



**Department of Public Safety**

**Driver and Vehicle Services**

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## **Legislative Report on the DPS-DVS Exam**

### **Backlog**

December 2020

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## Executive Summary

This year's COVID-19 pandemic changed the way many agencies conduct business and serve the customers of Minnesota. The Department of Public Safety-Driver and Vehicle Services (DPS-DVS) has worked to address how to safely provide many customer-facing services and reduce the exam backlog.

This report discusses a summary of actions implemented to date mitigating the backlog, a snapshot of total road tests conducted per month, the average wait time for a road test, and locations offering services throughout Minnesota. This report also identifies the status and potential future direction for exam services. To ensure thorough research and conclusions, DPS-DVS utilized multiple sources including a search through primary literature, past AAMVA surveys, and a review of current DPS-DVS practices and processes. Analysis of data pre-pandemic and current data occurred for more consistent data analysis and to better understand whether any trends occurred because of COVID-19 or not. The data analyzed was the road test failure rate, number of tests and appointments, no-show rate, and number of examiners and their duties. Finally, Minnesota Statutes differentiates testing requirements for people under 18 years old and over 18 years old. Therefore, DPS-DVS analyzed data between these two age groups to observe any correlations with current policy or practice.

In order to provide services during the pandemic, DPS-DVS shifted towards online availability of many services including knowledge testing, appointment scheduling for tests, license renewals and duplicate requests. DPS-DVS also received a waiver from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and was able to conduct distanced CDL road tests during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives have increased efficiency and improved customer service better meeting Minnesotans expectations for more web-based practices to conduct their transactions.

Finally, the end of this report provides recommendations to continue or add practices to further increase efficiencies for road testing. A recommendation centered on third party CDL testing will enhance relationships with business partners and continue the success of exam station efficiency. Some recommendations will require legislative action and statutory changes, such as imposing a fee for customers who fail to appear (i.e. no-show) for their testing appointments, mandating driver's education after the third road test failure, additional translations for the Minnesota Driver's Manual, extending the time allowed in between license renewals, and making permanent the current practice of online license renewals for non-REAL ID compliant (i.e. standard) credentials.

# 1) Implemented plans, benchmarks, and goals in addressing class D and CDL backlogs during 2020

The current COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique set of challenges for the Minnesota Department of Public Safety-Driver Services division (DPS-DVS). Through creativity, collaboration, and innovation, DPS-DVS adopted practices to increase efficiency and improve customer service for all Minnesotans. Ninety-three exam stations are located throughout Minnesota, but prior to the COVID-19 pandemic only 16 were open five days per week, and only six of those stations offered all three major services fulltime (application services, knowledge testing, and road testing). In order to improve efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic, DPS-DVS reduced the number of open exam stations to 14. Under this consolidation, examiners conducted over 3,700 road tests (on average) per week, which equated to a 33% improvement at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic from pre-COVID-19 pandemic averages. This testing volume exceeded the number of tests provided prior to the COVID-19 pandemic when all exam stations were open (Figure 1). With permission from the federal government, DPS-DVS conducted only modified Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) road exams from late April and throughout May to address the need to keep essential truck drivers on the road (Figure 2). However, in late May, class D road tests needed to be prioritized to address the class D road tests that were cancelled during the stay at home order (late March through May).

Figure 1. Graph describing the number of class D road tests performed in 2019 and 2020 as of November 27, 2020.

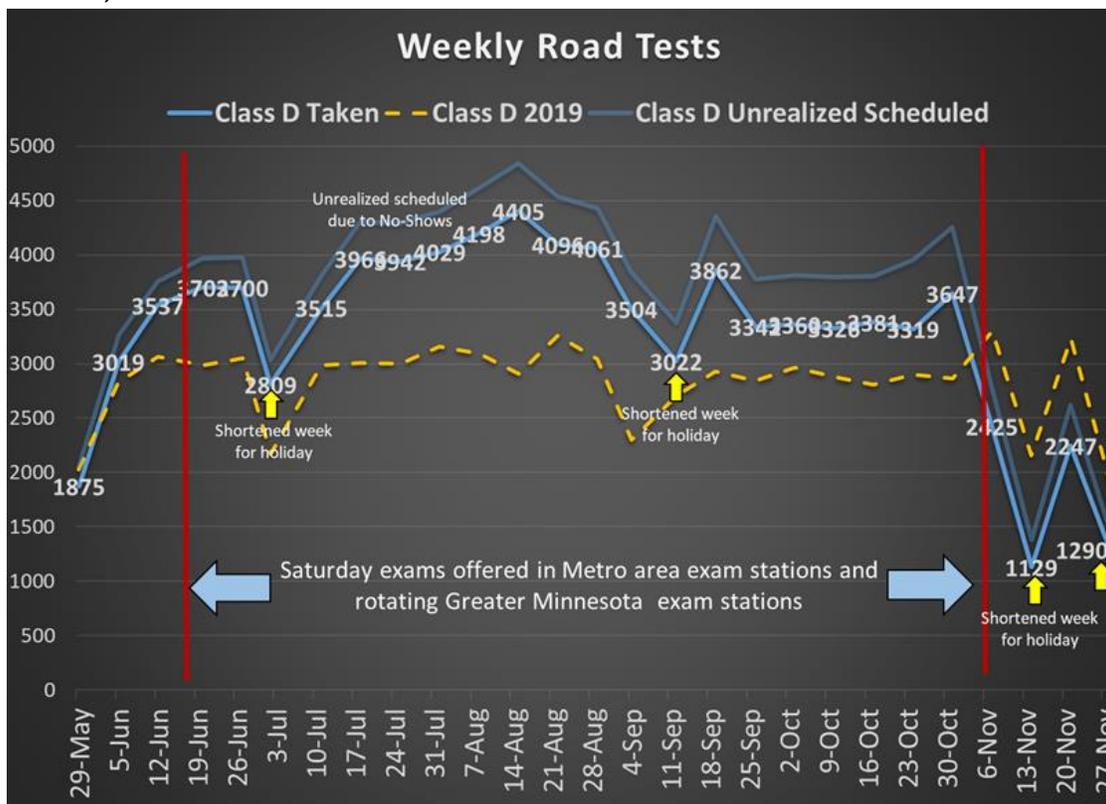
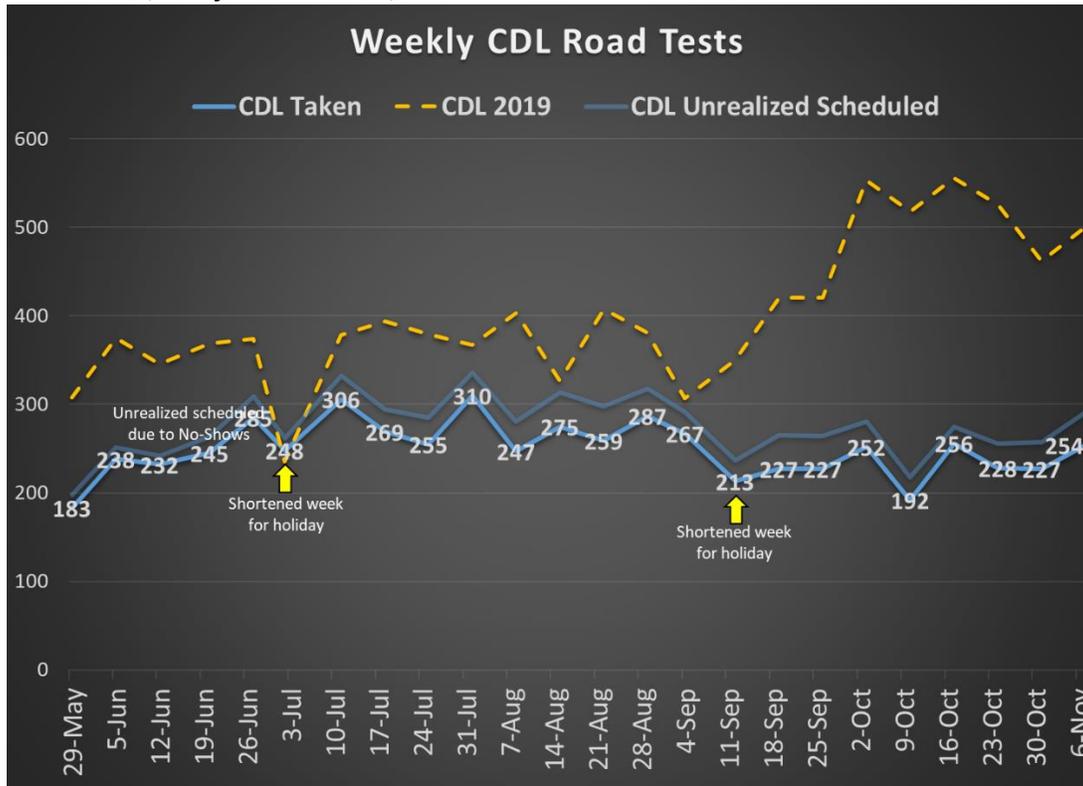


Figure 2. Graph describing the number of commercial driver's license (CDL) road tests performed in 2019 and 2020, as of November 6, 2020.



DPS-DVS currently has long wait times to schedule road tests, which has resulted in a backlog of applicants waiting to take a test. In 2019, the average number of days between the appointment date and the scheduled test date was 96. In 2020, the average number of days between the appointment date and the scheduled test date was 100 days, a 4.2% increase. The backlog worsened due to exam station closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. DPS-DVS cancelled and rescheduled approximately 19,041 road tests due to the stay at home order from March 29, 2020 through May 26, 2020.

Based on current staffing estimates, and without the use of overtime or extended hours, scheduling allows for approximately 500 class D road tests each of the 250 working days per year, totaling approximately 125,000 class D road tests per year. Approximately 136,436 class D road tests were administered in 2019. In 2020, approximately 121,410 class D road tests have been administered (excluding December 30-31). The total does not account for the ebbs and flows of testing demand throughout the year. For example, demand is higher in the spring and summer months than in the winter months due to better driving conditions. Furthermore, the yearly total does not delineate tests performed during the course of normal business days versus days where overtime or extended hours were available. Any time a backlog of road tests occurs, it can be further exacerbated because examiners complete unrelated duties such as conducting vehicle inspections to reduce lengthy wait times for those inspections. More examiners and inspectors could allow for more evenly distributed road tests administered throughout the year.

The implementation and use of online appointment scheduling is a great asset for customer service. Customers can view a calendar and select the date and time that works best for their schedule without spending precious time on the phone or waiting in line outside an exam station. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, road tests at the three metro locations (Arden Hills, Eagan, and Plymouth) offered road tests on a walk-in basis. At these exam stations, drivers would line up outside the station hours before opening in hopes of capitalizing on any no-show test slots for the day. Even though appointments are now required for all road tests, variability in demand, test availability, and the high no-show rate across exam stations makes the process for taking a road test frustrating for Minnesotans and difficult to state overall trends across all exam stations. If all stations operated with a consistent offering of services and were fully staffed all five days of the week, better conclusions could be drawn across all exam stations.

In addition to the standard class D licenses, some DPS-DVS exam stations also offer road tests for CDL. Applicants can take their CDL road test by making an appointment at one of the following 14 locations:

- Anoka
- Arden Hills
- Bemidji
- Detroit Lakes
- Duluth
- Eagan
- Fairmont
- Grand Rapids
- Mankato
- Marshall
- Plymouth
- Rochester
- St. Cloud
- Willmar

Exam stations offering CDL road tests were also open during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the 2020 legislative sessions, statutory changes helped continue serving Minnesotans while prioritizing the health and safety of employees and customers. Changes include extending expiration dates for CDL waivers, and medical certificates that expire during the peacetime emergency. However, the extension cannot go beyond the federal extension date of February 28, 2021. Another change was the waiving of the 30-day grace period for CDL holders new to Minnesota during the peacetime emergency.

In response to the national emergency declaration, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued waivers for testing requirements. In April, Minnesota applied for and received a waiver to utilize a modified method of testing while maintaining social distancing requirements. Examiners used a GoPro camera in the cab of the truck while two

examiners followed in a chase car, communicating via cell phone and evaluating based on their observations. DPS-DVS used this process from April 27 through May 26, 2020, with 800 CDL road tests performed during this period.

### **The Management and Development Team (MAD) from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) Report (2020)**

In 2019, DPS-DVS collaborated with Minnesota Management and Budget's (MMB) Management and Development (MAD) team to examine services and provide a report including improvement recommendations. Later, an internal Exam Efficiencies Task Force formed to conduct further research on exam efficiencies and develop a timeline to improve customer service for Minnesotans. Ideas included expanded hours at exam stations and discontinuing standing appointment for class D road tests. The "Timeline" section below contains descriptions of specific improvements. The report also identifies remaining challenges, which include the high testing fail rates, customers not appearing for their scheduled road test, more consistent access to greater Minnesota locations, and additional staff. The full report is included in Appendix B.

### **Timeline**

For over a year, DPS-DVS has continuously examined internal processes for efficiencies. The timeline of the actions taken by DPS-DVS to improve efficiency and customer service are below.

October 2018 – DPS-DVS implemented the practice of sending e-mail reminders to drivers three days before their scheduled road test in an effort to decrease the number of customers who did not appear for their test.

August 2019 – A systems interface was developed and implemented that passes DPS-DVS knowledge testing results to the applicant's database record. As a result, exam personnel only need to enter the customer information once in the MNDRIVE system and the knowledge test results pass from the knowledge test system to the customer's record. This has decreased the processing time for knowledge testing and application processes for customers at 26 exam stations.<sup>1</sup>

October 2019 – The Internal Exam Efficiencies Task Force formed<sup>2</sup> to study and develop recommendations to address inefficiencies identified by DPS-DVS program directors. The task force has met approximately 15 times since October 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> DVS, *Driver Exam Services Report*.

<sup>2</sup> DVS, *Driver Exam Services Report*.

November 2019 – DPS-DVS contracted the Management and Development Team (MAD) from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB)<sup>3</sup> to review exam efficiencies and made several suggestions. DPS-DVS implemented many of the suggestions, including:

1. Expand hours – Implemented by DPS-DVS in June 2020
2. Examiners focus solely on administering road tests – Implemented temporarily in May 2020<sup>4</sup>
3. Close satellite stations that are open only on certain days and add staff to stations open five days per week – Implemented temporarily in May 2020<sup>4</sup>
4. Extend time between renewals – Passed by Legislature in June 2020; valid until 60 days after the month following termination of peacetime emergency
5. Reduce the number of exam stations to 30 – DPS-DVS reduced to 14 exam stations temporarily in May 2020<sup>4</sup>
6. Open online test schedule to 6 months out for the public to schedule class D road tests

November – December 2019 – DPS-DVS conducted phase 1 of a pilot program for class D tests. The three metro exam stations (Arden Hills, Eagan, and Plymouth) introduced Saturday and Sunday hours, resulting in the scheduling and administration of an additional 3,000 class D road tests. The average examiner efficiency rate (i.e. the amount of time an examiner spends administering tests vs. providing other administrative services) increased from 45.5% to 89.1%. The no-show rate was 11%.

January 2020 – DPS-DVS discontinued the practice of standing appointments for driving schools. This resulted in an increase of 180 appointments per week (approximately 20% of weekly available test times) at the three core metro exam stations (Arden Hills, Eagan, and Plymouth). It has reduced the perceived preferential treatment to students of certain driving schools as well as the unintended consequence of providing a competitive advantage and increased revenue for those driving schools. Overall, discontinuing the practice has improved efficiency and equity.<sup>5</sup>

January – February 2020 – Provide additional training for examiners to include pre-test, scoring, and post-test conferences. The training improved the test's post-test conference so examiners could effectively explain driving errors to customers in an effort to help customers understand their mistakes and support improved preparation for the test on their next attempt.

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<sup>3</sup> Management and Analysis Development (MAD), *Updated Ideas for Increased Exam Capacity, Increased Efficiency*, (November 7, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Temporary actions were implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

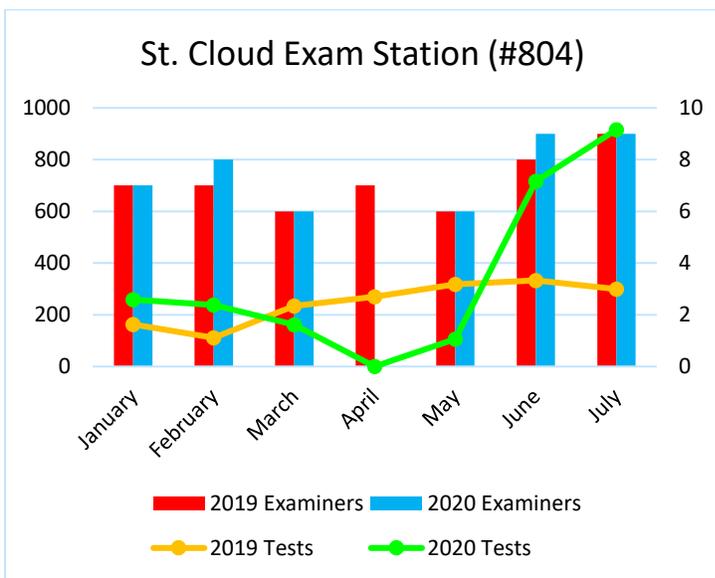
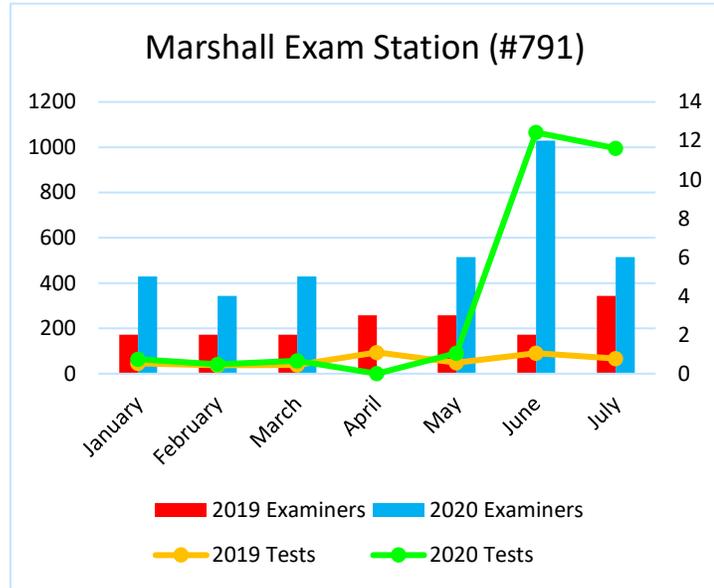
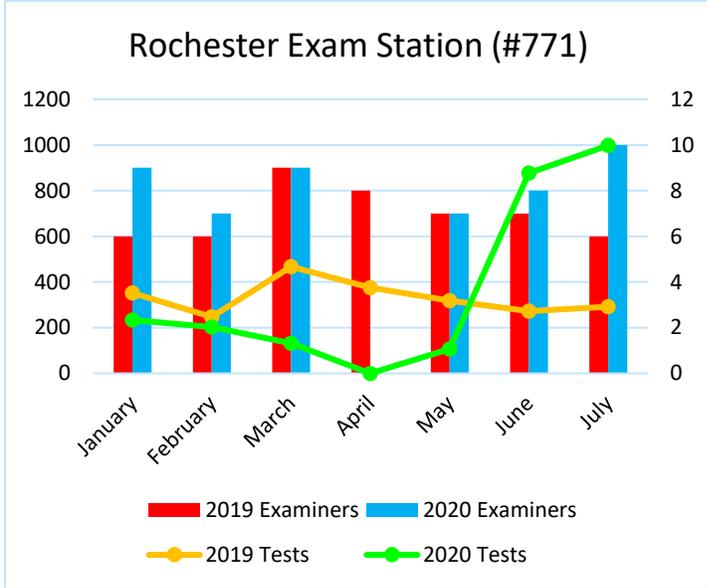
<sup>5</sup> Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) Management Analysis and Development Team, *Assessment of standing appointments for some driving schools at DVS exam stations*, (October 30, 2019).

April 2020 - DPS-DVS received permission from the federal government to conduct modified CDL tests using a GoPro camera, cell phone and chase vehicle from April 27-May 26. Examiners conducted approximately 800 CDL road tests using this method.

May 19, 2020 – In order to increase efficiencies while maintaining social distancing practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, DPS-DVS consolidated all Minnesota exam stations and their services from 93 to 14 locations. The responsibility of processing driver's license and identification card requests shifted away from exam station staff to driver's license agents (e.g. deputy registrars) to allow the exam station staff to focus on testing and processing new credentials. DPS-DVS redeployed employees at closed exam stations to open exam stations, and hired 35 temporary employees to assist with health screenings. The 14 consolidated exam stations locations were:

- Anoka
- Arden Hills
- Bemidji
- Detroit Lakes
- Duluth
- Eagan
- Fairmont (road test only)
- Grand Rapids
- Mankato
- Marshall
- Plymouth
- Rochester
- St. Cloud
- Willmar

Figure 3. Three exam stations, Rochester, Marshall, and St. Cloud, which show a drastic increase in class D road test efficiency. The left y-axis, orange line, and green line indicate data for the number of tests conducted. The right y-axis, red bar, and blue bar indicate data for the number of examiners at each exam station.



June 8, 2020 – DPS-DVS implemented the ability for customers to complete an online renewal for a standard (non-REAL ID compliant) class D driver’s license where there are no changes to the content of the card, or obtain a duplicate credential. Since offering this service, DPS-DVS processed more than 4,497 applications for a provisional to class D license. DPS-DVS also processed applications for over 5,607 duplicates and 102,682 renewals online. This capability is available temporarily until June 30, 2021 and requires legislation to become permanent.

Driver's licenses that expire during the pandemic will remain valid until two months after the emergency peacetime order ends.

June 20, 2020 – Service hours for road tests expanded and the three metro stations (Arden Hills, Eagan, and Plymouth) began offering half-day service on Saturdays.

July 10, 2020 – The ability for customers to schedule knowledge tests online became available. This new service allows customers to book their knowledge test up to six months in advance, removing the need to wait in line outside of an exam station to schedule the appointment.

July 13, 2020 – DPS-DVS repurposed workstations and secured new space at the downtown Saint Paul Town Square location to create knowledge testing stations. This created 42 additional socially distanced testing stations and the daily number of knowledge tests administered increased from 150 per day to over 450 per day.

July 13, 2020 – Saturday service hours at the three metro exam stations (Arden Hills, Eagan, and Plymouth) increased to offer full-day Saturday service. Through October 31, exam stations at 11 other locations offered one full Saturday for road tests per month.

October 8, 2020 – Class D knowledge tests became available online. Since launch, over 23,442 customers have taken an online knowledge test, increasing customer safety and reducing the number of office visits during the pandemic. This also reduces the need for a customer to travel to an exam station as the credential following a passed test can be obtained from a deputy registrar.

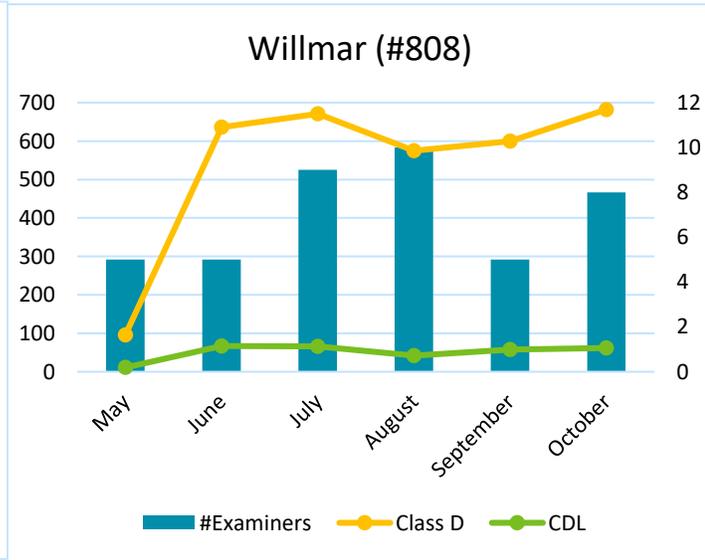
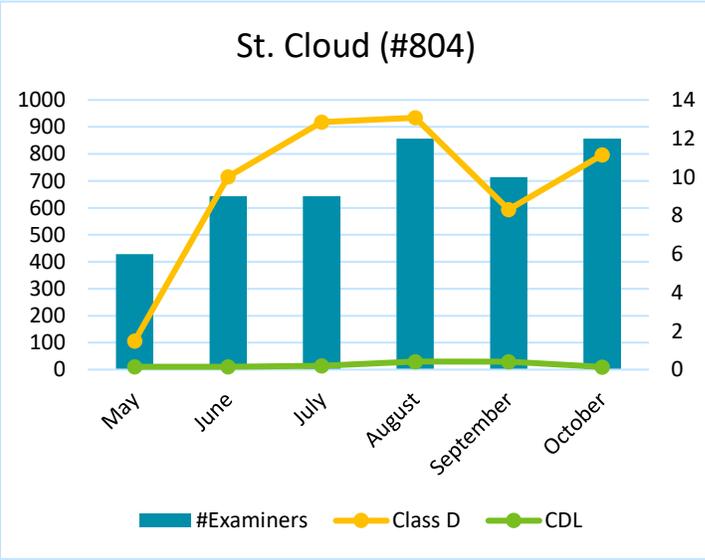
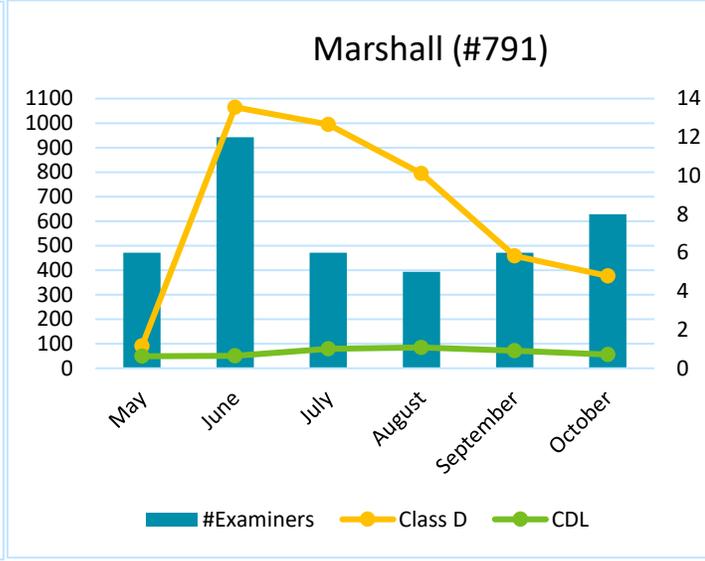
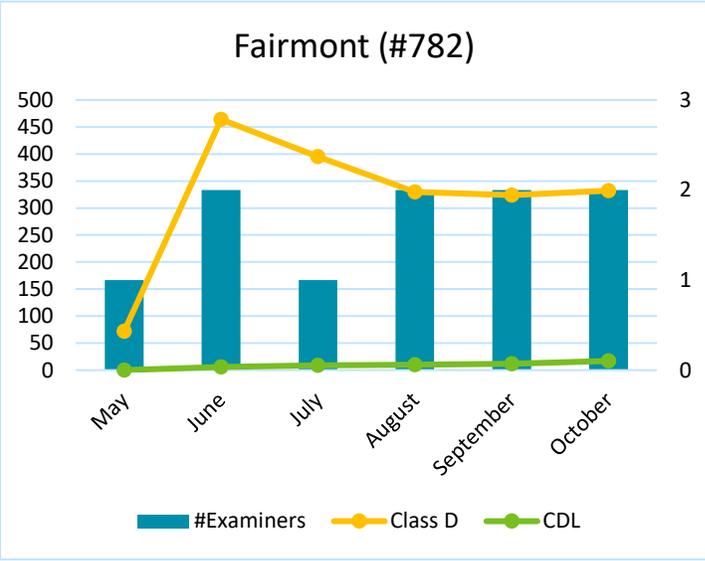
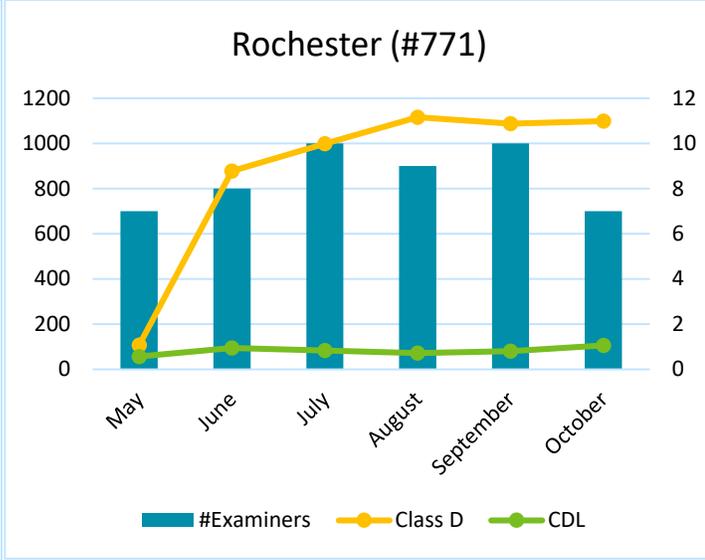
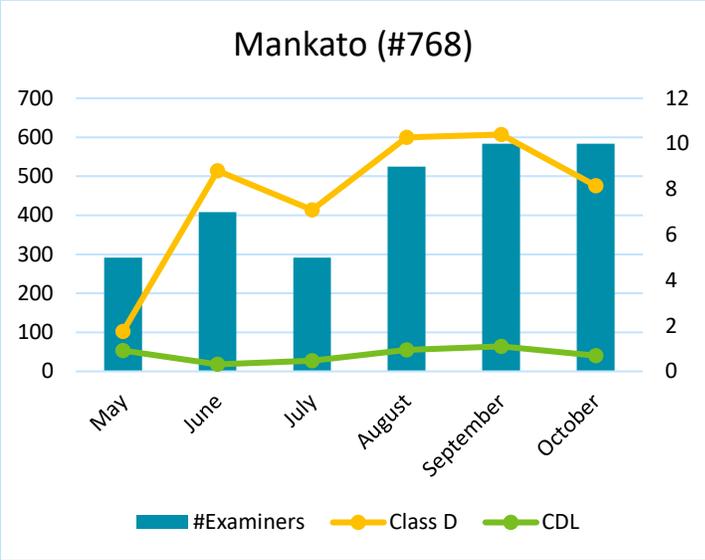
October 31, 2020 – Goal achieved of completing over 80,000 class D road tests.

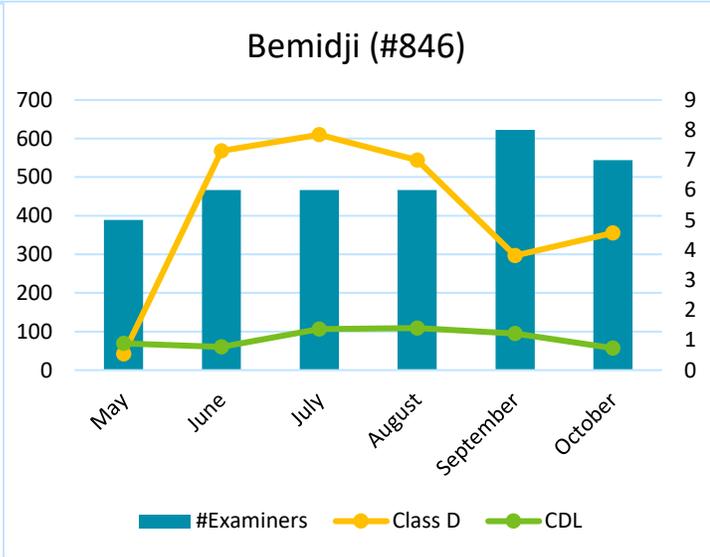
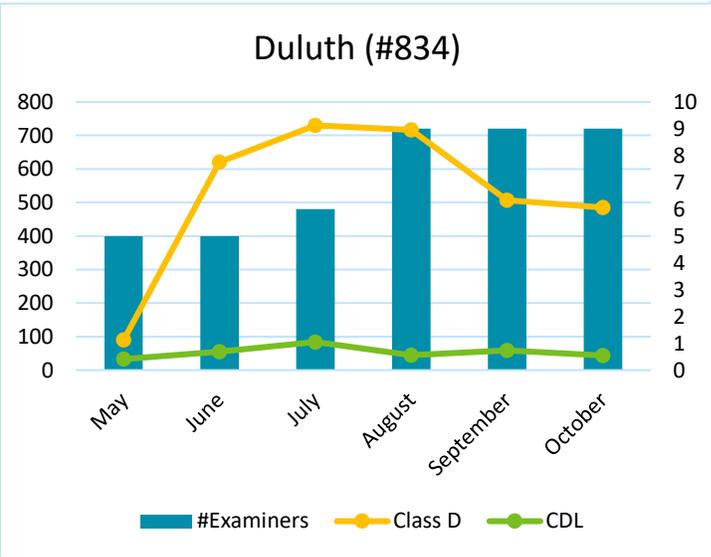
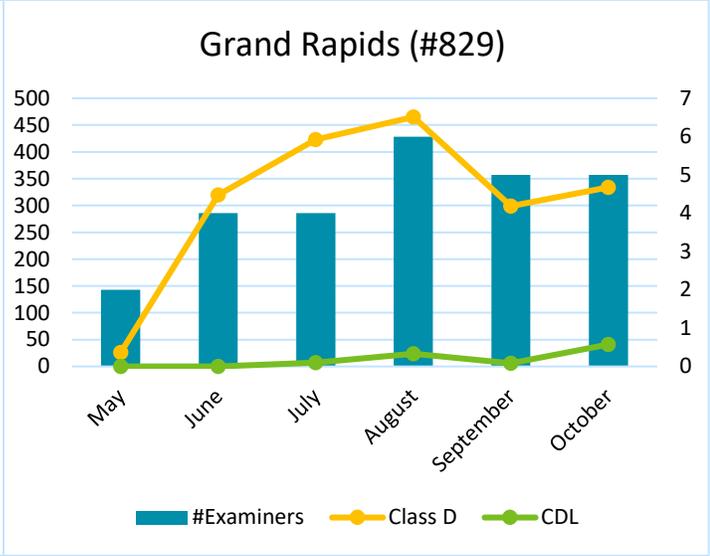
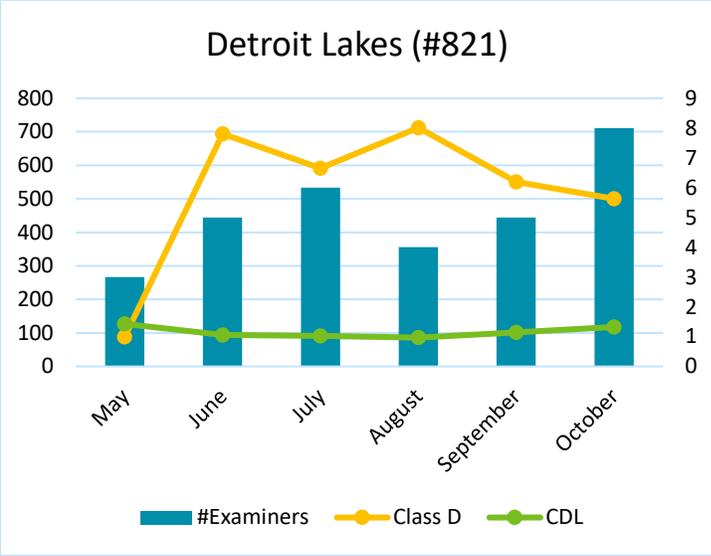
## **2) Monthly total road tests conducted (May-October)**

The consolidation of exam stations to 14 full service stations across Minnesota has shown to be an effective and efficient response to the road test backlog (Figures 3 and 4). Results from consolidation has shown a drastic increase in the number of road tests administered. Examiners conducted over 3,700 road tests (on average) per week to address the backlog caused by exam station closures. This amount exceeds the number of tests provided when all exam stations were open and before the COVID-19 pandemic. From May 26 through October 31 in 2019, 65,201 class D and 11,522 CDL road tests were administered. During the same period in 2020, 81,655 class D and 8,168 CDL road tests were administered. This is a 25.24% increase in class D road tests, and a 29.11% decrease in CDL road tests. However, consolidation has resulted in customers traveling further distances to access tests. Since October 8, 2020, online knowledge tests became available which have reduced the necessity of customers needing to travel to an exam station to take the knowledge test.

Figure 4. Graphs of class D and CDL road tests at each of the 14 open exam stations from May through October of 2020. Each exam station performs more class D road tests than CDL road tests. The left y-axis, orange line, and green line indicate data for the number of tests conducted. The right y-axis and blue bar indicate data for the number of examiners at each exam station.



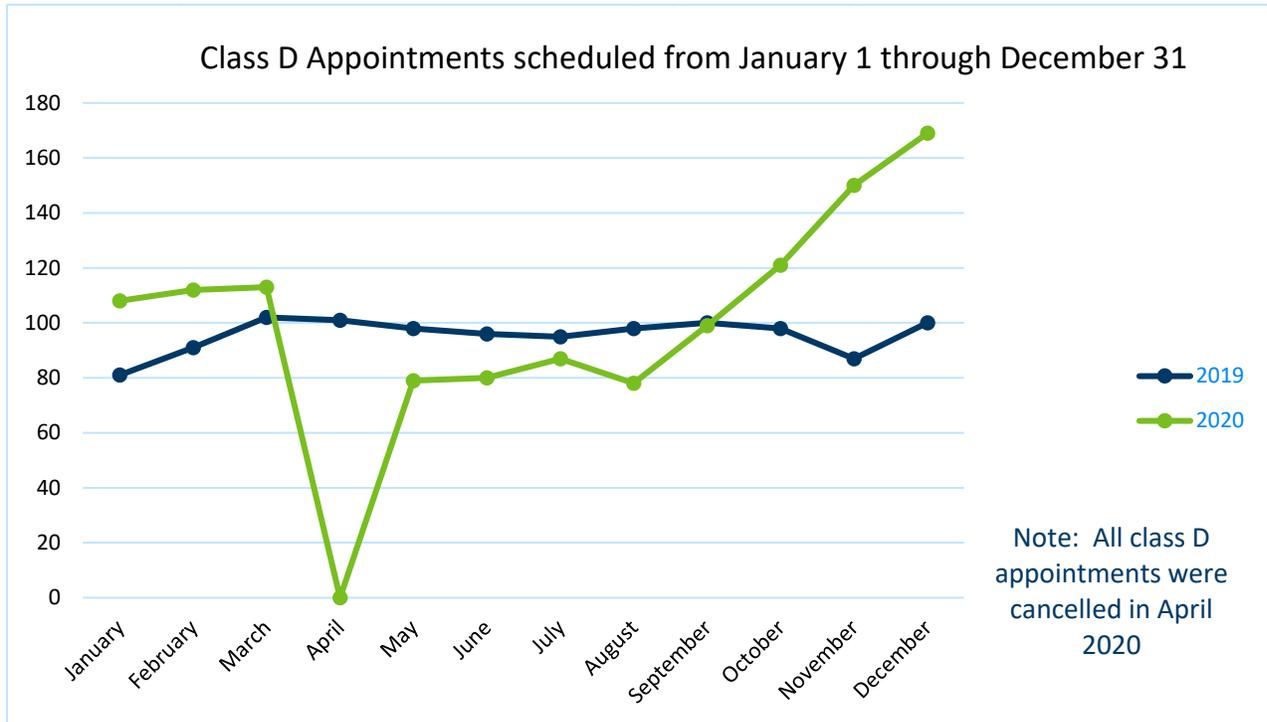




### 3) Length of wait times for seeking a road test (month, location, and type)

Since consolidation, exam stations as a whole are operating more consistently by offering services five days per week and a little more than half of the open stations offer all services (applications, knowledge tests, and road tests). Online appointment scheduling also offers more consistency, but the no-show and failure rates still make it difficult to predict statewide wait times. Finally, exam station staffing is not uniform, due to varying population sizes each station serves. Therefore, data presented reflects a snapshot in time for a particular exam station or across all exam stations. The following data compares January through December for the years 2019 and 2020, showing the increase in demand for class D road test appointments (Figure 5). In 2019, 1,147 appointments were scheduled for class D appointments (average of 96 per month). In 2020, 1,196 class D road test appointments have been scheduled (excluding April where all class D appointments were cancelled, the average is 109 per month). The yearly increase is approximately 4.3%.

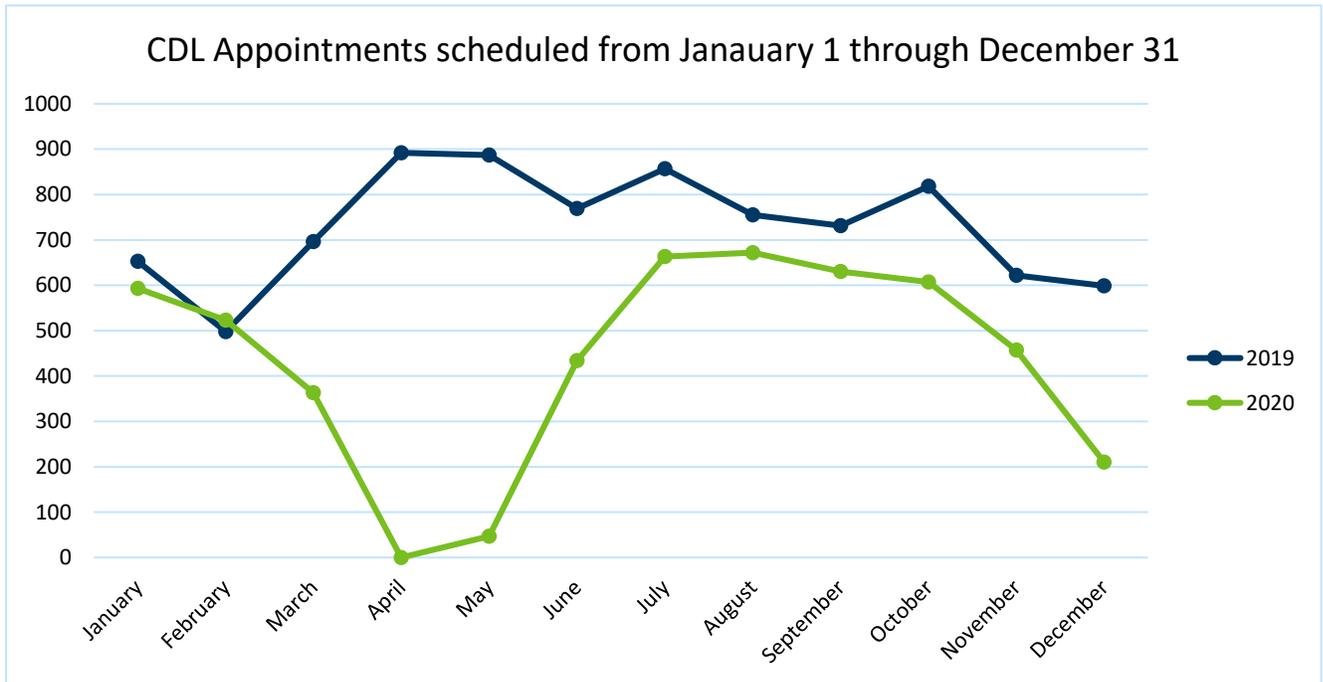
Figure 5. The first quarter of 2020 showed more class D appointments scheduled than in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic showed an immediate loss of appointments followed by a drastic increase meeting the level of appointments for 2019 in September, then surpassing the 2019 number of appointments through December.<sup>6</sup> The state stay-at-home order was in place from March 29-May 26 and no class D road tests were performed during that time.



Data below compares January through December for the years 2019 and 2020, showing the change in the number of CDL road test appointments (Figure 6). In 2019, 8,777 CDL road test appointments were scheduled (average of 731 per month). In 2020, 5,199 CDL road test appointments have been scheduled (excluding April where all CDL appointments were cancelled, the average is 433 per month). The modified CDL road testing procedure in May saw a sharp increase in appointments. The yearly decrease is approximately 40.8%, but the latter half of the year showed a similar pattern of decreasing number of appointments through the end of the year.

<sup>6</sup> Minnesota Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), *Driver's License – Class D – New Driver – Under 18*, <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/Pages/dvs-content-detail.aspx?pageID=555>. Accessed 17 August, 2020.

Figure 6. The number of CDL road test appointments was similar in early 2019 and 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp decrease of scheduled appointments. The y-axis indicates the number of CDL tests, the blue line is the number of CDL tests each month in 2019, and the green line is the number of CDL tests each month in 2020. In April, DPS-DVS received permission from the federal government to conduct modified CDL tests using a GoPro camera, cell phone, and chase vehicle from April 27-May 26.



#### 4) List of locations offering tests, and re-opening dates

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Minnesota had 93 exam stations spread throughout the state. However, due to the road test backlog caused by statewide office closures from March through May, Minnesota now has 14 exam stations (phase 1) offering road tests with additional offices opening for phases 2 through 4 (Figure 7). Upon reopening, each exam station will be open five days, and offer a mixture of application processing, knowledge tests, and road tests. The provision of vehicle inspections depends on the arrangement of staffing levels to accommodate a dealer who required multiple vehicle inspections or temporary dealers who needed an inspection for approval of business licensure. The consolidation of exam station offices and staff resulted in 33% greater efficiency and more class D road tests completed than previously. Exam stations that opened on May 19, 2020 for phase 1 include:

- Anoka (all services)
- Arden Hills (all services)
- Bemidji (all services)
- Detroit Lakes (all services)

- Duluth (all services)
- Eagan (all services)
- Fairmont (road tests only)
- Grand Rapids (road tests, knowledge tests 3 days per week)
- Plymouth (all services)
- Mankato (all services)
- Marshall (road tests, knowledge tests 2 days per week)
- MSP Airport (applications only, no testing services)
- Rochester (all services)
- St. Cloud (all services)
- St. Paul (applications and knowledge tests only)
- Willmar (knowledge and road tests only)

Phase 2 of DPS-DVS reopening plan involved a calculated reopening of locations. Listed below are the five offices that reopened during this phase.

- Virginia (all services)
- Austin (all services)
- Faribault (knowledge and road tests only)
- Worthington (road tests, knowledge tests 2 days per week)
- Alexandria (road tests only)

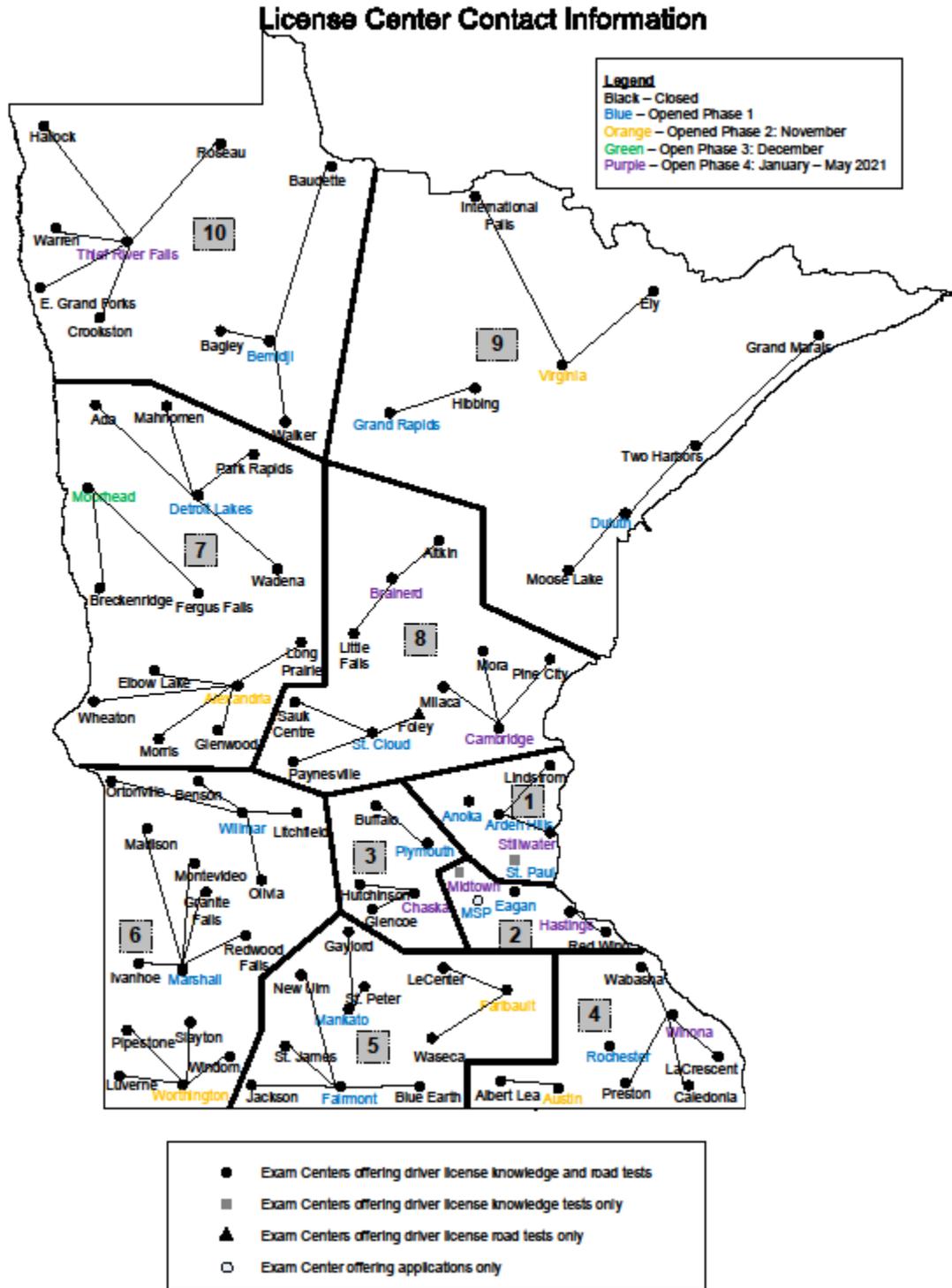
Continuing the calculated and measured reopening process, the following station opened for phase 3 in December.

- Moorhead (road tests only)

Phase 4 reopening will occur between January and May of 2021 and include:

- Brainerd
- Cambridge
- Chaska
- Hastings
- Minneapolis Midtown (no road test services)
- Stillwater
- Thief River Falls
- Winona

Figure 7. Map of Minnesota with all 93 exam stations. Locations in blue (16) opened for phase 1. Locations in orange (5) opened for phase 2. The location in green (1) will open for phase 3 in December, and locations in purple (8) will open for phase 4 in early 2021. All offices were closed from March 27, 2020 through May 18, 2020.



## 5) Summary of potential plans to address existing and future road test backlogs in 2021

### Increase number of examiners

Table 1. Utilizing data from all Minnesota exam stations between January 1 through July 31, 2019, the 12 exam stations conducting the highest number of tests per month are also the 12 exam stations with the largest number of examiners. The 14 exam stations with the lowest number of tests per month also employ the smallest number of examiners. Shifting services to a consolidated number of exam stations has resulted in a higher efficiency of testing

<u>Exam Stations with more than 200 (average) tests/month</u>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>Exam Station #</b>	<b>Avg. # Examiners/month</b>	<b>Avg. # Tests/Month</b>
Arden Hills	751	23	1962
Eagan	755	21	1639
Plymouth	758	18	1135
Rochester	771	9	332
Anoka	761	7	473
Mankato	768	7	448
St. Cloud	804	7	247
Willmar	808	6	347
Duluth	834	6	217
Hastings	756	5	250
Chaska	763	5	340
Faribault	772	5	287
<u>Exam Stations with 10 or less (average) tests per month</u>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>Exam Station #</b>	<b>Avg. # Examiners/month</b>	<b>Avg. # Tests/Month</b>
Ortonville	794	1	4
Benson	811	1	5
Breckenridge	828	1	6
Ely Senior Center	832	2	6
Ivanhoe	793	2	7
Baudette	847	2	7
Gaylord	765	2	8
Jackson	785	2	8
Hallock	840	1	8
Madison	795	2	9
Warren	843	2	9
Bagley	848	2	9
St. Peter	770	1	10
Grand Marais	836	2	10

A recent survey through the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) examined Minnesota compared to other responding states. With 3.7 million licensed drivers in

Minnesota, there are approximately 67,869 drivers per examiner. Minnesota is the third lowest (out of 22 respondents) in the number of trained examiners per state and has the second highest number of drivers per examiner (see Figures 8 and 9). Based on this survey information, Minnesota has fewer trained examiners performing a large number of tests than other states. From January to July of 2019, there were 117 examiners. Throughout 2020, DPS-DVS operated with 14 examiner vacancies, often due to promotions to other non-examiner state jobs.

Even though DPS-DVS needs more examiners, these positions are difficult to recruit and retain. The number of examiners that vacate the position within two years is low, but more leave as they become more tenured examiners. The recruitment and retention has magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic, because examiners are in a position of increased health risk by entering vehicles with numerous drivers every day. Like other frontline workers, the regular exposure to a dangerous virus causes a mental and emotional toll and employees may be experiencing an unsustainable amount of stress while balancing family, health, and work obligations.

Figure 8. Minnesota has the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest number of examiners employed out of 22 responding states (Hemmingsen-Jaeger, 2020).

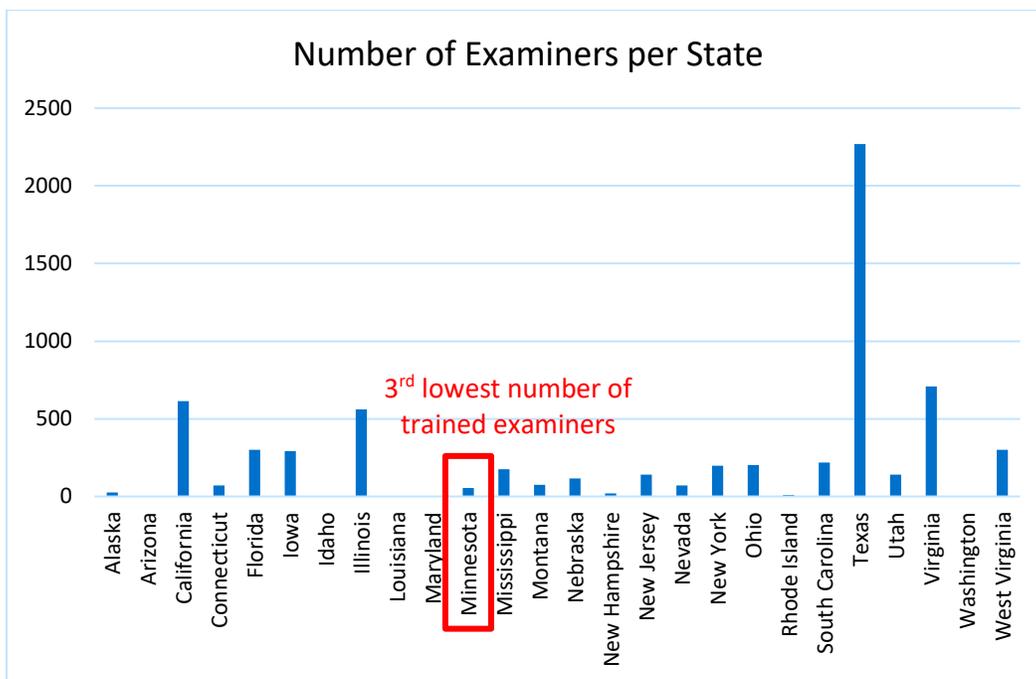
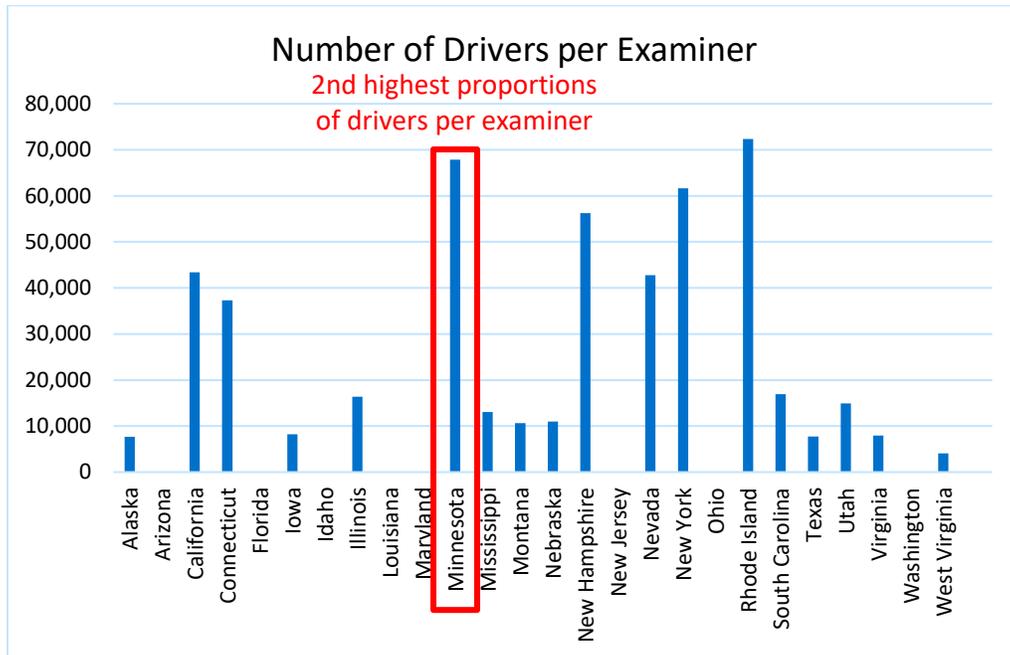


Figure 9. When analyzing areas of potential inefficiencies, Minnesota has the second highest number of drivers per examiner (out of 20 responding states) (Hemmingsen-Jaeger, 2020).



As identified in a 2020 “Driver Exam Services Report” by DPS-DVS (January 2020), proper staffing levels are critical to successfully scheduling and administering road tests. The time it takes to hire new employees adds more work to examiner workloads in an environment already experiencing high turnover. A supervisor of an exam station may have difficulty anticipating employee absences due to illness, family care, personal time off, etc., without enough resources to compensate for the absence(s). These limitations result in the practice of opening an inconsistent number of testing appointments based on the anticipated number of staff for a given day, further frustrating customers wishing to schedule a test. A service dependent on staffing levels leads to an unpredictable environment for effective implementation of scheduling and administering road tests.<sup>7</sup>

**Expand CDL road testing partnerships with third-party testers**

Federal rules and regulations strictly regulate the CDL third party testing program as opposed to class D tests. For example, federal guidelines require a clear separation between CDL training and testing hence minimizing the concerns with conflict of interest and test integrity. DPS-DVS is working with other states like Indiana and Michigan to expand the current program. Partnership with third-party testing programs for CDL improves DPS-DVS efficiency and allows staff to perform more class D license tests. A typical CDL road test takes approximately 90

<sup>7</sup> Minnesota Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS), *Driver Exam Services Report*, (January 2020).

minutes to complete, but a class D license road test takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. DPS-DVS currently works with 60 third-party testing programs, including MetroTransit, and would like to expand its partnership with other third-party testers. Employees performing an auditing role will ensure continued success and potential expansion of the DPS-DVS third-party CDL testing program.

**Address Minnesota’s high road test failure rate**

Another contributor to the road test backlog in Minnesota is the high failure rate of drivers taking the road test. The failure rate contributes to the backlog because each failed attempt utilizes a testing time slot plus additional time slots for a future attempt(s). The average fail rate from January through July of 2019 was 38.75%. The average fail rate from January through July of 2020 was 34.71%. Though the fail rate in 2020 is approximately 4% lower than the fail rate of 2019, Figure 10 shows that the 2020 fail rate may be increasing to the 2019 level as testing following the COVID-19 closure begins to stabilize. The steady fail rate indicates that examiners administer the test consistently; in fact, the reason for failure are similar between 2019 and 2020 (Figure 11). Drivers over the age of 18 are not required to take a driver’s education course and have a higher road test fail rate than drivers younger than 18. Drivers over the age of 18 also constitute a lower proportion of test takers compared to drivers under 18. (Figure 12).

*Figure 10. Fail rates per month, January through July in 2019 and 2020. All road tests were cancelled from March 27, 2020 to May 25, 2020. Even though fail rates were lower in May, June, and July of 2020, the trend indicates that the fail rate may stabilize with the 2019 fail rate as testing post-closure due to COVID-19 continues.*

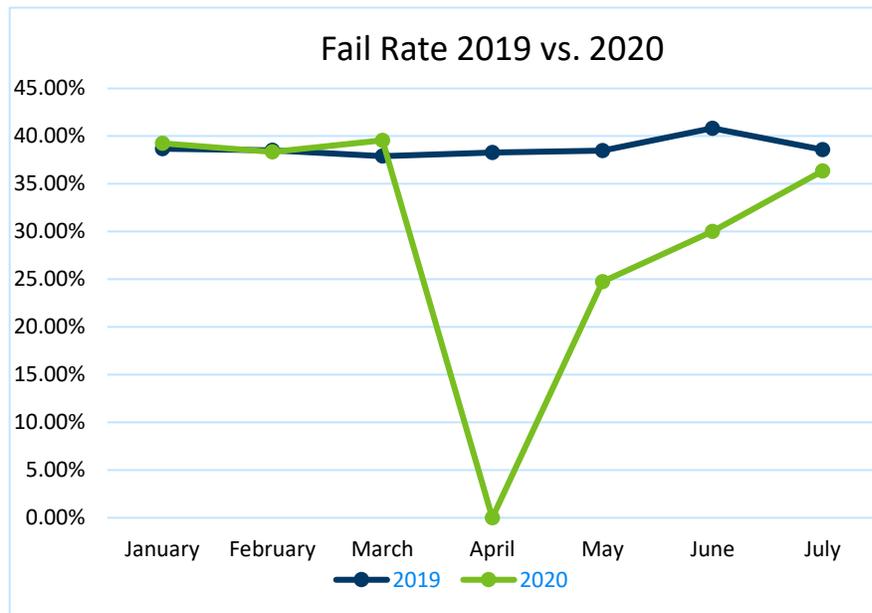
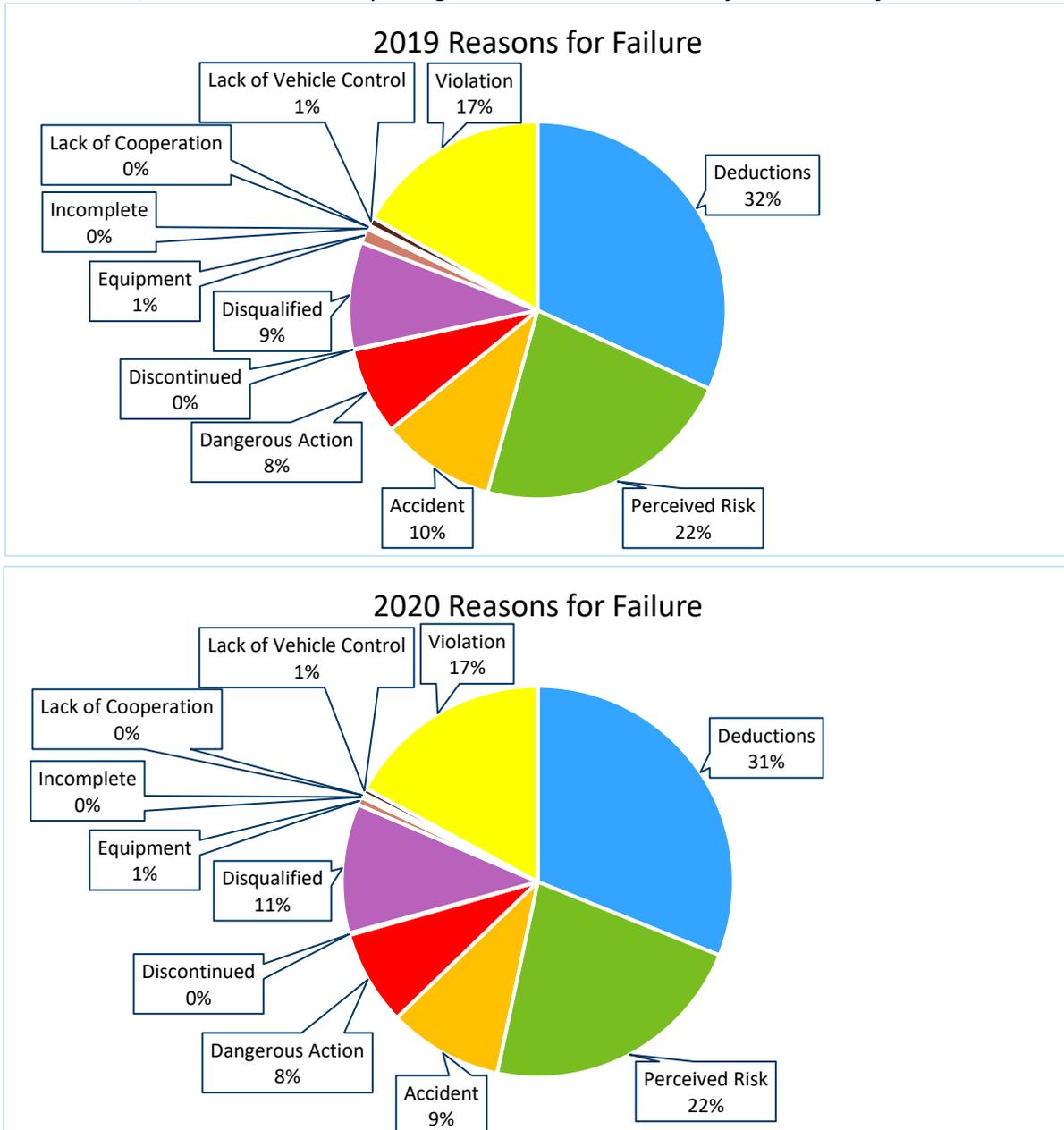


Figure 11. Pie charts showing the reasons (as percentages) for road tests failure in 2019 and 2020. The graphs show similar reasons for failing road tests in both years, with deductions, perceived risk, and violations comprising the three main reasons for road test failure.

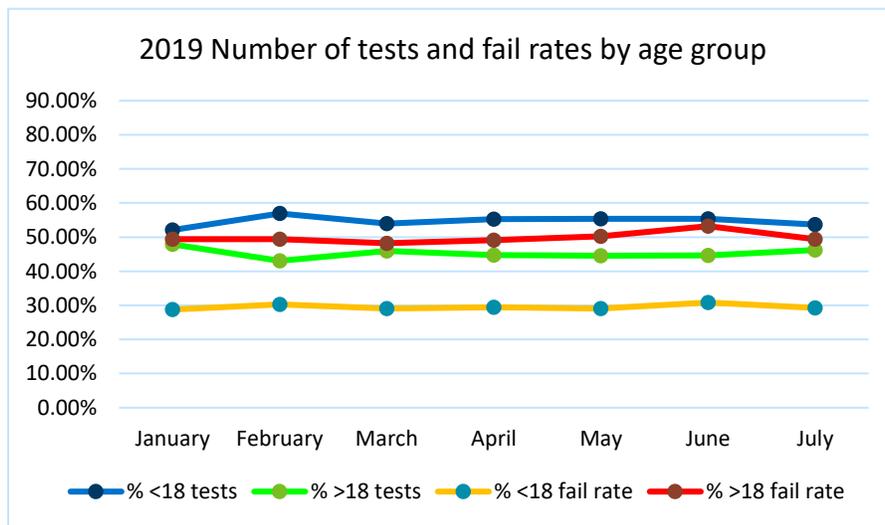


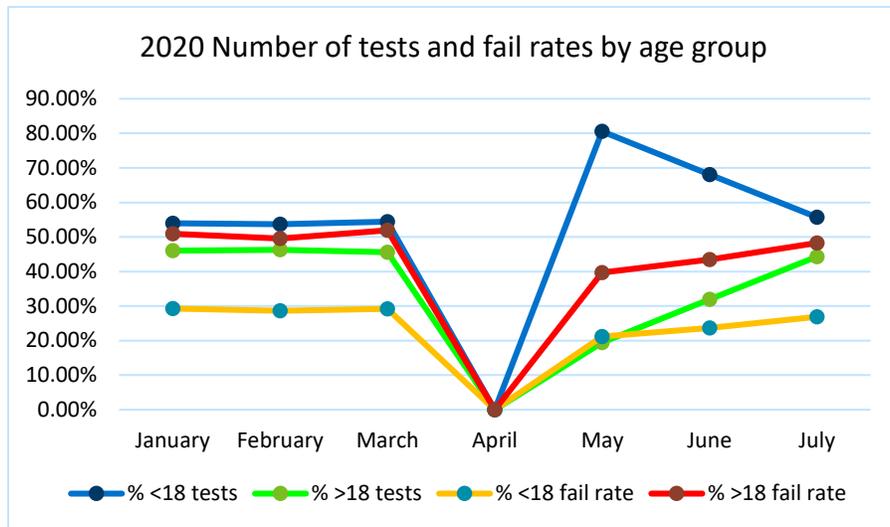
The Twin Cities metro area has a higher fail rate possibly because the road test courses are locked at night, which prevents drivers from practicing on the test route. The high population density may also contribute to the higher fail rate in the metro<sup>8</sup> because a higher number of

<sup>8</sup> DVS, Driver Exam Services Report.

people around roadways may make it more difficult to confidently practice driving skills. Other contributors to the road test failure rate include the inability to pay for driver’s education courses and language barriers.

Figure 12. The number of tests taken and the fail rate of two groups – drivers younger than 18 and drivers over the age of 18, for 2019 and 2020. The blue line in each graph represents the percentage of tests taken by applicants younger than 18 years old, and their corresponding failure rate is the orange line. The green line in each graph represents the percentage of tests taken by applicants over 18 years old, and their corresponding failure rate is the red line. In both years, applicants under 18 represent the higher percentage of test-takers, but their failure rate represents the lower percentage of test takers. Even though applicants over 18 years old represent a lower percentage of test takers, their failure rate is higher than younger applicants.





Minnesota’s graduated driver’s license system<sup>9</sup> helps ease inexperienced drivers into the driving environment. Drivers under 18 achieve a provisional license by completing classroom instruction, behind the wheel training, documenting driving hours to exceed 50 hours, holding an instruction permit for at least six months, and passing a road test. The provisional license is subject to nighttime and passenger limitations. Drivers with a provisional license graduate to a full license once they have held a provisional license for at least twelve months or once they turn 18 years old.

Drivers 18 years or older at the time of obtaining their license do not go through the graduated driver’s license system. They do not need to complete classroom or behind the wheel instruction, but must still pass the knowledge test to obtain an instruction permit. Drivers who are 18 years old are required to hold an instruction permit for six months before taking the road test to obtain a full license. Drivers who are at least 19 years old are required hold an instruction permit for at least three months before taking the road test to obtain a full license. The higher fail rate among drivers 18 and older could be because there is no requirement for driver’s education coursework and the decreased time required to hold an instruction permit for that age group. In fact, behind the wheel training is not required for this group until the driver fails four road tests. There is little evidence showing that new drivers delay licensure to avoid the graduated driver’s license system. Instead, delayed licensure is attributed more to the income level and race of the new driver.<sup>10</sup>

One way to decrease the failure rate is to incentivize road test preparedness among drivers older than 18. This can become complicated because the reasons for not participating in driver’s education courses can be complex. Current law and practice applies fees and penalties

<sup>9</sup> Minn. Stat. § 171.04.

<sup>10</sup> Tefft, et. al., *Timing of driver’s license acquisition*.

for not passing instead of encouraging drivers to be proactive and prepare. Test applicants are assessed a penalty fee of \$20 for any driver taking their third and subsequent road test.<sup>11</sup> To allow practice time between road tests, a driver must wait a one-week practice period after their first road test failure.<sup>12</sup> A two-week practice period is required for drivers who have failed their second, third, and fourth road test. After the fourth road test failure, a driver must complete six hours of behind the wheel training with an approved/licensed driver's education program.

In November 2019, MAD issued a memo as a follow-up to their October report examining the practice of standing appointments. One of the suggestions is to translate instructional and informational materials into more languages for the many populations experiencing language barriers.<sup>13</sup> Allotting time and resources for examiners to engage in a post-test conference with the failed driver could contribute to a greater chance of success on the following road test. In addition, legislative changes to increase the amount of practice time between road tests and/or requiring driver's education coursework after the first road test failure may improve testing outcomes. Other incentives to increase road test preparedness could include partnerships to offer driver's education courses and/or behind the wheel training at an affordable cost through community sponsorship(s) and/or government subsidies.

Further discussion within DPS-DVS is required to examine the effectiveness of the current Driver's Manual and identify changes that could more effectively help drivers prepare for a road test without taking a driver's education course. Modifications to the driver's education curriculum or testing requirements would require legislative changes or legislation that grants DPS-DVS the ability to amend to Minnesota Rules, part 7411.0515.

### **Address the high rate of no-show road tests**

Because all road tests require an appointment, a driver failing to show for their road test contributes to the backlog of road tests. There are approximately 25,000-26,000 no-shows every year. Other states experience no-show rates at varying percentages. An AAMVA survey conducted in 2019 with 21 state responses showed a near equal proportion of each no-show rate range (Figure 13). Minnesota has a no-show rate of 15% each year.

*Figure 13. Proportion of each no-show rate range among all 21 states that responded to AAMVA survey.*

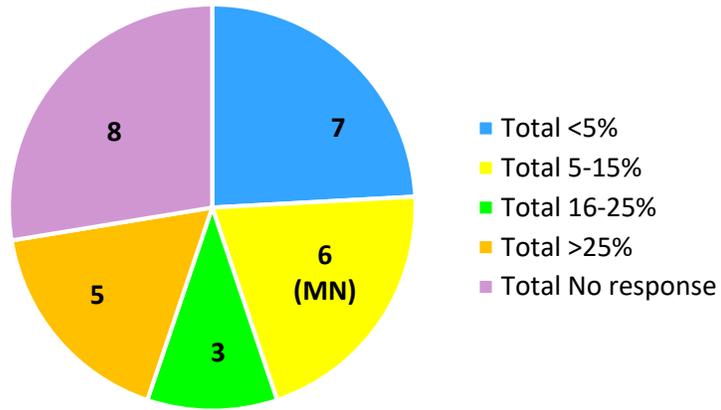
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<sup>11</sup> Minn. Stat. § 171.13.

<sup>12</sup> Minn. R. 7410.5360.

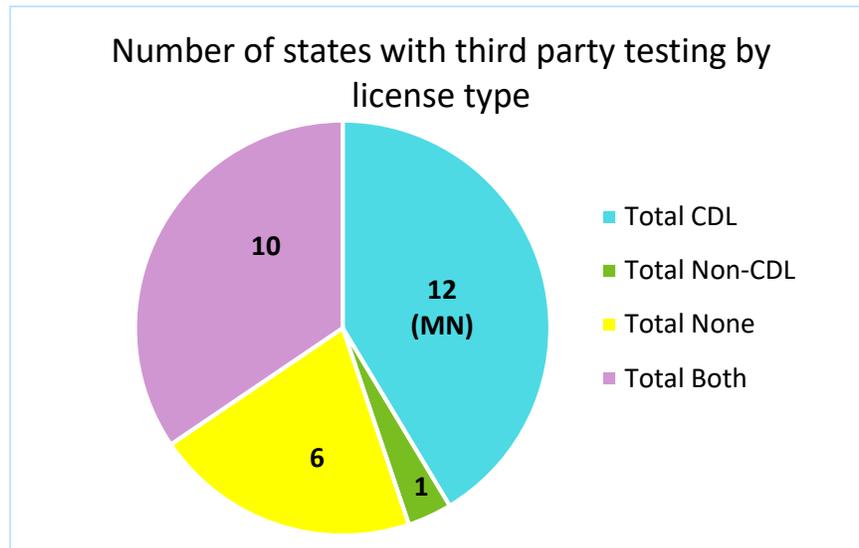
<sup>13</sup> Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) Management Analysis and Development Team, *Updated ideas for increased exam capacity, improved efficiency*, (November 7, 2019).

Percentage of No-Shows



## 6) Recommendations on whether third party testing for class D and CDL should be authorized

Figure 14. Proportion of states offering third party testing for CDL only, non-CDL only, no third-party testing, and both CDL and non-CDL testing (Vang, 2019).



### Class D Recommendation

While third party testing for CDL road tests has shown to be successful, DPS-DVS does not recommend third party testing for class D driver's licenses at this time. The most significant reason is the lack of federal requirements surrounding third party class D testing. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) strictly regulates CDL testing, allowing for better utilization and auditing of third party testing companies. Additionally, beginning a new program within DPS-DVS for class D testing, auditing, and administration may prove costly.

### Conflict of Interest

There is a conflict of interest for class D third party testers when providing instruction and testing to the same student. The federal regulations for CDL testing clearly separate training and testing, prohibiting CDL skill trainers from administering CDL skill tests. In 2015, FMCSA enhanced their regulations on third party testing that prohibits the third party tester from being involved in the behind the wheel training of students who are tested. Regulations prohibit a road test examiner who is also a skills instructor as a part of a school, training program or otherwise from administering a road test to an applicant who received skills training by that road test examiner. The program experienced an increase in the fail rate since the separation of training and testing went into effect. DPS-DVS views this fail rate as an affirmation that testers are inclined to pass the students that they also trained.

Providing third party testing for class D licenses presents a greater opportunity for fraud. DPS-DVS schools engaged in class D testing would have no incentive to fail students when

appropriate; rather, a pressure would exist to communicate high pass or success rates as a marketing point for their program and increase their revenues.

In contrast, measuring success as a trainer is often tied the success rate of the individuals trained and it is difficult to transition from training responsibilities to objectively evaluating the same student. Relationships between a trainer and trainee form during the training process, and those relationships can influence the integrity and validity of the testing process. DPS-DVS examiners currently recuse themselves from testing anyone they personally know. Recusal may be challenging in areas with smaller populations. Additionally, a different examiner should conduct any re-test(s) for an applicant, resulting in another challenge for areas with smaller populations.

#### Increased Fees

Programs will increase driver education fees to compensate for time spent administering tests to students. There is a concern that applicants paying to take a test will have the expectation to pass the test provided by a third party tester versus a free road test provided by a DPS-DVS exam station.

#### Safety concerns

Drivers under the age 18 are at the highest risk of being involved in a crash. This is why CDL third part testing rules prohibit testing drivers under 18 for a commercial learners permit and CDL. Indemnification exists for CDL third-party testers within Minnesota rules and concerns arise if the driving schools both train and test.

#### Surety Bond Requirements

There is a federal requirement that has been in place since 2015 for third party testing programs to have sufficient surety bonds in place. CDL third party testing programs have surety bonds to reimburse DPS if improper testing activities are uncovered and retesting is necessary to protect the individual and driving public. This requirement protects students. Class D testers would need additional surety bonds in place to cover potential costs for DPS-DVS to conduct retests if there are improper testing activities by the behind the wheel instructors who also provided the road test as a Class D third party tester.

#### Rulemaking Requirement

DPS-DVS would need authority to engage in rulemaking to implement class D third party testing and address the following:

- State examiners and DPS-DVS licensed CDL third party testers undergo a background check; Class D third party testers should meet the same criteria.
- Amend both the current third party testing rules and driver education rules.
- Conflicts identified with the driver education rules include:
  - Knowledge of test routes by trainers and not training to the route.
  - Violations with training on test routes.

- Instruction shall not duplicate state tests.
- Prohibited conduct with influencing licensing.
- Prohibiting the reduction of training time to include the examination.
- State examiners will not monitor completion certificates because the training school is also administering the test.
- Student contracts and agreements would require amending.

#### Significant DPS-DVS Investment Required

This option will require sizeable fiscal and staff resources. There will be system programming and new policies and procedures required to implement this option successfully. DPS-DVS will need to establish the requirements for a safe and effective program. For example:

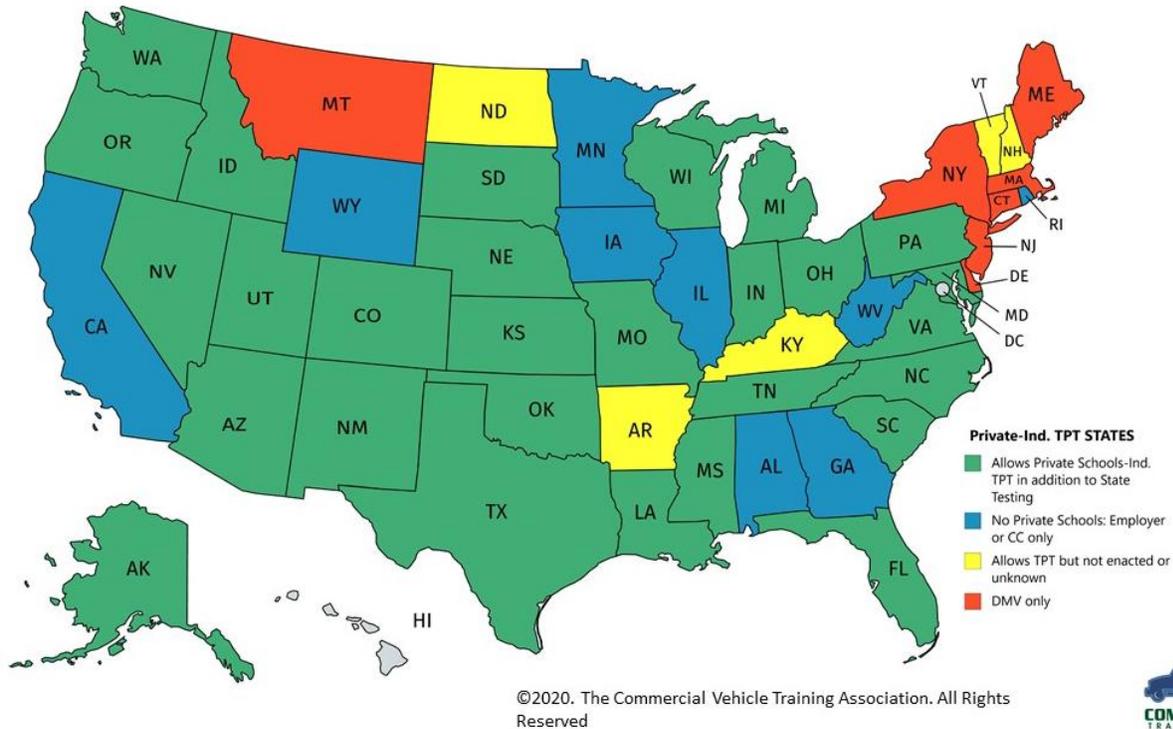
- Testers will need access to DPS-DVS data to confirm a student has met all eligibility requirements to be administered the test.
- A process will be required for DPS-DVS to monitor and audit the testing activities of each instructor.
- Test notifications will be required so DPS-DVS can audit the testing process.
- Determine the method and frequency of transmitting test copies and reports.
- Create a process to address customer complaints regarding test administration given by the third party tester.
- Creating the training curriculum, training delivery model and necessary support for the third party testers.
- Establish methods to keep testing information secure to protect the integrity and validity of the testing process.

#### CDL Testing Recommendations

Third party testing is already in place for CDL. During the drafting and finalization of third party testing rules, various motor carriers, school bus contractors and districts, and college and university truck training programs were participating in third party testing. At that time, there was a significant concern with CDL testing mills across the country where for-profit truck driving schools had an increased risk of fraudulent testing or passing students that should have failed to make the school look good at training and increase their revenues. Minnesota has needed to retest CDL drivers who obtained their license from third party testers in Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri, and Tennessee. As a result, DPS-DVS excluded licensed commercial truck driving schools from participating in third party testing.

Figure 15. Map of the United States showing the types of CDL testing providers per state.

## States Laws & Regulations towards Third Party Testing (TPT)



While current federal regulations alleviate past concerns, DPS-DVS licensed commercial truck driving schools lack the opportunity to apply as a third party testing program. As a result, application of the current rules results in a hardship because these schools are unable to test their own students. The majority of these schools are located in the metro area and their students seek to test at metro exam stations, affecting the availability of testing slots in an area with high demand based on population density. Many students ready to test with access to the training vehicle for testing cannot take a test in a timely manner due to the 3-4 week DPS-DVS testing backlog. The significant wait times result in loss of skills and proficiency, customer frustration, expending CDL school resources retraining students and negatively affecting employment opportunities for students.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The testing backlog at one time contributed to the 2005 onset of the now defunct standing appointment practice for CDL driving schools.

To mitigate these issues, in August 2020, DPS-DVS created a workgroup composed of DPS-DVS staff and stakeholders<sup>15</sup> to explore and identify potential avenues to allow DPS-DVS licensed commercial truck driving schools to become third party examiners. The workgroup was composed of DPS-DVS staff and CDL stakeholders.

### **Workgroup Recommendation**

The workgroup suggested a pilot program in which licensed commercial truck driving schools could apply to become third party testers through a variance to the current rule. DPS-DVS is exploring if this is possible with current rules or if statutory changes are required. If possible, a pilot project would play an integral role in growing the DPS-DVS CDL third party testing program.

Under the workgroups proposed pilot program only DPS-DVS licensed commercial truck driving schools would be authorized to provide CDL testing. The test would utilize the current Minnesota two-part testing model and would remove the 180-hour curriculum requirement to align with the upcoming ELDT from the FMCSA. Class D testing is not part of the pilot program.

## **7) Recommended legislative changes addressing road test backlogs to minimize future road test backlogs**

### **Mandate Driver's Education After a Third Road Test Failure**

Since there will be no additional testing or fees associated with mandating driver's education coursework, there will be no fiscal impact to DPS-DVS. Instead, customers will bear the financial impact. If a driver fails three road tests, two hours of behind the wheel training will be required before attempting the test again. The standard adult behind the wheel training costs at least \$50 per hour.<sup>16</sup> With two hours of training required, the financial impact will be at least \$100.

DPS-DVS recommends an amendment to Minnesota Statutes, section 171.04, subdivision 1(8)'s education training after the third road test failure. Alternatively, DPS-DVS could amend Minnesota Rules, part 7410.5360, subpart E, but requires authority from the Legislature to engage in rulemaking. In addition, the rulemaking timeline is generally longer than a regular

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<sup>15</sup> Stakeholders in the workgroup were the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Commercial Vehicle Training Association, Class A Leasing, Minnesota Coaches, 160 Driving Academy, and the Minnesota Trucking Association.

<sup>16</sup> Driver Education programs provide their fees to DPS-DVS when they are licensed. This has been the standard rate per hour for an adult lesson.

legislative session and has agency costs associated with the rulemaking process.<sup>17</sup> A change in statute is the preferred option to make this change

Finally, amending statute to require behind the wheel training or driver's education coursework before the fourth road test fail can bring more efficiency to the process. Current statute and rules state that upon the fourth road test failure, a driver must complete six hours of behind the wheel training with a DPS approved driver's education program before attempting the road test again.<sup>18</sup> Amending statute and rule to require two hours of driver's education after the third road test failure will allow new drivers the ability to take a modified driver's education course to prepare them better for success at the next road test. Reducing the number of retests will increase the efficiency of scheduling and administering road tests.

### **Provide the Minnesota Driver's Manual in Additional Languages**

Providing the Minnesota Driver's Manual and informational materials<sup>19</sup> in more languages spoken by Minnesota residents will require an appropriation to cover the costs for document translation and publication. The cost to provide the Minnesota Driver's Manual in another language varies depending on the language. DPS-DVS would like to provide translated documents in several more commonly spoken languages to accommodate individuals where English is a second language.<sup>20</sup> In order to translate the manual to the 12 most commonly read and spoken languages in Minnesota, the cost is approximately \$75,000.<sup>21</sup> This cost is a barrier for DPS-DVS to take action and requires funding or an appropriation from the Legislature.

### **Impose a Nominal No-Show and Late Cancellation Fee for Road Tests**

To reduce no-shows, DPS-DVS recommends charging a nominal fee to people who book road test appointments in advance. Charging a fee may incentivize some drivers to appear or reschedule their test if they have a financial investment. Those who fail to show up for their

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<sup>17</sup> Depending on the type of rulemaking authority granted to DPS-DVS and the changes required, rulemaking could take a minimum of 18 months with costs that exceed \$40,000 for a small rule, \$130,000 for a medium rule change, and \$302,000 for a major change. See Minnesota Rulemaking Manual. Appendix. COST-INF - Information About the Cost of Rulemaking. September 19, 2019. Changes to the requirements would fall into the medium or major change category.

<sup>18</sup> Minn. Stat. § 171.04(1)(8); Minn. R. 7410.5360, subp. E.

<sup>19</sup> Translating the Driver's Manual is a MAD recommendation.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census, *Table 24. Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over for Minnesota: 2009-2013*, (October 2015). This data showed the number of individuals in Minnesota where a language other than English was spoken and of those individuals, which could speak English less than "very well." The most common languages spoken at home and the number of individuals unable to speak English very well were: Hmong-26,674; Vietnamese-13,324; Cushite-18,500; Chinese-7,495; Russian-6,479; Karen-4,045; and Arabic-3,082.

<sup>21</sup> DPS-DVS obtained quotes from providers to translate the Driver's Manual to three of the most common read and spoken languages other than English in Minnesota. The translation cost was \$12,115 for Hmong, \$13,639 for Somali, and \$6,080 for Spanish. The approximate cost to translate to these three languages is the basis for the estimate to translate the manual into 12 languages.

appointment forfeit the fee and those who show up can apply the fee to their licensing costs.<sup>22</sup> Amending Minnesota Statutes, section 171.13, subdivision 7 will accomplish the fee.

### **Extend the time allowed between license renewals**

Currently, when there are staff shortages at camera exam stations, examiners perform counter work such as processing driver's license and identification applications rather than provide road tests. Extending the credential expiration dates will decrease the demand for renewals and the number of customers that need to visit a DPS-DVS or deputy registrar office in person.<sup>23</sup>

Federal guidance for REAL ID and Enhanced credentials allows renewal dates out as far as every eight years. To address the requirement for a vision exam, doctors could complete vision screenings and submit results similar to the requirements currently in place for diabetics.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges and opportunities for DPS-DVS as it continues to serve Minnesota customers. Consolidating exam station services has shown successful increases in efficiencies. Exam station consolidation has offered better consistency in staffing and services offered. Prior to the consolidation, satellite exam stations were not open as frequently as larger exam stations, and often used traveling staff of 1-2 employees to administer road tests. Therefore, if an employee could not work on any given day, road tests were cancelled because the satellite station was unable to cover all of the exams. Providing exam stations that are open every day with full staffing to accommodate unexpected shifts in staffing prevents test cancellations and increases customer service. Despite the redeployment of employees and risk of exposure with routine road tests, the health and safety of employees and customers remained a priority and has avoided any exam station closures due to COVID-19.

Other business practices were implemented or changed to better serve Minnesotans. DPS-DVS obtained permission to perform modified CDL road tests early in the COVID-19 pandemic. By working with the federal government, DPS-DVS was able to test CDL drivers to help maintain the transportation of crucial goods during a critical time. Since many workers shifted to a teleworking status, the St. Paul Town Square location utilized the space to create more knowledge testing stations. Finally, technology expansion allowed for online renewals and duplicate credentials, online appointment scheduling, and online knowledge testing.

Looking ahead, more work can be done to better serve DPS-DVS customers. Increasing the number of examiners to administer road tests will help with keeping up with road test demand.

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<sup>22</sup>MAD, *Updated ideas for exam capacity, improved efficiency*.

<sup>23</sup> Extending credential expiration dates is a suggestion from MAD. See Management Analysis and Development, *Updated ideas for exam capacity, improved efficiency*. November 7, 2019.

Expanding the third-party CDL testing program would allow for DPS-DVS examiners to administer more class D road tests, while maintaining the integrity of the testing process. However, class D third-party testing is not recommended. There are no federal requirements for class D road tests, and it would be costly to create and audit such a process in Minnesota. Initiatives that will require a more comprehensive approach include addressing Minnesota's high road test failure rate and high no-show rate.

Finally, changes in legislative language and increased funding can help in addressing areas for better efficiency. Examples include mandating driver's education training after the third (instead of fourth) road test failure and providing the Minnesota Driver's Manual in additional languages to better prepare customers for success in their road test. A no-show or late cancellation fee may encourage people to appear for their road test appointment, increasing the efficiency of exam stations. Extending the time between credential renewals may increase customer satisfaction as well as increase exam station efficiency.

The work towards the goals and accomplishments so far could not have been achieved without the hard work, flexibility, and dedication of DPS-DVS examiners, business partners, and customers. Legislative support has also been critical to quickly pivot to adapt statute to meet the needs of Minnesotans. Deputy Registrars and business partners were flexible and allowed examiners to focus on administering exams by focusing their work on vehicle and credential transactions. Finally, the customers of Minnesota embraced the implementation of online appointment scheduling, exam station safety precautions, and online knowledge testing to increase the efficiency of the consolidated exam station model.

## Appendices

Appendix A. Raw, numerical data for class D and CDL road tests at each of the 14 open exam stations for each month from May through October 2020 (see Figure 4).

		<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>
<b>Arden Hills</b>	Class D	350	2731	2968	3343	2706	3121
	CDL	248	301	314	276	251	276
	#Examiners	10	22	25	26	20	31
<b>Eagan</b>	Class D	267	2588	3009	3340	2965	3032
	CDL	174	180	211	162	93	58
	#Examiners	11	25	24	19	23	22
<b>Plymouth</b>	Class D	332	2941	3182	3488	3474	2986
	CDL	8	117	126	114	133	112
	#Examiners	12	27	23	22	21	22
<b>Anoka</b>	Class D	94	628	739	695	469	526
	CDL	3	0	0	4	1	2
	#Examiners	4	8	11	9	8	6
<b>Mankato</b>	Class D	102	514	414	600	607	476
	CDL	53	18	27	55	64	40
	#Examiners	5	7	5	9	10	10
<b>Rochester</b>	Class D	107	878	999	1116	1088	1099
	CDL	57	95	84	72	81	106
	#Examiners	7	8	10	9	10	7
<b>Fairmont</b>	Class D	72	464	395	330	324	332
	CDL	0	6	9	10	12	17
	#Examiners	1	2	1	2	2	2
<b>Marshall</b>	Class D	91	1065	995	794	459	376
	CDL	49	51	79	85	71	56
	#Examiners	6	12	6	5	6	8
<b>Saint Cloud</b>	Class D	106	715	918	934	594	797
	CDL	11	11	14	30	29	10
	#Examiners	6	9	9	12	10	12
<b>Willmar</b>	Class D	96	636	671	575	600	682
	CDL	11	67	66	42	58	62
	#Examiners	5	5	9	10	5	8
<b>Detroit Lakes</b>	Class D	88	694	591	712	550	500
	CDL	127	94	91	86	102	118
	#Examiners	3	5	6	4	5	8
<b>Grand Rapids</b>	Class D	26	320	423	465	299	334
	CDL	0	0	7	24	6	41
	#Examiners	2	4	4	6	5	5
<b>Duluth</b>	Class D	90	621	730	717	507	485
	CDL	33	55	84	45	59	44
	#Examiners	5	5	6	9	9	9
<b>Bemidji</b>	Class D	42	568	610	544	297	355
	CDL	69	60	106	109	95	57
	#Examiners	5	6	6	6	8	7

*Appendix B. Copy of the Management and Development Team (MAD) from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) 2020 Report.*



# **Department of Public Safety**

## **Driver and Vehicle Services**

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## **Driver Exam Services Report**

January 2020

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## Improvements to Minnesota's Driver Exam Services

Driver exam services consists of 93 locations spread throughout Minnesota. The current team includes customer service staff, examiners, and regional/assistant supervisors. Many challenges exist with providing exam services to Minnesotans and Driver and Vehicle Services (DVS) has invested in the following activities to improve these services in 2019, within the resources available.

### **Implemented an interface to speed up knowledge test transactions**

A systems interface was developed and implemented in August 2019. This interface combined the automated knowledge testing system with the application and database records system. This interface substantially decreased the amount of processing time required for knowledge testing and application processes used at the point of contact for customers at twenty-six exam stations across the state.

### **Collaborated with Management and Development (MAD) to provide an independent review of services**

DVS has collaborated with our partners at Minnesota Management and Budget's Management and Development team to study and provide a report that included a thorough review of the practice of standing appointments for licensed driving schools. This report on standing appointments was completed at the end of October with the strong recommendation from MAD to end the practice. MAD is still in the process of reviewing the practice of CDL standing appointments; completing a review of demographic data to assist with identifying the location of the new exam station; reviewing the current level of efficiency and capacity for providing driver license skill testing; and reviewing the option of Class D third-party testing.

### **Created an Exam Taskforce**

The Exam Efficiencies Task Force is an internal work group formed within DVS in October 2019 to research exam efficiencies by reviewing a combination of business and service delivery processes that would enable DVS to provide improved timeliness of exam services to Minnesota residents.

Phase 1 involved the expansion of service hours by adding Saturday and Sunday driver's exam appointments at the North Metro, South Metro and West Metro exam stations. Between November 2 and December 22, over 3,000 additional driver's tests were scheduled and administered. The task force membership continues to meet weekly and is currently determining what will be included in Phase 2.

Items under consideration for Phase 2 include:

- Get existing and future vacant positions filled and trained as quickly and effectively as possible.
- Begin to reduce overtime for staff and balance schedules. This includes readjusting to Monday-Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and scheduling more appropriately to compensate for no-shows.
- Change DVS Town Square Service Center hours for all services to Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

- Review satellite exam station procedures and costs.
- Identify function and location of the additional Metro Exam Station.
- Provide additional training to driver license examiners on pre-test, scoring, and post-test conferences.
- Encourage online appointment scheduling for exams including the addition of scheduling online for CDL tests.

### **Eliminated driving school standing appointments**

As mentioned above, DVS engaged our partners at Minnesota Management and Budget's Management and Development team to evaluate the former practice of standing appointments. A final report was received which strongly recommended that DVS end the practice of standing appointments for Class D driver's tests. Starting November 1, DVS supervisory and management staff began working with driver's education partners to transition out of that practice by obtaining the names of their students and adding them to the appointment scheduling system. On January 1, 2020, DPS-DVS discontinued the practice of standing appointments for Class D driving tests.

### **Expanded exam hours to include Saturdays and Sundays in November and December**

DVS added driving test appointments on weekends in November and December of 2019. Over 3,000 tests were administered on Saturdays and Sundays between November 2 and December 22. DVS staff scheduled 3,370 driving tests and conducted 3,009 tests; the no-show rate for appointments scheduled was 11%.

Examiner efficiency is a measurement of the capacity to conduct driving tests vs. tending to other activities such as helping a customer at the front desk or answering phone calls. This measurement involves evaluating the examiner's time spent on administering tests vs. providing other administrative services. The average examiner efficiency rate is 45.5%. The examiner efficiency rate for Phase 1 weekend testing was 89.1%. In short, when examiners were able to concentrate on only their core function of conducting driving tests, their efficiency in production effectively doubled.

Driver's license application services remained available for applicants that passed their road test, along with scheduling services for those that did not pass. During weekend testing, DVS encountered issues with system updates on Sundays at both the state and national level. Many technology updates occur overnight on Saturday into Sunday as most state agencies are not usually open for business.

## **In Progress**

### **New exam station**

The 2019 legislative session allocated funding to DVS for a new exam station. The funding included costs toward the leasing of a facility in addition to an exam supervisory position overseeing seven examiners and three clerical positions. At this time, the exam supervisory

position has been filled. Of the seven examiner positions, six have been filled. All three of the clerical positions are filled. These new employees are currently in training and working at other exam locations until the location of the new station is determined. The goal is to have these new employees trained and ready to staff the new exam station when it is open to the public.

### **Evaluating the impact of CDL standing appointments**

DVS continues to collaborate with our partners at Minnesota Management and Budget's Management and Development team to study and provide a report evaluating CDL standing appointments. Currently only three CDL entities have standing appointments at the North Metro, South Metro, and West Metro exam stations. The team from MAD is gathering information and completing interviews with internal exam staff, the entities that have standing CDL appointments, and members of the commercial motor carrier community.

## **Remaining Challenges**

There continues to be several remaining challenges that DVS faces which includes the following.

### **Exam fail rates**

Fail rates for driving exams statewide consistently range between 37% and 39%. The three metro exam stations have a higher fail rate due to a variety of factors. One major factor is that practice driving is not permitted during the day when testing is occurring and sites are not open to the public at night whereas other locations where driving exams occur are on city streets where access is continuously available. The public learns the test route and practices on it. Another factor is the population density and diversity of the metro population and driver education is not a requirement for anyone over age eighteen, unless they have failed four road tests.

### **No-shows**

Customers not showing up for their road test appointments has been an ongoing issue. Annually, 26,000 Minnesotans do not show up for their scheduled road tests. DVS has implemented a new online scheduling system that now requires an email address be provided. The scheduling system sends an email to the customer three days in advance reminding them of their appointment.

As mentioned above, the no-show percentage was 11% for road tests scheduled on Saturdays and Sundays from November 2 to December 22. DVS continues to monitor no-show rates for driving test appointments. Solutions to address the issue include promoting the online scheduling system and adding text message reminders to the existing email reminders. A recommendation from the Exam Task Force is to be able to charge a fee for a scheduled appointment that results in a no-show by the customer. Implementation of this suggestion requires legislation for DVS to be able to charge such a fee.

## **Staffing**

The funding allocated by the legislature in 2019 for a new exam station and additional eleven staff will help with providing more exam services. The DVS exam work unit has not operated at full staff capacity for the past four years and the turnover of staff this past year has continuously consisted of twenty vacant positions. DVS is currently studying the concept of determining being “right-staffed,” meaning what is the correct amount of exam personnel needed to not only catch up with the demand but maintain services today and in the future.

## **Access to greater Minnesota locations**

Currently, the DVS exam work unit has a staffing model that consists of fifteen, two-person teams that provide driver license road tests to forty-six locations across the state. This continues to be a challenge on both the current staff providing the services and supervisors to manage the services provided at these remote locations. These staff travel from their regularly assigned exam station to provide testing services to greater Minnesota; some of which are an hour away, one way. These services are provided at a cost—travel time and safety, especially during winter months.

## **Closing Summary**

Driver and Vehicle Services continues to evaluate its exam services and implement improvements based on feedback received. DVS has implemented many new initiatives this past year, responding to the immediate needs of Minnesotans. The division continues to plan for a new exam station in the metro area and further evaluate the impact of CDL standing appointments. We welcome feedback and the opportunity to partner together to ensure we are providing the best possible customer service to Minnesotans.

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