

## Washington Department of Transportation Streamlines Communication Strategy, Sends Over 2 Million Updates to Stakeholders in 5 months

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is the steward of a large and robust transportation system including over 18,000 highway lane-miles, 3,600 bridges, 23 ferry vessels active in the largest vehicle-ferry system in the world (servicing approximately 24 million passengers annually), and has over 7,000 employees. With nearly 5.9 million residents in Washington State, the Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has a large audience expecting up-to-date information on DOT issues, such as construction projects and road closings. WSDOT's current \$15 billion capital improvement program, including 391 highway projects, will require many project updates to stakeholders. WSDOT replaced its existing system with GovDelivery's Email and Digital Subscription Management solution to automatically send updates on everything from Pierce County traffic updates, mountain pass conditions, and construction reports, to employment opportunities.



*“We use GovDelivery to automatically generate email communication to parties interested in WSDOT projects.”*

*“The 2009 snowstorm caused power and the servers to go down. We got information out because GovDelivery is a hosted, SaaS platform.”*

- Jim Culp, Web Coordinator, WSDOT

### Situation

The mission of WSDOT is to “keep people and business moving by operating and improving the state’s transportation systems vital to our taxpayers and communities.” WSDOT takes this mission seriously; when the existing email list service was becoming cumbersome and making efficient communication difficult, the department decided to research other options.

WSDOT operated more than 70 independent email distribution lists to push information out to citizens and stakeholders. Maintenance of the lists was labor-intensive and system performance was frequently poor, resulting in service delays in message sending. In addition to being labor-intensive and unreliable, the existing system had limitations for sending communications in case of an emergency, and could not send to mobile devices. The department needed a more efficient method to communicate with stakeholders, both for general information, as well as during a crisis situation. Key requirements of the new system included automation of the email process, opt-in subscriptions and the ability to send messages to mobile devices.

### Solution

After evaluating the different solutions, WSDOT partnered with GovDelivery, an automated system that uses email, text messaging and RSS to keep stakeholders informed when new information is available on topics of interest. Washington DOT launched GovDelivery's Email and Digital Subscription Management (EDSM) solution November 6, 2008. (Other transportation departments and transit agencies using GovDelivery include [Arizona DOT](#) and [Texas DOT](#), [Dallas Area Rapid Transit \(DART\)](#) and [Chicago Transit Authority \(CTA\)](#).)



### RESULTS

Since launching GovDelivery in November 2008 WSDOT has:

- Sent more than **9.2 million email updates** to subscribers.
- Signed up nearly **69,000 subscribers**.
- Incorporated **200 specific subscription items** including:
  - Commute Trip Reduction
  - Employment & Purchasing information
  - Aviation & Freight News
  - *Climate Change Digest*
  - I-405 Eastside Transportation News and more...

Today's citizens are on-the-go and want their information immediately available; providing timely, specific, and relevant information is more important than ever before. Citizens want to choose what information they want, when they want it and how they want it. WSDOT liked GovDelivery's personalization capability, which allows stakeholders to choose the specific information for which they would like updates. The department could offer unlimited subscription options on transportation projects and topics, and subscribers could choose only the specific information they were interested in receiving. The GovDelivery solution supported WSDOT's efforts and mission in providing relevant and up-to-date information to the public, meeting stakeholder expectations, and ensuring improved service.

Other key benefits the GovDelivery solution brought to Washington DOT was consistent and assured message delivery and business continuity. Messages sent through GovDelivery have a 98% rate of delivery to the inbox and require no increased administrative support or additional infrastructure. Email alerts are generated automatically when website content is updated and delivered to subscribers. Business continuity is addressed through the Software as a Service platform, enabling WSDOT to access GovDelivery from anywhere through an internet connection.

WSDOT's GovDelivery solution was put to the test during a recent snow emergency. During the January 2009 snowstorm, complete with flooding, avalanches and drifting snow, the true value of the GovDelivery system was proven. Highway I-5 and mountains passes were closed; there were 60 highway closures and power outages causing servers to go down. System administrators from WSDOT were able to access the system remotely to send nearly 77,000 email updates in one day through GovDelivery, reaching its stakeholders with no problem.

*"The 2009 snow emergency was proof. Performance in a crisis. We were getting messages out when we otherwise wouldn't have been able to."*

*-Jim Culp, WSDOT Web Coordinator*

### Results

Since launching in November of 2008, Washington DOT has signed up nearly 49,000 subscribers and sent more than 3.2 million email alerts to its stakeholders, improving service and communication with the public. Stakeholders now receive the most up-to-date information on the state highway system, state ferry system, local roads, and all other areas of the department's jurisdiction.

Additionally, the system has enhanced the process of communicating WSDOT Wellness program updates to the department's 7,000+ employees.

GovDelivery's Software as a Service platform has provides the department with improved service in a crisis. Remote access, as well as an assured path for message distribution, makes GovDelivery an effective solution for general informational updates as well as during a crisis. Mobile support has also been vital to improving service in crisis situations, as it allows the department to reach stakeholders immediately, wherever they are.

The Washington Department of Transportation puts great emphasis on establishing a sense of accountability among taxpayers, demonstrating smart management of the resources given to them. As an example of this focus WSDOT has devoted an entire webpage to demonstrating the effectiveness of the GovDelivery solution, explaining its benefits and illustrating how these benefits align with department priorities and goals. To visit this page, go to: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Communications/WebToolKit/HowTo/GovDelivery> .

To receive free email and text message updates from Washington DOT, go to [www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov) .

**GovDelivery** is the world's leading provider of government-to-citizen communication solutions. GovDelivery's Email and Digital Subscription Management solution is a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform that provides organizations a fully-automated, on-demand public communication system.

*Updated November 2009*