

NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards

Entry file name: **CA_ Cybersecurity**

STATE: California

AGENCY: California Department of Motor Vehicles

CATEGORY: Cybersecurity

PROJECT TITLE: DMV's Identity Verification Transformation Secures Californians' Data

PROJECT DATE: April 3, 2025

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Executive Summary

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has successfully modernized its identity verification processes to combat evolving cyber threats and fraud. By integrating Socure, an AI-driven identity verification platform, with its existing remote onboarding and fraud prevention tools, the DMV has achieved a phased, high-ROI rollout with minimal disruption. This strategic approach has significantly enhanced verification accuracy and speed, leading to increased first-pass approvals and a substantial reduction in manual reviews and false positives.

A key innovation is the Supplemental Remote Identity Verification, which empowers Californians to securely confirm their identity from home through a streamlined process involving selfie and ID uploads, complemented by robust biometric, document validation, liveness detection, and human review.

These advancements not only bolster the DMV's ability to rapidly counter emerging fraud patterns and reduce reliance on legacy systems but also deliver tangible benefits to residents: a smoother, more accessible customer experience, enhanced protection of personal information, and greater overall trust. The DMV's forward-thinking strategy establishes a new benchmark for public sector cybersecurity, driving measurable gains in safety, cost savings, and long-term resilience.

Project Description

IDEA

As California's primary identity authority, the DMV plays a central role in protecting the personal data of 40 million residents. This responsibility demands constant innovation. Therefore, the DMV is shifting from reacting to threats to building an identity ecosystem that anticipates and neutralizes them before they reach the public.

In the legacy environment, fraud prevention was rigid and reactive. It operated as a simple pass/fail gate that couldn't keep pace with modern user behaviors. With validation rates stuck at approximately 40 percent, millions of legitimate customers were being blocked, creating unnecessary friction and frustration. Each edge-case solution required individual coding, integration, and debugging. Every false negative pushed individuals out of the digital flow and into a field office, slowing service and adding unnecessary costs.

Valid credentials often failed for legitimate reasons, such as students using a parent's address or seasonal workers with non-traditional residential histories. Previously, resolving these "edge cases" involved months of custom coding and debugging. While strong identity checks are essential for protecting customer data, every time the system rejected a legitimate person, it caused frustration and unnecessarily directed them to a DMV office, increasing workflows and costs.

By integrating Socure's machine-learning platform, the DMV transitioned to a modular, adaptive design, enabling the DMV's Digital Services Division (DSD) and Information Security Division teams to iterate and optimize solutions without system downtime.

With the Socure platform's modular design, DMV IT teams can quickly refine and improve identity verification tools without taking systems offline. Since launching the new approach, validation rates have climbed to 80 percent, meaning twice as many customers can complete digital transactions smoothly and without added friction.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Identity Verification Transformation (IVT) represents a landmark shift in how California serves its residents, moving beyond legacy constraints to a modern, frictionless ecosystem. Driven by Director Steve Gordon's strategic mandate to optimize operational efficiency, the project was architected as a collaborative masterclass in technology leadership and governance between DMV Chief Digital Transformation Officer Ajay Gupta, Chief Information Security Officer Eric Harrauld, and Digital Services Deputy Director Serenity Thompson.

The initiative was framed not merely as a fiscal objective but as a total evolution of service delivery. By partnering closely, the cross-functional leadership team established a "Security-by-Design" framework. This approach ensured that the goal of saving \$1 million a year did not come at the expense of quality. The team balanced cost savings with rigorous standards for data integrity, identity assurance, operational efficiency, customer experience, and successful user outcomes.

The transformation began with a deep-dive analysis of legacy barriers. Prioritizing Human-Centered Design (HCD), the Digital Services Division (DSD) defined their goals: Empowering Self-Service: Enabling the highest possible number of citizens to verify their identity seamlessly, ensuring the DMV "front door" is always open and accessible. Operational Resilience: Reducing the "friction tax" across all channels with higher "pass" rates without increasing risk.

Recognizing that modernization requires elite technical agility, the DMV integrated Socure as a strategic partner. This collaboration allowed the DMV to fuse its deep institutional knowledge with Socure's industry-leading AI and identity verification technology. The result is a high-performing, agile product design that anticipates the needs of 40 million Californians while setting a new national standard for secure, digital-first government.

Tactically, the DSD worked closely with their agile business partner to whiteboard and refine the necessary workflows over the course of six 30-minute meetings. Once the DMV was satisfied with the new process maps, all changes were made within the Socure system while the customer-facing interface remained the same, reducing the potential for frustration and friction in the customer experience. The platform is fully configurable through administrative system dashboards, allowing access, workflows, and business rules to be modified through modular configuration as strategies shift and operational needs evolve.

IMPACT

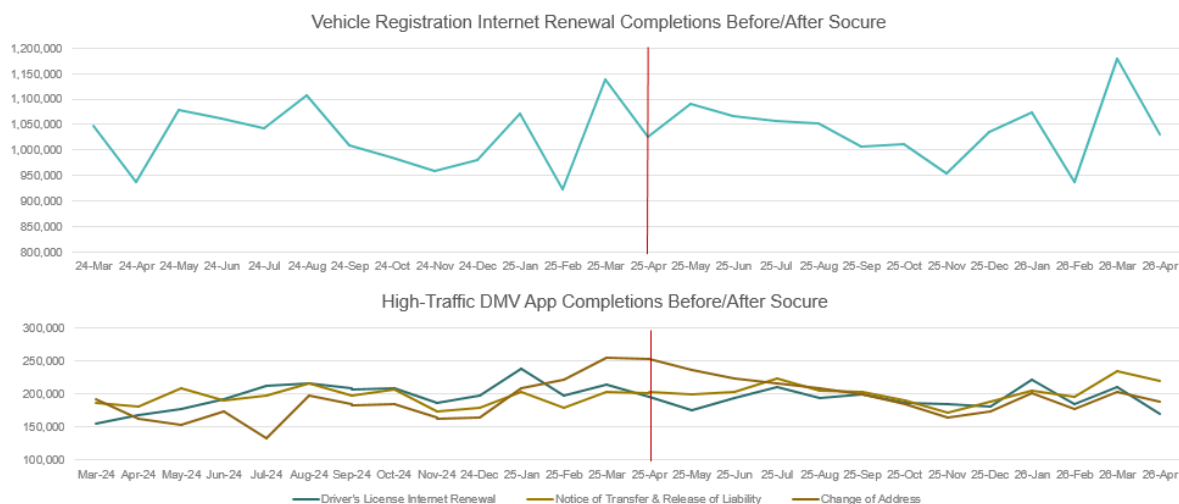
Modern identity and access management systems, like those utilized in this transformation, prove that high security and low user friction can coexist. True cost savings stem from improving the user journey, not simply cutting the budget. The DMV benefits from using agile partners like Socure to scale innovation at the speed of the private sector.

By leveraging intelligent data validation, the DMV has hardened its defenses against sophisticated fraud while simultaneously lowering barriers for legitimate residents. The result is a more inclusive digital government that respects the user's time and the State's resources.

- In just one year, IVT has fulfilled its objective to save at least \$1 million while empowering self-service and improving operational resilience.
- The successful implementation of IVT has doubled the average identity verification success rate from 40% to 80% while controlling outgoing costs through strategically tiered queries.
- IVT has also contributed to improvements in customer satisfaction and reduced call volume in the contact center.
- Customer satisfaction scores have increased from 3.7 out of 5 stars one year prior to launch, to 4.0 immediately following launch, and to 4.4 one year post-launch.
- Customer calls to the online help desk related to identity verification have reduced by 41% since launch.

IVT's flexibility and scalability enable the DMV to serve as many customers as possible while reducing fraud and remaining poised to respond to emerging trends in the future.

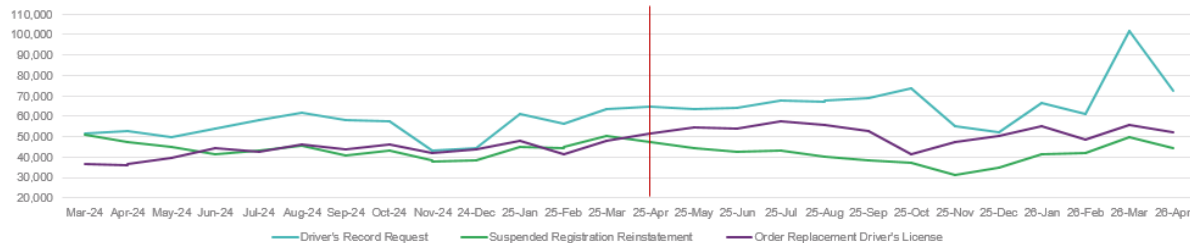
DMV App Performance Before and After Socure Implementation (4/3/2025)



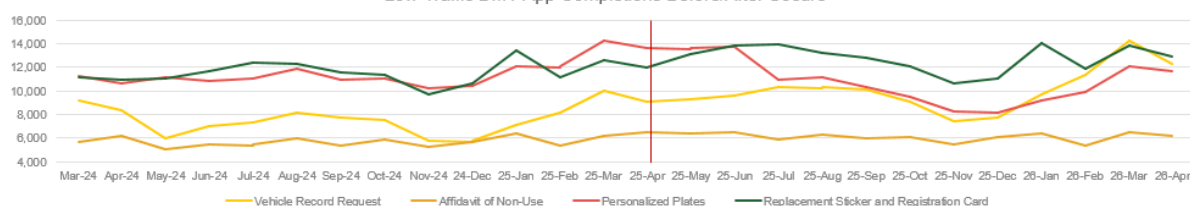
DMV App Performance Before and After Socure Implementation (4/3/2025), cont'd



Medium-Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure



Low-Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure

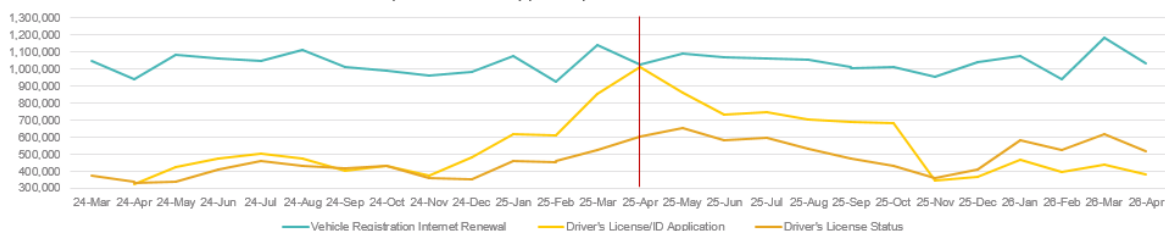


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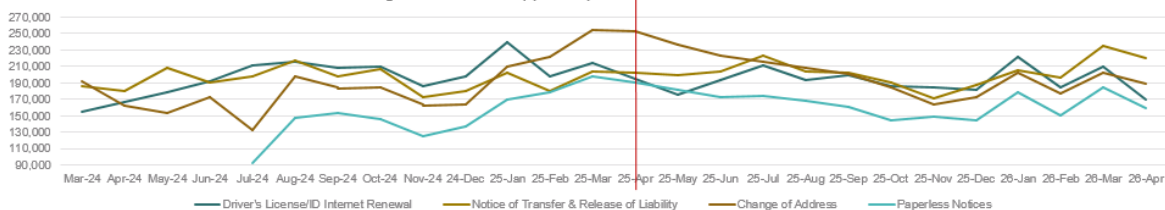
DMV App Performance Before and After Socure Implementation (4/3/2025)



Top Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure



High-Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure

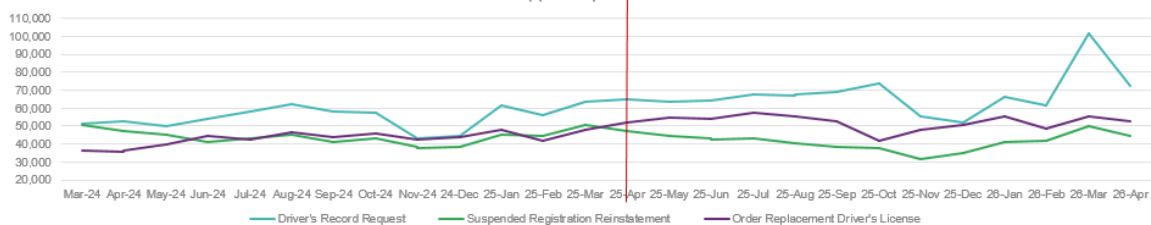


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DMV App Performance Before and After Socure Implementation (4/3/2025), cont'd



Medium-Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure



Low-Traffic DMV App Completions Before/After Socure

