



OHIO LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Technology in State Government Committee Testimony
September 14, 2011

Chairman Newbold and members of the committee, my name is Kurt McDowell, and I am the Director of Legislative Information Systems (LIS).

LIS was formed in 1995, and serves the Ohio General Assembly and the legislative agencies by providing computer network services, telephone services, development of new or improved computer applications, and computer education and training services.

Like our parent agency, the Legislative Service Commission (LSC), LIS is a non-partisan agency established to facilitate the legislative process. We strive to provide the very highest quality professional information technology services through robust, reliable, cost-effective systems that meet the needs of the legislative agencies we support.

Initially LIS had an oversight Joint Sub-Committee. However, in 2010 that sub-committee was replaced with oversight provided by the House Clerk, the Senate Clerk and the LSC Director.

The House, Senate, and LSC each have their own information technology organizations and we try to work closely and cooperatively with them. You can get a good understanding of how we work together by seeing LIS as the railroad tracks and legislative IT organizations as the trains that run on those tracks to deliver services to you. The LIS director functions as the General Assembly Chief Technical Officer (CTO). The CTO acts to improve cooperation, standards conformity, and security in all General Assembly IT organizations.

The House has asked LIS to provide IT support for their IT systems. This entailed consolidating servers and software. Just this last weekend we finished the migration of virtual servers into the LIS virtual environment. LIS is now working to consolidate duplicative services and provide the excellent IT services that the OHR staff has been accustomed to.

LIS is also working on IT projects with consultation from House leadership to meet their computing needs. This includes implementing Microsoft SharePoint, new computing devices for the chamber and committee rooms, and enterprise mass emailing.

LIS also provides direct services. We design, operate, support, and maintain the General Assembly website, the Senate website, and the House website.

LIS is responsible for the design and support of key applications like the bill drafting system used by LSC and the clerks, House and Senate journal applications, and the Bulletin application. LIS

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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is John Conomy, and I am the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS).

I would like to take this opportunity to familiarize you with the functions of the Information Technology Office (ITO) within DPS, our major efforts, and what our future holds.

As you may already know, DPS is comprised of eight separate divisions:

- Administration - of which ITO is a part
- the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV)
- the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS)
- Ohio Homeland Security (OHS)
- Ohio Investigative Unit (OIU)
- Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP)

ITO is charged with managing the information infrastructure and services supporting these divisions. To do so, we have several functional areas within ITO including:

- .Net Applications (software) – creates software using modern standards and techniques;
- Infrastructure and Operations - engineers, builds and supports our physical environment;
- Mainframe – handles all aspects of our mainframe environment including hardware and software;
- Databases and Special Applications – which maintains our databases and creates and supports applications not on the mainframe or in .Net environments;
- Security Operations – maintains and continuously improves the security surrounding all of our systems and networks;
- Project Management – provides expertise in the processes and methodology to ensure IT initiatives are delivered on time, within budget, and that they provide the required features.

In addition to the groups within ITO, we work closely with the OSHP Network group, which builds and maintains the network for the entire agency, as well as administering the Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS). We also work with the IT

department of EMA, which is a separate entity supporting the technology infrastructure for EMA.

The separation of the network and EMA technology groups from the rest of ITO is something of an anomaly in the IT world, yet we have managed to work together, and over the last year have greatly improved our relationships. This unusual arrangement, while not optimal, is an artifact of the evolution of DPS between 1933 when the first agencies now under the DPS umbrella were created, and 1992 when DPS reached its current form.

Current major IT initiatives – some examples:

- Email – We have just completed a major effort to leave behind an antiquated email system that over time has become costly and difficult to support.
 - Our email services are now hosted by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), and we are among the first large agencies to participate in this statewide consolidation effort. By taking advantage of shared state services, we saved the agency approximately \$1 million in procurement of hardware and services that would have been necessary to replace our in-house email system with a more modern one.
 - This is the sort of service that, while important to our business functions, is not a part of our core business expertise and is exactly the right kind of candidate for consolidation via shared services.

- Mainframe Migration – This is also known as our “Exodus” project and is currently underway.
 - The mainframe is the heart of the system that generates revenue for DPS, and Ohio. Billions of dollars are generated annually by driver’s license and vehicle registration transactions.
 - For decades and up to this time, the processing that goes on behind the scenes necessary to issue Ohio driver’s licenses and vehicle registrations has occurred on a mainframe computer. Mainframes are able to process transactions very quickly, but represent a fading technology that is becoming increasingly difficult to support and maintain. People with expertise in the mainframe world are becoming fewer and fewer.
 - We are moving to a new platform based on modern hardware and software which will enable us to continue these vital functions into the foreseeable future and avoid the increasing costs of maintaining a mainframe.

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- This transition is a tremendous effort consisting of thousands of hours of development time for both software and physical environments. It is being completed by DPS personnel, using very few outside resources.
- Automatic Title Processing System – Working with Ohio vendors, we are working on a major upgrade of the state’s vehicle titling system.
 - The new architecture will provide increased security, better performance, and a reduction in support costs.
- Real ID/Safe ID – is the project underway now to make driver’s licenses and state identification cards compliant with new federal requirements.
- Wide Area Network (WAN) upgrade – will improve the network outside the walls of DPS.
 - As new, upgraded systems are implemented, the increasing need for fast, reliable, and secure transfer of data to remote sites and outside customers requires improvements to our networks.
 - ITO, OSHP network staff, and DAS have collaborated well and are working to implement new network technologies that are both scalable and more “future proof” than technologies currently in place.
- HB 648 compliance and other security efforts– DPS is a leader among state agencies in implementing technologies to further protect confidential personal information (CPI) and other sensitive data.
 - We take seriously our responsibility as custodians of the personal information of all Ohioans. Such information is extremely valuable, and deserves the utmost care.
 - Securing this data requires constant vigilance and investment to keep pace of threats emerging daily.

The above are only some examples of the dozens of projects both underway and planned for the future at DPS.

ITO Cooperates with other agencies:

In addition to our own business interests, DPS supports the needs of many other entities. Implementing appropriate security measures and agreements, we provide key data to federal, state, and local authorities for licensing, titling, legal, and law enforcement purposes. This ongoing exchange of data requires that our infrastructure

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supports these needs, and that our staff members work diligently to keep information flowing in a secure manner.

Despite uniqueness within agencies, there are common services we consume that are in support of, but not central to, our core business. This has created opportunities within the state for consolidation of some services which you have already heard about from State CIO Stu Davis.

Email is one example where we participated in the consolidation of common services. We recently completed a plan with the state CIO and other agencies to look for ways of improving the technology staff augmentation process, with the dual goals of increasing efficiency and saving taxpayer dollars. We are also involved at the state level in other areas and we have members serving on technical committees in the realms of Identity Management, Unified Communications, and Enterprise Technical Architecture.

Consolidation and centralization requires careful analysis:

Within DPS, each division has its own mission and areas of expertise, creating unique demands for ITO. DPS can almost be thought of as a holding company which owns several somewhat related, yet very unique businesses. This structure requires ITO to have knowledge and expertise unique within state government, and not easily replicated outside of DPS. Similarly, other state agencies have unique demands and skills within their own IT departments. Areas requiring specialized knowledge, and specialized systems, are not always the best candidates for consolidation or centralization.

It is important that as we continue efforts at the state level to improve efficiencies and lower costs, we identify the vital core businesses and areas of expertise for individual agencies. These unique core business functions may not be the best candidates for consolidation, unlike "commodity" functions such as email. To risk these core competencies in the name of consolidation may in the long run reduce our ability to properly provide the unique services that each agency is charged with providing to Ohio's citizens.

Cost cutting is necessary and desirable in our economy:

We must take the necessary time to identify efficiencies and become more informed before making sweeping changes that can affect our citizens. Often there is an assumption made that agencies are overstaffed, and overpaid. Within ITO we currently employ approximately 150 full time staff. They represent more than 80 thousand hours of development and over 17 thousand hours of support time annually. A 2004 study of the DPS ITO by Gartner, an industry leader in research within the information technology industry, stated that ITO, with a staff of 150 at that time, was 50 percent

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understaffed compared to similar technology organizations. Even with the increased demands on DPS, ITO staffing has not changed in the intervening years. I am very proud of and impressed by the efforts of my staff on a daily basis. Heroics are a daily occurrence within ITO. Ohioans expect good service and responsiveness, and my staff reminds themselves – and me - of this always. It is important for us all to discover the truth of where the opportunities for efficiency really lie lest we make incorrect assumptions and hurt our ability to provide needed services to Ohioans now and in the future.

I would like to conclude by again thanking you, Chairman Newbold, and the rest of the committee for inviting me before you today. I and my staff are ready to assist you with your goals, and look forward to helping in any way we can.