



**Plan to Address**

**CDL & Class D Road Test Backlogs**

**May 11, 2020**

# **DVS PLAN**

## **Addressing CDL and Class D road test backlogs**

May 11, 2020

### **ISSUES:**

- **Road test backlog** – 13,161 road tests (12,311 Class D, 814 CDL and 36 Motorcycle) have been canceled due to COVID19 concerns since Governor Walz's stay at home order went into effect on March 28.
- **More time needed for road tests** – Tests will take longer due to enhanced screening, sanitizing and other precautions needed to safeguard examiners and examinees.
- **Uncertain staffing** – We are not sure how many staff (examiners and counter staff) will report to work when the stay at home order is lifted, making it harder to schedule tests to maximize efficiency.

### **GOAL:**

Address the road test backlogs while keeping the health and safety of our employees and customers a priority.

### **DVS CURRENT OPERATIONS – 5/4/20 Status Update:**

Most DVS locations remain closed in compliance with Governor Walz' stay at home order through May 17, with most DVS staff working remotely except for the following:

- Limited services in Town Square Building – Mail processing, prorated, title & registration, deputy registrar inventory, scanning to support work queues for teleworking staff (no public-facing counter services).
- Eight exam stations offering limited number of modified CDL tests and a plan to begin VIN inspections starting May 11.

### **PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:**

**Consolidating locations:** By consolidating 93 exam station locations down to 15 regional exam hubs located statewide we will build staffing efficiencies and address the backlogs. The proposed exam hubs are Town Square, Arden Hills, Anoka, Eagan, Plymouth, Rochester, Mankato, Marshall, Willmar, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, Brainerd, Duluth, Grand Rapids, and Bemidji.

**No camera operations:** DVS exam stations will focus ONLY on knowledge tests and road tests. All other driver license services will be diverted and will bring added business to deputy registrars and driver license agents in communities across the state (146 of a total of 174 DRs are currently open statewide).

**Examiners focus on exams:** Staffing assignments at the 15 exam hubs will focus on >90% of examiners' time on road tests. Any counter service, screening of customers, sanitizing procedures, knowledge tests will be assigned to Customer Service Specialist (CSSI) staff supported by redeployed staff.

**Request for redeployed staff:** DVS has redeployed 18 staff to help out other DPS divisions as well as other state agencies during the stay at home order. Now we need help to address our backlogs and are requesting 30 redeployed staff (2 for each exam hub) for the next 8-10 weeks to help with various screening processes and procedures so examiners can focus on tests.

**Communication Plan:** The DPS office of communications will undertake a campaign over the next several weeks reminding the public to 'help us help them' and outlining the new business procedures. Messages will be developed regarding wearing a mask and gloves when you come for your test; be prepared to sanitize your vehicle before an examiner steps in; do not be a 'no show'; come prepared to pass the first time; only applicants allowed in the exam building except if the driver is under 18. DVS has developed a detailed return to operations plan outlining PPE use and screening.

**Staggered Shifts and Overtime:** Many of our examiners and CSSIs are now also primary educators supporting distance learning for their school age children. This might support staggered shifts and possible weekend shifts. We will be working with our staff and AFSCME partners to develop a plan in the coming weeks. To begin, for the first four weeks when we return to work, we will offer one hour of overtime at the beginning and one hour at the end of the day for staff who volunteer to work extra hours. Hours at all 15 exam hubs will be 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

**Supplement examiner pool:** Over the years, many examiners have moved into other jobs at DPS or recently retired. Our intent is to reach out to these ex-examiners and invite them back to help us through the next 3-6 months. Retirees could come back on pro-appointments, current staff could come back as reassignments on their current salary levels with an agreement with their current supervisors.

**Grow our third party CDL testing program:** We are partnering with the Minnesota State Center for Transportation Excellence, MN Trucking Association, MnDOT and other partners to brainstorm how we can partner on the backlog of CDL tests as well as grow the program with a focus on standards and safety well into the future. DVS also has a proposal to shift the first and second tests to third party programs. This will take a legislative change.

**Temporary Exam Adjustments:** Three changes we intend to make to our Class D road tests in order to save time and supplement sanitizing procedures without compromising standards or safety include 1) eliminating the equipment inspection since < 5% applicants typically fail this part of the test, 2) examiners will terminate the test as soon as an applicant makes an 'automatic fail' error or has enough deductions to fail, whichever is sooner and 3) applicants do not sign the RX. All aspects of the class D skills test are being evaluated to determine if they are still needed to assess driving skills or if the maneuver is repetitive and can be removed to maximize efficiencies. These efficiencies will reduce the time needed to test, which reduces time in the car and possibly increasing the number of tests that can be given.

**No paper tests:** In order to save time and build efficiencies, we will focus on computer tests and will not offer paper tests at our 15 exam hubs for the next three months. In the event of a request from an individual with special needs, we will assess and offer paper tests on a case by case basis.

**Scheduling efficiencies:** We are working with the FAST team on a solution to fairly and efficiently reschedule the over 12,000 canceled tests without needing to tie up examiners and

other staff with rescheduling appointments by phone. Canceled tests will be rescheduled before the schedule is opened up for new candidates.

**MSP Airport REAL ID office:** We plan to defer reopening the MSP REAL ID Office at least for the next 6-8 weeks due to our staffing constraints and the low travel volumes anticipated for the near future.

**Prioritize staff providing critical services:** For these alternate CDL tests, we intend to prioritize candidates who have a job offer or a letter from their employer certifying that they require a CDL to do their job providing critical services during the stay at home order.

**Hiring exception for exam staff:** DVS is requesting MMB for a hiring exception during the current hiring freeze in order to immediately fill the 29 open exam station positions – CSSIs and E&Is, Assistant Regional Supervisors.

**Taking care of our staff:** In the coming days and weeks, we acknowledge the anxiety and pressures on all. We are especially concerned for our staff with vulnerable health conditions or those who have contracted or have been exposed to the coronavirus. We are also concerned about those with elderly parents in their care or those with school age children and distance learning roles and responsibilities. We are committed to providing the leave options, flexible work schedules, reassignment opportunities, teleworking options as best fits their schedule and ask that employees work with their supervisors to establish a schedule that is mutually beneficial to them and DVS.

**Virtual lobby:** Customers can practice social distancing by waiting in their car or elsewhere and receive a text message when it is their turn at the counter. A pilot will begin with Town Square, Arden Hills and Mankato Exam Stations once the stay-at-home order is lifted.

### **Actions DVS has taken to address some of these concerns:**

- 1. Alternate CDL testing:** On April 28, 2020, we began to offer alternate CDL testing, approved by FMCSA. It uses a Go-Pro camera and cell phone; no examiner is in the cab, but rather a chase vehicle with two examiners balances driving, giving instructions, observing and scoring. We plan to offer this resource-intensive option through the duration of the stay at home order. As we begin using this method, we expect to provide approximately 150 CDL tests a week. Link to WCCO story at: <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2020/04/30/coronavirus-updates-minnesota-driver-exam-stations-resume-testing-for-commercial-driver-licensing-only/>
- 2. Teleconferencing variance for Drivers ED:** On April 7, 2020, DVS approved a variance that allows driver education providers to provide an alternative to classroom education with teleconferencing options. Students currently enrolled in driver's education can complete their driver's education requirements via this teleconferencing option.
- 3. Two COVID bills passed:** Thanks to bipartisan support two COVID bills were passed during the stay at home order that positively impacted DVS operations in the following areas:

- a. **DL extensions:** Provided conforming language so state statute mirrors the federal extension for Driver's license for two months beyond the month in which the peacetime emergency ends.
- b. **Farm/Seasonal CDL:** Provided online options for new and renewed farm/seasonal CDLs. Waives photo and vision.
- c. **REAL ID documentation & staff:** Making it easier for Minnesotans to get a REAL ID by simplifying and increasing the kinds of documentation accepted. Also provided funding to hire temp staff for REAL ID processing
- d. **Out of State drivers:** Allows flexibility and more time to apply for a MN credential.

*Here are some additional ideas for consideration that would require legislative action/statutory change:*

1. **Grow our third-party CDL testing program:** DVS has proposed language to legislators that would allow the first and second CDL test to be conducted by a third party. After the second failed test, the third test and each test thereafter would need to be conducted by DVS. It would also allow CDL testing staff to shift focus to class D road tests. This proposal has received positive interest from the legislature.
2. **Waive Vision and Photo requirement for the next 12 months:** This will allow for online renewals for standard DLs, reduce in-person visits and reduce exposure and crowded exam hubs when we return to work. DVS has shared proposed language with legislators and received positive feedback.
3. **'No show' fee:** One of the key inefficiencies with road tests at DVS has been the issue of "no shows" for road tests. Annually, 26,000 Minnesotans do not show up for their scheduled road tests resulting in lost time and resources. Rep. Hornstein and Rep. Benardy have recently proposed a "no show" fee, which we believe would be an excellent idea. It would most certainly help with optimizing testing efficiencies and addressing backlogs, especially since we will be testing by appointment only and not permitting any walk-ins for the next several weeks, allowing so they would not be able to fill in behind no shows.

**Current stats and future projections as of 5/4/20**

**Driver Testing**

- Road Tests
  - Class-D: 12,500 cancelled, estimated 89,500 pending (based on 2019 data): 102,000 total
  - CDL: 1,000 cancelled, estimated 8,500 pending (based on 2019 data): 9,500 total
  - Total road tests anticipated now - Dec 2020 = **111,500 tests**

**Driver's License Card/ID Credentials**

- Expired Credentials
  - Approximately 85,000 per month = estimated over 150,000 expired as of now
  - Estimated remaining 2020 (JUN-DEC) = 595,000
  - Total credentials anticipated to be renewed now - Dec 2020 = **745,000 credentials**