

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

**Plan for Serving Virginians
through Appointment and Walk-
in Service – September 9, 2021
(2021 Appropriation Act,
Enactment Clause 23.)**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

Plan for Serving Virginians through Appointment and Walk-in Service

September 9, 2021



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Current Department of Motor Vehicles Operations

As directed by Governor Northam in Executive Directive 7 (amended), the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) began reopening Customer Service Centers (CSCs) on May 18, 2020 after the temporary closure. During the period when CSCs were closed to the public, DMV staff continued processing transactions online, by mail, and by phone. By the end of August 2020, 72 of the total 75 CSCs were open and all field employees had returned to work serving customers. At this time, only the Smithfield CSC remains closed because it is being relocated. Today, 75 of now 76 CSCs are open for business, serving thousands of customers daily, and collecting revenue. Not only have CSCs been open since the early days of the pandemic, DMV developed and implemented an appointment system to offer customers a safe and efficient means to conduct business.

DMV is conducting over 10% more transactions per week cumulatively through all service channels than before the pandemic. For the week ending September 4, 2021, customers completed 359,452 transactions across all service channels, as compared to the pre-pandemic weekly average of 309,111 total transactions. Compared to pre-pandemic weekly averages, internet transactions increased 39%, mail transactions increased 32%, and phone transactions increased 205%, while in-person transactions decreased 24% for the week. The table below compares the weekly average pre-pandemic transaction numbers across all service channels with the most recent weekly transaction numbers, which is representative of a typical week during the past two months.

DMV Transactions:
Average Weekly Transactions Conducted Prior to Pandemic
Compared to the Week ending September 4, 2021

	Pre-COVID-19	Last Week	Difference	Percent Difference
Internet	126,008	175,686	49,679	39%
CSC	103,551	78,610	-24,941	-24%
Online Dealer	32,219	39,423	7,204	22%
Select	23,642	31,308	7,666	32%
Mail	20,110	26,572	6,462	32%
Auto Auction	1,399	2,225	826	59%
Phone	1,828	5,581	3,753	205%
Other	355	47	-308	-87%
Grand Total	309,111	359,452	50,341	16%

As of September 7, 2021, DMV had conducted 20,897,047 transactions across all service channels since it began reopening CSCs on May 18, 2020, and collected \$4.3 billion in revenue for the Commonwealth. In addition to creating an appointment system in the midst of the

pandemic, DMV also implemented an entirely new transaction, the driver privilege card, and 29,586 driver privilege cards have been issued since January 2, 2021.

These successes would not have been possible without dedicated, hardworking employees who continued to serve Virginians throughout the pandemic. The agency's progressive stance enabled DMV to reopen, reinvent, and re-engineer how it does business. DMV has not only continued to serve customers through a variety of platforms during the pandemic, it has taken steps to migrate operations to be more efficient, health conscious, and innovative, using technology to provide the best customer service experience possible. Even as DMV returns to offering walk-in service in conjunction with appointments, agency leadership is hopeful the success in migrating customers to alternative service channels will lead to a reduction of the large crowds and long service waits customers experienced before the pandemic.

Innovative Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to designing and implementing an appointment system that allows DMV to be open, engaged, and health-focused, DMV has taken additional steps to give customers as many options as possible to complete necessary transactions. A two-fold approach has been used to ensure that in-person service at DMV remains a convenient and efficient option. DMV has worked both to streamline and expand services within DMV outlets and to create more avenues for completing transactions outside of DMV offices.

Expanding in-person service has included several new offices. One new office is located in the Sterling area (Sterling/Sterling Boulevard CSC) and opened in January 2021, complementing the existing Sterling/Free Court CSC. A replacement for the Lexington CSC opened in February 2021. Planned replacements for the North Henrico, Smithfield, Leesburg, and Fair Oaks Mall CSCs are slated for 2022. These new offices will increase capacity across the Commonwealth, as will renovations to the Charlottesville and Norfolk/Widgeon Road CSCs by the end of this year.

DMV has also been working to expand the DMV Select program, reaching out to local governments to establish contractual partnerships to offer mostly vehicle-related DMV services such as titling and registration. As of early September 2021, there are 54 DMV Select offices open across Virginia, including the Haymarket DMV Select, which opened on July 1, 2021, the Scottsville DMV Select, which opened on August 16, 2021, and the Waynesboro DMV Select, which opened September 7, 2021. DMV expects to announce more partnerships in coming months.

DMV is seeking to increase partnerships with auto auctions. Prior to the pandemic, DMV enlisted the services of two auto auctions in the Commonwealth to assist in processing titles for vehicles sold through dealerships. DMV is working to add a third auto auction partnership, which will expand the resources available to customers for processing titles and registrations.

The expansion of available online and mail-in service options that accompanied the appointment system also enhanced the agency's ability to serve customers at a time and place of their choosing. Of particular impact, DMV instituted new online and by mail two-year driver's

license and ID card renewal options. More than 217,000 customers have taken advantage of the two-year renewal options, allowing eligible customers to postpone an in-person visit to the DMV and making appointments available for other customers.

In all, DMV added the following 10 new online services through the pandemic, bringing the total to 55:

- Two-year driver's license renewal,
- Two-year ID card renewal,
- Commercial driver's license (CDL) renewal,
- Commercial driver's license replacement,
- Driver's license learner's permit replacement,
- Driver privilege card replacement,
- Driver privilege card renewal,
- Limited duration driver's license learner's permit replacement,
- Limited duration driver's license replacement, and
- Payment plan online for Virginia residents.

In addition to expanding the availability of online transactions, DMV instituted a drop off title work option on August 16, 2021. Title services were already available by mail, in person by appointment, and through DMV Selects, but customers now have the option of dropping off title work at all full-service DMV CSCs. Without needing an appointment, customers bring their application packet to the information desk, where a customer service representative will review and verify the application and supporting documents for accuracy and completeness. DMV customer service representatives process the work within five business days and the customer may either return to DMV to pick up their title and registration materials or have them sent by mail. To date, over 2,500 customers have used this option, with an average turnaround time of four days. DMV has also doubled the size of the headquarters titling work center and implemented process improvements to facilitate the timely processing of title work.

DMV has also expanded its remote learner's permit testing program, which continues to earn high marks from students and parents. Students, and perhaps to a greater degree their parents, enjoy the convenience of taking the test at a school facility instead of making a trip to a DMV office. DMV has partnerships with 146 Virginia public high schools in 52 localities and six private schools.

DMV's expanded third-party commercial driver's license testing program allows licensed third-party testers to administer knowledge tests as well as skills tests. There are now 48 third-party testers, with four more starting soon.

Serving Customers by Appointment and with Walk-In Service

Chapter 1 of the 2021 Acts of Assembly Special Session II required DMV to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with an operating plan for serving walk-in customers at existing CSCs in addition to the appointment reservation system, and required

DMV to ensure that all CSCs are open for in-person walk-in services in accordance with the operating plan.

DMV's goal in developing the plan was to maintain the customer satisfaction level with the current successful appointment service when adding walk-in services. According to recent survey data, 77% of 24,519 responding customers statewide would like to see DMV continue service by appointment. Additionally, 86% said that their overall customer service experience met (35%) or exceeded (51%) expectations. DMV researched other state motor vehicle agencies' best practices through the pandemic and found that those offering walk-in and appointment service simultaneously were met with long lines, confused and dissatisfied customers, and health safety concerns.

Considering the research and customer input, DMV developed a hybrid plan that maximizes the best features of both types of service. Beginning Tuesday, October 5, 2021, DMV will offer walk-in service on alternating days at all customer service centers. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (if normally open) will be for walk-ins only. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday will be appointment-only days. This schedule will be simple to communicate to customers and will allow DMV to effectively manage the expectations of customers who arrive either with an appointment or have more immediate needs attended to on a walk-in basis.

Under the current appointment-only system, DMV would have had approximately 304,000 available appointments in October. While there will be approximately 158,700 under this new approach, DMV will continue to evaluate this dual system, looking for opportunities to improve and expand service delivery. At every step, DMV will focus on achieving greatest efficiency and satisfaction for customers.

In anticipation of a dual system of service, DMV temporarily stopped accepting appointments on certain days beginning October 5, 2021. The approximately 25,000 customers who previously scheduled appointments on what will now be walk-in days will be rescheduled for an appointment day within a week. No appointments will be canceled.

The appointment system appeals to customers able to schedule a future visit to the DMV for service. The system allows DMV to schedule the correct amount of time for each transaction and successfully limit customer wait and transaction times. It also allows DMV to best use the skill sets of its employees as managers know in advance what transactions will be conducted on a given day. In addition, controlling when customers arrive and adjusting appointment times for the scheduled transactions allows DMV to give customers the safety afforded by social distancing and open lobbies.

On appointment days, DMV will continue providing services that, generally, require in-person service. On walk-in days, DMV will offer all transactions including knowledge and skills testing.

When walk-in service resumes, DMV plans to determine safe lobby capacity based on fire marshal and health guidelines and will add contract security personnel to allow DMV to regulate lobby capacity.

DMV's overall operational plan is complex and requires continuous evaluation to ensure the agency is providing efficient and effective service and meeting customer needs across all its service options. Prior to developing the plan to reinstitute walk-in service, DMV had been continually adding appointment availability and evaluating how to best address the problem of customers who do not show up for appointments. Similarly, DMV will need to make adjustments to operations as it makes appointment service and walk-in service available to customers to ensure that the agency provides the best possible customer service. As COVID-19 remains an ever-changing threat to the health and well-being of Virginians, DMV will need to maintain its ability to quickly adapt operations based on factors, including service demands, public health, and staffing levels. At a minimum, DMV will evaluate the plan within 60 days of implementation and make adjustments as needed.

Conclusion

DMV is hopeful that integrating walk-in service with the successful and very popular appointment system on alternating days will allow for continued efficient service. The agency's efforts to streamline transactions and create service channels outside of offices have positioned DMV well for coming challenges. Employees will continue to demonstrate dedication, flexibility, and innovation, just as they have throughout the pandemic, to provide superior service to all DMV customers.

