



2010 CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN

Department of Public Works & Transportation

THE CHALLENGE

The Customer Service Plan is centered on the following principles of public service: openness; accessibility; accountability; and continuous improvement. In arriving at this Plan, we have considered information and correspondences received from our citizens, peers, findings of customer satisfaction surveys, Community eForum Feedback, media perception, and the responses received on the quality of our services to date. This Plan is published and posted on the County's web site and in each of our Division offices in order to communicate these standards to our customers and to reinforce them with our employees. "Our customers are the purpose of our work—they are not interruptions of it." There is a clear presumption that our service will progressively improve, as our operations become more efficient and we are dedicated to "***Making a Difference Everyday***". The Plan will be reviewed and updated periodically as we gain more experience with it and as we compare our service with the best in the private sector.

Openness

- Accurate, up-to-date, and reliable program information is available in our files, handouts, or on our web site.
- When you visit our offices, the staff you see will identify themselves by name.
- When you telephone us, we will identify ourselves by name.
- Our letters will be easy to understand; and unless the letter is a computer notice, the person writing to you will give you his or her name.
- We encourage public participation and increased customer involvement in the services we provide.

Accessibility

- If you have an appointment with a Department employee, you will not be kept waiting.
- When you telephone us, you will reach us on the first try.
- If you cannot come to our office, we may be able to visit you at home or at a mutually agreeable location.
- We want you to be able to obtain the kind of information you need.
- We return all our voice mail and email messages.

Accountability

- If things go wrong, at the very least, you are entitled to a good explanation and/or apology.
- Customer Feedback Forms are available in every Division for you to tell us how we did and how we can improve our service.
- If you are not satisfied with our service, you may contact the Supervisor of the Division with which you have been dealing, or the Director who is responsible for the Department.
- Respond to our customers by making pro-active, timely, appropriate changes to our services and processes, as may be required for improvement.
- Ensure that everyone in the Department understands the need for exemplary customer service, is capable and possesses the ability to interact with customers in a friendly, helpful and professional manner, and knows and accepts their role in the process.

Continuous Improvement

- Create a culture that continually assesses and restructures procedures to assure they benefit the customer first and the organization second.
- Perform periodic review and assessment of the Plan and provide increased employee training opportunities to employees who directly serve customers.
- Benchmark customer service performance against the best in business.
- Survey front-line employees on barriers to, and ideas for, improving service to the community.
- Recognize employees for meeting, or exceeding, customer service standards.

CUSTOMER SERVICE PLEDGE

"We strive to be reliable in all our dealings. This entails being consistent with our responses and doing what we say we will do".

MISSION

The St. Mary's County Department of Public Works & Transportation is in daily contact with the citizens of the County in a variety of ways. The purpose of our Customer Service Plan is to reinforce with our employees that the citizen is our customer, and that they are the most visible part of the public service we provide.

Customer satisfaction is work, but customer dissatisfaction is even more work. When we target customer service with a dedicated effort, we are bound to offer better customer service. This Customer Service Plan also embraces our Departmental Strategic Plan entitled "**Community First**" in which we are reminded of the following community-based mission statements:

DEPARTMENT	<i>Mission Statement: "To serve the community of St. Mary's County by assuring its transportation, facilities management, development review, and solid waste and recycling programs are properly planned, implemented and maintained".</i>
COUNTY HIGHWAYS	<i>Mission Statement: "To exercise good judgment and implement programs which maintain all roads and bridges under its jurisdiction safe for public travel".</i>
ENGINEERING	<i>Mission Statement: "To effectively and efficiently manage the planning and design phase services for the continued orderly development of County-wide improvement programs".</i>
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW	<i>Mission Statement: "To provide quality technical reviews, sound engineering recommendations and permitting services for the development of public and private sector infrastructure".</i>
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	<i>Mission Statement: "To provide safe, dependable and cost-effective transportation to our customers and mobility for all residents".</i>
AIRPORT OPERATIONS	<i>Mission Statement: "To satisfy aviation demand and promote airport development that both integrates with the community and serves the region's general aviation and corporate pilots".</i>
CONSTRUCTION & INSPECTIONS	<i>Mission Statement: "To assure quality control of capital construction and site development projects through proper management, inspection and testing of materials".</i>
SOLID WASTE	<i>Mission Statement: "To provide adequate facilities for the safe handling, collection and disposal of solid waste generated in the County".</i>
RECYCLING	<i>Mission Statement: "To promote Reuse, Recycle and Reduction programs through effective communication, public education and example".</i>
ADMINISTRATION	<i>Mission Statement: "To support the overall mission of the Department and its Divisions through administrative support and maintenance of all inventory and management systems".</i>
BUILDING SERVICES	<i>Mission Statement: "To provide quality operational and maintenance activities as cost effectively as possible and to respond to service requests from our customers in a timely fashion in order to preserve facilities for future use by employees, visitors, and citizens".</i>

Customer Service is meeting the needs and expectations of the customer as defined by the customer. “Meeting the needs and expectations of the customer” means you know what your customers want, what they expect, and you provide that to them on a consistent basis. So, in order to have an effective customer service initiative, you must know what your customers want, provide it to them on a consistent basis, and ask them how you’re doing. With a system in place, we should be better able to track customer satisfaction.

OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE VALUES

Customers Know What They Want – rather than sitting back and assuming that we knew what customers wanted and needed, our agency went out and asked. Through formal surveys, focus groups, and conversations, we listened to what our customers thought about the types and quality of services and products we offered. What we discovered helped to shape the ways in which we strive to redirect our services to ensure that we are meeting your needs.

Customer Needs Are Paramount – based on feedback from our customers, the Department must always be open to responding to comments and suggestions about improving the way we deliver public services. We need and welcome this feedback on a regular basis.

Communication Is Key To Our Success – developing effective tools to open lines of communication with our customers will help us do our jobs better. We will not always be able to satisfy every customer, but by developing more effective ways to explain our position, offering reasonable advice and recommendations and by providing clearer paths to receive feedback, our Department will be in a better position to address customer needs and concerns.

WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

DPW&T serves a broad spectrum of internal and external customers in St. Mary’s County, which include:

- Individual Citizens and Families, Publication
- Media and Broadcast Journalists
- State and Local Government Personnel
- Federal Government Agencies
- Professional and Volunteer Organizations and Their Members
- Boards, Commissions, Committees and Consultants
- Developers, Surveyors, Engineers and Property Owners
- The General Public at Large
- Visitors and Newcomers
- Our Peers and Sister Departments within County Government
- Lease Holders, Transients and Visitors
- Emergency Response Teams

WHAT ARE OUR SERVICES?

- **County Highways** - Maintenance and repairs on over 1,500 County roadways, including bridges, signage and citizen work requests along more than 1,200 lane miles of right-of-way.
- **Solid Waste Management** – Service to more than 805,000 customers at the six (6) convenience centers and landfill facility for collection and disposal of solid waste. Between 300-400 permits per month issued to residents.
- **Recycling** – County-wide and regional public/private sector recycling initiatives to over 100,000 residents in approximately 40,000 households in St. Mary's County, including business outreach to more than 600 licensed establishments.
- **Development and Plan Review** – Review and approval of between 800-1,200 development-related plans, plats and corresponding permits valued at \$5-10M per year.
- **Non-Public School Transportation** – Manages over 40 buses under contract for the safe transportation of more than 2,000 students to 11 non-public school systems, a service unique to St. Mary's County.
- **Engineering** – Infrastructure improvement design and construction with an average value of over \$15M each year in accordance with the FY 10 County Capital Improvement Program.
- **Airport Operations** – Provides general aviation services to between 100-145 fixed base tenants and transient guests at a regional facility with over 40,000 operations per year.
- **Vehicle Maintenance** – More than 7,500 centralized safety compliance and maintenance repairs per month to a County-wide transportation fleet comprised of more than 470 vehicles and 105 pieces of valued at over \$ 20M.
- **Transit System** – Various County-wide transit bus services to more than 380,000 riders each year with connections to Calvert and Charles counties, with system route mileage exceeding 1,050,000 miles per year.
- **Construction Inspections** – Over 4,000 quality control inspections each year on an estimated \$18M in development construction work, with more than \$32M currently under bond. An average of 50-60 miles of roadway is resurfaced each year.
- **Customer Service and Administrative Support** – Management of a diverse operation of 170 employees and their respective procurement, personnel, risk management, information technology and grant administration needs.
- **Metro Mail** – Over 220,000 pieces of communication/correspondence are distributed and processed to more than 65 State and County agencies each year.
- **Building Services** – Maintenance of approximately 93 buildings and facilities encompassing over 850,000 square feet and averaging more than 12,000 non-routine service calls annually.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

We are determined to meet and exceed the following Departmental Customer Service Standards, especially on the front lines, by providing employee training, regular feedback on performance, adequate resources, equipment and incentives. Customer service will be emphasized in all facets of our operations and we will continue to monitor satisfaction levels through surveys and feedback. Our customers deserve our best efforts, as well as our respect and courtesy every time they contact us.

If you contact us with an inquiry about the Department of Public Works & Transportation, or ask for other information:

- We will answer your written inquiry within 15 working days. If we need more time to research the answer, we will contact you within those 15 days to tell you when to expect our response and who the contact person is.
- If you telephone us, you will speak to a knowledgeable person who will answer your question, or refer it properly. You will receive no more than two referrals.
- We will answer phone calls promptly and courteously, within four rings, and return all voice mail messages within 48 hours.
- If you have a personal appointment with a Department employee, you will be helped within 5 minutes.
- You will not have to wait more than 20 minutes if you do not have an appointment.

If you request one of our publications or documents:

- Requests for single copies of publications by telephone will be sent within 48 hours.
- Information requested as a pick-up request will be made available within 48 hours.
- Requests for single copies by mail will be sent within 72 hours.
- Publications and documents will be made available in alternative formats on request.
- We will give you the option to receive the information in electronic form where possible.

If you contact us with a suggestions, or complaint:

- We will respond to written complaints within 15 working days.
- We will respond to our on-line Maintenance Request and Community eForum Feedback messages within 48 hours.
- If you telephone us with a complaint, we will advise you on the telephone or refer your complaint to the proper source.

IF THINGS GO WRONG, YOU CAN CONTACT US

If our service has not matched our values and standards for customer service, we want to know so that we can do something about it and get it right the next time. In this manner, we embrace a comprehensive recovery strategy, which seeks out and deals effectively with customer dissatisfaction. If you have a problem or suggestion, you may:

- Discuss the problem with the person who served you.

Or

- Speak, or write, to the supervisor in charge. The names of supervisors may be obtained by calling us at (301) 863-8400 and are on our web site at www.co.saint-marys.md.us/dpw/. If we cannot solve your problem immediately, we will provide a response within 15 working days.

Or

- Fill out our Customer Satisfaction Survey at the front counter, or use our on-line electronic Community eForum Feedback Form.

Or

- Send a message electronically to our Director at george_erichsen@co.saint-marys.md.us. Your message will be routed to the Director of the DPW&T, who will personally ensure your question is answered. If you request a reply, we will provide a response within 48 hours.

Or

- Set up an appointment with us to discuss your situation in more detail. No requests for an appointment are denied. Meetings will be scheduled within 7-10 calendar days.

Or

- Contact the County Administrator, followed by the Board of County Commissioners if you remain unsatisfied with our responses or have recommendations for improvement of services.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR IMPROVING SERVICES

The existing and proposed framework in the Department of Public Works & Transportation must be complimented with proper actions in dealing with the public face-to-face. This can be improved through increased training levels of our employees, especially front-line employees. This will be accomplished by a three phase approach: firstly, in-house training through film, literature, work sessions and human resources presentation; secondly, outside training through seminars, college credit classes, consultants or conferences; and thirdly, empowering employees with a clear understanding so that they can more clearly disseminate and represent departmental policy and better explain to our customers.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN ACTION

The customer service standards we have set for ourselves are goals to be met, and do not necessarily represent current levels of performance. To improve customer service, we will concentrate on working to meet the standards we have set and to improve our service effectiveness. On some of the standards, our performance can be measured internally; in other cases, it will be tested through surveys. The last County-wide survey was performed in 1997 by The Tarrance Group, and the DPW&T received an overall quality rating of "Good".

The DPW&T has undertaken many innovative initiatives designed to provide better service and flexibility to our customers while enhancing the Department's ability to serve the community. These initiatives are aimed at improving our customer service, introducing more common sense into the way we do our work, and reducing costs. Examples of some of the DPW&T's initiatives are highlighted below:

- **Customer Assistance Guides.** Available in hard copy and on-line.
- **On-Line Program Information.** The DPW&T, in detail, is available in electronic format and includes standard forms and agreements; (i.e. Inspection and Maintenance Request Forms).
- **Customer Information.** Copies available upon request, to include the retrieval of archival information. Direct access to staff and open-door meeting policy.
- **Public Kiosk.** Access to the Internet and County processes is available to the general public in the front lobby of the Arnold Building. A Customer Service Questionnaire is available at our front counter to comment on the quality of our services.
- **Information and Forms.** Over 40 standardized forms, guidelines, information and agreements are available on-line and in hard copy format. Clearly stated and understandable policies and procedures are in place.
- **Permits Coordinator.** Maintains submittal tracking and processing database with review date deadlines. Status of submissions, permits and respective comments are also available on-line.
- **Road Advisory Update.** Community-based informational source during adverse weather operations including listing of our priority, emergency/salt routes.
- **Customer Feedback.** Web-based capability for evaluation of services as well as hard copy Customer Satisfaction Surveys located at front service counters.
- **Public Awareness.** Fliers, press releases, increased community presence public information office announcements, responsiveness and open dialogue with the media.
- **Formalized Management Plans.** Established through pro-active citizen involvement and improved public relations. Responsiveness during natural disasters and severe weather events.
- **Performance Indicators.** Updated and monitored to establish improved and measurable levels of service.
- **Work Management System.** Implementation of automated systems to track service maintenance, inventory, fleet management and development review data.
- **Public Relations.** Improved relationship with the media for timely and accurate dissemination of information.
- **Citizen Involvement.** DPW&T representatives serve as ex-officio members to support numerous Board of County Commissioners selected committees, commissions, task forces, forums, and forums designed to make system improvement recommendations.

PERFORMANCE ATTRIBUTES

The standards described in this Plan represent the Department's effort to identify the needs and concerns of our customers and to establish measurable processes to address these needs and concerns. Performance Attributes are organized into two (2) categories and represent a set of criteria that expresses customer requirements and expectations.

1. Process Attributes-transaction-related characteristics represented by internal operations, such as procedures, policies, and functions; and
2. Quality Attributes-image-related characteristics that describe the contact between the customer and the organization.

The following attributes were used to develop the standards:

Process Attributes

Consistency in policies and procedures – holding to the same principles or practices across the organization and community.

Convenient feedback mechanism – feedback (output that is responsive to input) arrangements that are easy to use or get to.

Frequent communication, including follow-up – any form of communication on a regular basis, where the effectiveness of that communication is enhanced by taking action following that communication.

Manages resources well – careful control and use of resources, human as well as fiscal, to maximize their impact and effectiveness.

Problem solving and attempts to remove barriers – a means to address proposed solutions, or considerations, to resolve something that is an obstruction or prevents progress.

Prompt handling of complaints – immediate, or quick, management of charges of dissatisfaction.

Define the boundaries – providing staff with direction and parameters that outline the limits of tasks, responsibilities and decision-making.

Empower staff – communicate decision-making guidelines to the front line staff and encourage them to solve customer concerns and inquiries expeditiously.

Quality Attributes

Accessibility – ensure customers have the ability and freedom, to approach and communicate with us.

Courteousness – show respect and consideration by example.

Flexibility – capability to adapt to, or change, requirements and provide customers with choices in both the sources and means of service delivery.

Knowledgeable – familiarity with, or understanding of, facts and processes within the organization.

Listens Well – give attention and/or careful consideration of what is said by the customer and employees.

Reliability and Trustworthiness – be dependable, truthful and confident in character and abilities.

Timeliness – information and/or responses are provided early or on time.

