



# **COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

## **Department of Taxation**

August 30, 2015

**TO: The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe  
Governor of Virginia**

**The Honorable Walter A. Stosch  
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance Committee**

**The Honorable Charles J. Colgan  
Co-Chairman, Senate Finance Committee**

**The Honorable S. Chris Jones  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee**

Pursuant to Item 272 paragraph C of the 2015 Appropriation Act, the Tax Commissioner is required to report on the initiatives' implementation status and the estimated revenue collected using the tablets. The report is to be provided to the: Governor, Chairmen of the House of Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees, Secretary of Finance, and Director, Department of Planning and Budget by September 1, 2015.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig M. Burns".

**Craig M. Burns  
Tax Commissioner**

**Cc: The Honorable Richard D. Brown, Secretary of Finance  
Mr. Daniel S. Timberlake, Department of Planning and Budget**

Enclosure

# REPORT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION'S MOBILE COLLECTOR APP

## Overview

The Virginia Department of Taxation (TAX) employs 45 field collection representatives or agents who work across the state from home offices. They make phone calls, write letters and visit businesses to resolve delinquent debt cases that are complex and often involve large dollar amounts. During meetings at taxpayers' businesses, field agents collect what payments they can and, if needed, help businesses set up payment plans to resolve the remaining debts owed.

Several years ago, the agency implemented the Computer Assisted Collections System for Government (CACSG), an efficient case-assignment system. But when cases were assigned, field agents still had to wade through time-consuming paperwork to complete the task. A field agent could spend several hours a day preparing paperwork to send to TAX processing in Richmond. Agents had to:

- retrieve the taxpayers' accounts in CACSG,
- print account information for each business visited,
- complete and print payment vouchers for each bill, account and check received,
- send the postmarked envelopes with the checks to provide accurate date information,
- enter vouchers and checks into a paper transmittal record once they were prepared for sending, and
- mail the vouchers and checks to the TAX processing operations facility in Richmond.

TAX always strives to get tax payments deposited as quickly as possible, but in the field, it could take 10-14 days from the time a check was received by a collector for the check to be deposited and posted to a taxpayer's account. The tablet mobile application was identified as a solution for collectors to easily have access to real time taxpayer information to ease administrative burdens for collectors and taxpayers and speed processing of payments.

The basic goals of the new mobile application are to:

- provide field collectors easy, real-time access to business accounts,
- enable collectors to receive tax payments on site by electronic funds transfer (EFT) payment, credit or debit card,
- permit collectors to quickly update customer accounts, and
- allow collectors to eliminate paper reporting requirements.

The first tablets were distributed to 15 collectors in June 2014 for a controlled production phase. These collectors visited businesses and processed EFT payments from checking accounts. The transactions were monitored closely by the team to ensure there were no issues. The credit card option was added in August 2014 and debit cards followed. Collectors plug a card-reader into the tablet's audio port to process payments.

At that point, an additional 30 field collectors received tablets and were fully trained effective October 31, 2014. The use of the tablet by field collectors provides a valuable tool to our collectors in near real time debt collection and other efficiencies in transacting collections business.

## **Results**

The new mobile application has met all of the goals of the field collection agents. Two of the important benefits are eliminating some of the paperwork at the beginning and end of the day enabling them to spend more time in the field working with taxpayers and collecting funds. When a collector arrives at a business to discuss past-due taxes, the collector is more prepared to do the job than before the application was deployed. The collector uses the tablet to connect and accesses the business account to review with the taxpayer.

In addition, the collector can take payments immediately via electronic check payments, credit cards or debit cards. The taxpayer receives e-mail confirmation before the collector leaves the business. When a payment is made, it processes overnight and is posted to the taxpayer's account the next day. The application reduces the risk of mistakes and the processing time for viewing accurate data in the system.

Since implementation in June 2014, more than 2,000 payments, ranging from as small as \$1.34 to more than \$70,000 and totaling more than \$2.7 million, have been processed on the spot and deposited within one day. It has improved the collector-taxpayer experience, and the business community has provided very positive feedback.

Finally, along with the benefits of accepting and posting payments immediately, the tablets are equipped with a GPS feature that helps agents locate addresses and businesses faster than mapping out their routes manually, as they did before. Although working in the field, collectors can now stay in close contact with the office. They can use a remote video conferencing feature with supervisors and colleagues, do not require personal cell phones and can easily access their Outlook email accounts.

## **Conclusion**

While the mobile tablet has proven to be a popular and productive tool for our compliance staff, there was a learning curve for our long-term staff with limited experience using a tablet device. The program overall has realized successes for both the taxpayer and the Commonwealth. In addition to providing a tool to our collectors to better support their business needs, the tablet provides greater service to our citizens whom are able to review their account on the spot, make payments and immediately receive confirmation that payment was made.

We continue to explore ways to improve the use of the Mobile App to meet Taxpayer demand and agency staff needs. One example of additional features we are exploring is to develop a process for the field collector to deposits checks received through the mail via the mobile app. This process would expedite the deposit of checks and provide an enhanced feature that both our collectors and Taxpayers have suggested. We intend to seek, develop and implement new and improved features to better utilize the tablet and meet the growing demand and needs of our compliance program.