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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

OFFICE OF
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

August 3, 2016

The Honorable John A. Lawrence
1 Commerce BL
Second Floor, Suite 200
West Grove, PA 19390

Dear Representative Lawrence:

I am writing in response to your letter dated July 15, 2016, which related your concerns, as well as other members of the House and Senate, with scheduling a driving skills test appointment in the Southeast region of the commonwealth. I appreciate you taking the time to write and share both your concerns, as well as possible remedies.

The summer season is the peak time for driving skills test scheduling requests. In an effort to keep up with the summer demand, beginning in May, a number of PennDOT Driver License Centers, including several in the Eastern Region, have added schedules on Mondays to conduct additional non-commercial skills testing. Although PennDOT has incurred overtime expenses for the added skills testing, the Monday scheduling has created nearly 12,000 additional non-commercial skills testing appointments statewide. This strategy will continue until the end of the summer in locations across the commonwealth that require additional skills testing appointments.

Despite the additional appointments added to our exam schedule, customers who do not show up for their scheduled appointment continues to be a problem. In some areas, up to 25% of customers fail to keep their scheduled appointment.

Recently PennDOT implemented an automated process to send a reminder notice approximately two weeks in advance of a scheduled skills test appointment. The notice reminds the applicant of their appointment location, date and time, as well as what documents they need to bring along with them (i.e., valid learner's permit, proof of insurance, valid vehicle registration, etc.) on the day of the exam. The notice also advises the customer how to cancel the appointment if he or she is unable to keep it. Since the implementation of this process, we have seen a small reduction in the "no show" rate. We continue to monitor the issue and if needed, we will implement additional strategies to reduce missed appointments.

PennDOT is also in the process of implementing enhancements to our Exam Scheduling System that will increase the availability of skills test appointments. We anticipate completion of these by the end of August 2016.

The non-commercial driving tests administered by third-party sites was part of ongoing efforts to enhance customer service. This new program began in May of this year as an 18-month pilot, to determine the effectiveness of the program. As part of an Article 43 case, AFSCME Council 13 raised some concerns with the new program. In resolution of those concerns, an agreement between ASCME Council 13 and PennDOT was signed on May 14, 2014. The agreement limits the pilot program to ten (10) locations for the 18-month period unless the Article 43 process is restarted. Currently, nine (9) companies are under contract with PennDOT and are located in Allegheny, Carbon, Delaware, Erie, Lancaster, Montgomery and Venango counties. We anticipate the last company will begin testing later this summer.

While we recognize that not everyone will be interested in using this new service, it is another option for individuals who reside in an area where there is a high demand for testing. As of the end of July, over 1,000 non-commercial driving skill tests were administered by our third-party sites.

We actively monitor demographic changes across the commonwealth. We have seen demand for services increase in the Southeastern region of the commonwealth, and have taken a number of steps to address increased demand. Over the last decade, four driver license centers were relocated to larger facilities in the Southeast, Arch Street, Granite Run, Whitman Plaza and Norristown. This has dramatically improved our customer service capabilities. In addition, we added 20 new complement positions in 2015, the majority of which were located in the Southeast region to supplement existing complement at our driver license centers. While we are not considering adding a new site at this time, we will continue to monitor shifting demographics to ensure we are addressing customer needs.

Even with the steps we have taken above, it is important to note that approximately 50% of all initial driving skills tests end in failure. This adds to the demand since customers return at least once (if not multiple times) for a retest.

I hope this information is helpful to you. If you have additional questions please feel free to contact Kurt Myers, Deputy Secretary for Driver and Vehicle Services at 717.705.1000.

Sincerely,



Leslie S. Richards
Secretary of Transportation

cc: Representative Becky Corbin
Representative Warren Kampf
Representative Steve Barrar
Senator Tom Killion

Representative Lawrence

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Representative Tim Hennessey

Representative Dan Truitt

Representative Chris Ross

Representative Duane Milne

Senator Andrew Dinniman