



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Rowland State Government Center, 55 West Main Street, Waterbury, CT 06702-2004  
<http://dmvct.org>



**Testimony of Robert M. Ward, Commissioner  
Department of Motor Vehicles  
Transportation Committee Oversight Hearing  
January 12, 2009**

Good Morning Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee. I appreciate this opportunity to come before you and report on the various initiatives, accomplishments and issues currently facing the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

I am here this morning with a number of agency staff, and would like to specifically introduce two new senior managers and members of my leadership team. Bill Callahan comes to DMV with a strong customer service background, as well as experience in CHRO and Affirmative Action matters. He is serving as Chief of the Customer Operations Bureau, formerly known as Branch Operations. James Rio is the Division Chief of our Commercial Vehicle Safety Division. He started work with us in October after a long tenure with the Farmington Police Department where he most recently served as Chief.

As returning members of the Transportation Committee are aware, the scope of this agency's responsibilities stretches far beyond the simple regulation of drivers and their motor vehicles. This agency also serves as the primary revenue generator for the Special Transportation Fund, collecting upwards of \$400 million annually to finance the construction and maintenance of our state highways. We handle 1.8 million customers in our Branch Operations annually and answer over 1 million phone calls in our customer center.

Assessing the needs of the agency, as well as the expectations of the constituents we serve, has been one of my priorities since being appointed Commissioner two years ago. The Department of Motor Vehicles has some extremely talented and innovative personnel who are committed to building a successful future for this agency. Together we are pursuing strategic initiatives that reinforce document integrity, employ new and enhanced technology, and facilitate professional and efficient customer service.

In an effort to keep my remarks brief and answer any questions that Committee members have, below I have provided some background on the Department, including some recent accomplishments and projects.

- Current Employees:

758 Total Full-Time Employees (707 filled, 58 vacant); and  
152 Total Part-Time Employees (125 filled, 27 vacant).  
(This is 4% below the January 2007 level)

- A massive modernization effort to re-engineer DMV's business processes and technology infrastructure is underway. Over the next several years, these new systems will ultimately provide integrated license and registration files.
- Effective August 1, 2008, DMV implemented both legislative and administrative changes aimed at improving the training and credentialing processes for teen drivers. These changes include imposing a new, 48-hour license seizure for teens who violate graduated license laws, doubling the number of hours required for behind-the-wheel training to forty hours, extending the passenger restrictions from six months to one year, and moving the curfew an hour earlier to 11 p.m. DMV also stopped allowing driving schools to issue learner's permits- thereby requiring all sixteen and seventeen year-olds to visit a DMV Branch for eye-testing, review (and electronic capturing) of identity documentation and a more comprehensive knowledge test. As part of the effort to ensure the integrity of our credentials, DMV now issues learners' permits with photographs. This Department is committed to producing responsible, proficient, new drivers, and the Center for Teen Safe Driving within the agency was created last summer to be a policy, information, and data clearinghouse.
- DMV is in the final stages of an upgrade to the systems and equipment that are used to issue and renew licenses and non-driver identification cards. The upgrade is being done, with DMV oversight, by the vendor that provides these systems and includes a new format and security features for these documents. DMV has also carefully evaluated the option to issue licenses by mail, on a centralized basis, as is done in other states including New York, but, has decided to continue to issue credentials on an over-the-counter basis for the convenience of our customers.
- In July 2007, DMV instituted an Internet registration renewal system which will likely be expanded. To date, over 16% of eligible renewals have been renewed via the Internet.
- Recognizing the importance of credit cards in day-to-day business transactions, a Pilot Project was begun in the Wethersfield Branch to accept credit cards. Approximately 20% of their transactions are paid for with credit cards, and expansion of this initiative is forthcoming.
- DMV continues to seek ways to enhance our highway safety programs, including our partnership with the federal government under the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program and our Administrative Per Se License

Suspension and Ignition Interlock Programs for individuals charged with drunk driving. Last year, with the assistance of a grant from the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration, DMV appointed an attorney to assist in the prosecution of drunk driving suspension cases.

In closing, I realize this is going to be among the more challenging legislative sessions that we have faced. My staff and I look forward to working with this Committee in providing any information or assistance that you may request in the upcoming months.