen experience. Through the use of an all-new online appointment scheduling solution, real-time camera feeds, and new online enhancements, the services offered through the Skip the Line program not only served the public mid-pandemic while offices were closed but they also allowed DPS to safely reopen which drove significant efficiencies and enhanced overall citizen satisfaction.

Prior to the launch of Mississippi's Skip the Line program, walk-ins were handled using an in-person queuing system and resulted in crowded waiting rooms and long wait times for citizens. Since reopening offices across the state, the Skip the Line initiative has reduced typical in-person wait times by over 75% and driven adoption of online services by over 69%. Skip the Line was developed in collaboration with the State's eGovernment Partner, NIC Mississippi.

PROJECT IDEA ✳

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety's (DPS) goal was to utilize technology to provide a citizen-first channel to deliver services to its constituents, and to help combat in-person issues that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic with the need to social distance in DPS locations. The following distinctive features of the Skip the Line Program are unique to the Mississippi implementation and together help anchor the citizen experience:

> **66** The "Skip the Line" Program is a major time-saver! I made an appointment for my son during our lunch break. We were in and out in 11 minutes. My son didn't have to miss school and I didn't have to take time off from work. **99**
> -KELLY C.

ONLINE APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING: The cornerstone of the Skip the Line program was the introduction of online scheduled appointments. Utilizing NIC's TeleGov platform, online appointments helped DPS reopen all offices while adhering to social distancing guidelines. TeleGov allowed citizens to schedule in-person, phone, or virtual appointments. It also provided DPS a way to notify constituents through automated text and email reminders and electronically collect required information, forms,

and payments ahead of in-person visits. View the online appointment scheduling service for yourself here: dps.ms.gov/appointment!

Since its launch in September 2020, more than 185,000 appointments—across 35 locations and 16 unique appointment types—have been scheduled using the TeleGov platform. Of those, more than 76% of people visited the service via mobile device and over 70% opted in for text notifications.

SKIP THE LINE CAMS: Live camera feeds are now available at all nine major driver license stations across the state. Citizens planning to visit a location can view real-time feeds of station lines and can modify any plans by visiting a neighboring station that may have a lower volume of visitors. Since the launch of the first camera in August 2020, almost over 26,000 individual visitors have viewed live cams, 50% of those users have viewed the location feeds on-the-go from a mobile device. With the transparency of real-time location feeds, coupled with online appointment scheduling capabilities, citizens are now more empowered than ever to plan government interaction with the least amount of disruption to their day-to-day lives. Pick a location and see real-time feeds:
https://www.driverservicebureau.dps.ms.gov/live-feeds

ONLINE CHANGE OF ADDRESS: One of the most widely completed in-person transactions for DPS were address changes on licenses and ID cards. The requirement to complete the transaction in-person significantly impacted in-office foot traffic. Through Skip the Line, address changes can now be completed from any computer, tablet, or mobile phone. By utilizing Address Verification Services, a customer's address can be instantly verified and updated prior to license fulfillment. Over 72,000 addresses have been changed online since the feature was made available to the public, a significant reduction in annual foot traffic.

> **66** The new online appointment system is awesome! It only took 12 minutes to renew my license. Also, the staff at the driver service bureau was courteous and helpful. Overall, it was a great experience! **99**
> -ASHLEY C.

FIREARM RENEWALS: Due to the length of Firearm renewal visits, DPS streamlined the renewal process, eliminating the requirement of an in-person visit. Firearm Permit Renewals now utilize fingerprints on file that were submitted with the initial concealed carry permit purchases and applications are now available online for quick access.

SIGNIFICANT FEE REDUCTIONS & EXPIRATION EXTENSIONS: To aid in the citizen experience, DPS removed all late fees during the pandemic which also further reduced foot traffic in driver license locations. Additionally, expiration date extensions were provided to all driver license and ID holders to provide relief during the COVID-19 emergency.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Mississippi Department of Public Safety began discussions and requirements gathering with NIC Mississippi, the State of Mississippi's eGovernment partner, in April 2020 with the goal of having the TeleGov Appointment Scheduler launched in September 2020 and the entire program and associated components live by October 1, 2020. Designated resources including .net developers, creative designers, and quality assurance analysts executed the project development. An assigned project manager led the project's design, development, implementation, and launch, along with simultaneously overseeing coordination between various DPS divisions, driver license location personnel, and NIC Mississippi.

The pilot implementation of the Skip the Line program, which included TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling, launched on September 14, 2020 at two high-traffic driver license locations. From conception to launch the pilot was implemented in under 90 days. Full implementation was completed on October 1, 2020, including the statewide roll-out of appointments at 33 additional locations, Skip the Line Cams, online address changes, and marketing.

The Skip the Line Program provides a high level of comprehensive, easily navigated functionality that quickly guides users to information and features and allows DPS to serve their citizens more efficiently, including:

- **SELF-SERVICE PROCESSES:** The entire Online Appointment platform is self-service by DPS users. DPS can manage in real-time the following: user groups, office closures, locations, appointment times, reports, forms, and other functions.
- **MICROSOFT AZURE CLOUD HOSTING:** NIC hosts the TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduler in a Microsoft Azure environment. It is designed for continuous operation, protected from power failure, physical intrusion, and network outages.
- **PERFORMANCE SCALABILITY:** The TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling system supports the creation of thousands of driver appointments per hour and utilizes Cloud-based hosting, allowing DPS to ramp up availability during peak times and press coverage.
- **ADVANCED USER ROLES:** The TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling system supports different levels of user permissions through role memberships. DPS Admin users can add, remove, and manage clerks at the 30+ Driver License locations in varying authorization levels including Super Admin, Group Admin, Tenant Admin, and Tenant Clerk.
- **FORM BUILDER:** TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling integrates with NIC AppEngine which allow DPS to build and automatically launch workflows, forms, and data collection in the appointment creation flow. The platform can collect information from a DPS user, optionally receive payments, and many other features. The data submissions are linked to the individual appointments, making the data readily available to DPS personnel at the meeting time.

REAL-TIME SMS AND EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS: During the TeleGov appointment scheduling process, users submit an email address to receive important appointment-related documentation and can opt-in to receive SMS text notifications for appointment confirmations, cancellations and reminders. DPS has the ability to use email and SMS templates for customer correspondence, or if preferred, the agency can create custom email and SMS templates for confirmation, update, and reminder notifications.

INTERACTIVE MAPPING: The TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling System functionality shows all appointment locations in the state of Mississippi on an interactive Google map. Users can filter locations by typing in a location name, zip code, or by navigating to a pin on the map.

AD HOC REPORTS: DPS personnel can quickly run reports by varying metrics including date range, location, appointment type, format, and status, utilization filters by location, and user configuration changes - just to name a few.

PEAK TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT: DPS utilizes queuing software to cope with website traffic congestion by directing visitors to a queue where they can wait until access can be facilitated.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS AND CAPTCHA: TeleGov Online Appointment Scheduling and Skip the Line Cameras use Google Analytics to track website activity such as session duration, pages per session, bounce rate, etc. of individuals using the site, along with the information on the source of the traffic. Additionally, TeleGov also uses Captcha to prevent automated scripting of appointment creation and misuse of the appointment scheduling solution.

SECURITY: TeleGov and the Skip the Line Feed take advantage of multi-layered state-of-art security provided by Microsoft across physical data centers, infrastructure, and operations. Security controls are integrated into the hardware and firmware components and added protections against malicious activities such as DDoS attacks.

Additionally, the project benefitted from having key contributions and leadership from the onset of the initial project idea. Governor Tate Reeves and DPS Commissioner Sean Tindell provided significant support in delivering weekly communication to the citizens ahead of the launch, and they championed the service after launch in discussing with local and statewide news media.

> The Skip the Line program addresses several of the State CIO Top 10 Priorities including: cloud SaaS, application modernization, AI and chatbot process automation, digital government services, and customer relationship management.

PROJECT IMPACT ✳

Key performance indicators leveraged to benchmark the Mississippi Department of Public Safety's citizen/customer service delivery include website and application analytics through Google Analytics, social media interaction and feedback, along with appointment metrics captured through the TeleGov system.

NOTABLE IMPACT:

75%
REDUCTION IN
IN-PERSON
WAIT TIMES
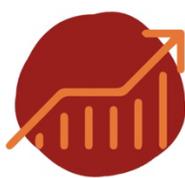
69%
INCREASE IN
ONLINE SERVICES
ADOPTION

72,379
ADDRESSES CHANGED THROUGH
THE DL/ID RENEWAL OR
DUPLICATE PROCESS

3 MILLION+
PAGE VIEWS ON
THE APPOINTMENT
SCHEDULING SERVICE

76%
VISITORS COMING
FROM MOBILE DEVICES

35 LOCATIONS
AND 16
APPOINTMENT TYPES

185,000+
APPOINTMENTS
SCHEDULED

26,000
LIVE CAMS HAVE
BEEN STREAMED

CITIZEN FEEDBACK:

- "Our most recent visit to the Driver Service Bureau was awesome! We scheduled an appointment online for my daughter. When we arrived, the entire process took less than 10 minutes. I am beyond impressed with the online scheduling system and would highly recommend it!"

- "The new online appointment system makes it so easy to visit the Driver Service Bureau! We arrived at our scheduled time and were on our way home with my son's new license in less than 20 minutes. I highly recommend taking advantage of the new services offered by DPS!"

- "I scheduled an appointment to renew my driver's license. (…) The new online appointment system makes the renewal process so easy! Good job, Mississippi Department of Public Safety!"

BEFORE AND AFTER: After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, all driver license locations operated on a daily walk-in schedule according to the first letter of customers' last names and required proper social distancing protocols for those waiting to be served. Additionally, one day a week was designated for Firearm Permits, Security Guard Permits, Renewals, and Duplicates. Even before the pandemic, the longstanding first-come, first-served queueing system resulted in long lines, crowded waiting rooms, and frustrated citizens. With Commissioner Tindell's vision of expanding DPS' digital footprint while reducing its physical footprint, the Skip the Line initiative was developed. Since its launch, customer wait times have been significantly reduced through the implementation of online appointments, giving customers the ability to schedule and reschedule appointments 24/7 while also providing them front of the line priority at driver license locations. The removal of the alphabet schedule and streamlining of the firearm renewal process further reduced citizen frustration through eliminating permitting redundancies. Additionally, increased adoption of online services, like the new address change, have allowed customers to skip the line all together.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE: To further enhance citizen experience and back-office operations, NIC's TeleGov platform was designed to provide DPS with access to a complete digital office. Personnel can configure custom digital forms to gather information from customers prior to their appointments, citizens can upload documents they would normally present in person, and electronic payments can even be processed through NIC's secure payment system. Virtual video conferencing appointments will also be made available in the event a location needs to be closed to the public. Future updates will include the creation of a "Virtual Waiting Room" and will allow for citizens to check-in and receive a text message when it is time to enter the government building. These features along with continuous enhancements to the online renewal processes ensure DPS can serve citizens in the most efficient way possible.