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A Message from the New Commissioner of FMS, Dave Lebryk

One year ago, I wrote my first article for the Financial Connection. I had been the Deputy Commissioner for about six months and just getting comfortable with my role. The last twelve months have certainly brought change. Commissioner Judy Tillman retired in April after almost 36 years in Treasury. She is loving retirement and doesn't miss at all her long commute into Washington, D.C. Today, I write this article as the new FMS Commissioner. Many changes have taken place over the year but one thing that has remained the same and will

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FMS Creates CAC to Send "One Voice" to Federal Program Agencies

By Carolyn Dunston, Agency Relationship Management Division

The Financial Management Service (FMS) is one of the smallest bureaus of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. However, it has a lot to say about how the federal government conducts its financial business. FMS's role is to communicate directly with Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) regarding their collection and payment activity; governmentwide accounting; debt collection; budget impacts; information technology/systems, and more. Oftentimes, FMS representatives from varying program areas (as mentioned above)

meet with FPAs in order to discuss a myriad of overlapping business processes and functions. These representatives may not know at the time of their contact that other representatives from within FMS may also be in communication with the agency. FMS recognizes the importance of striving to improve communication internally, as well as, externally. It is our vision and goal to speak to agencies going forward with just "One Voice."

How do we plan to accomplish this? FMS recently established a

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Upcoming FMS Conferences

2009 Year-End Closing Seminar August 3, 2009

Ronald Reagan
Building & International
Trade Center
Washington, D.C.

[www.fms.treas.gov/tas/
conference/seminar.html](http://www.fms.treas.gov/tas/conference/seminar.html)

19th Annual Government Financial Management Conference

August 4-5, 2009

Ronald Reagan
Building & International
Trade Center
Washington, D.C.

[www.fms.treas.gov/tas/
conference/annconf.html](http://www.fms.treas.gov/tas/conference/annconf.html)

A Message from the New FMS Commissioner

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continue to remain a major focus is our emphasis on operational excellence.

Earlier this year, our Executive Board met to discuss strategic and tactical plans for FMS. We reaffirmed our commitment to six overarching priorities:

- Daily operations
- Conversion from paper to electronics
- Security of people, data, dollars, and physical locations
- Cost management
- Operating by our values (the 5 I's)
- Being a great place to work

While our overarching priorities remain constant, tactical priorities, i.e., priorities for the next 6 – 12 months, will naturally change as we complete some and add others. Recently, the FMS senior management team updated the list of tactical priorities. Identifying tactical priorities does not diminish the importance of any work conducted on other program initiatives or projects. However, it is important to state our current tactical priorities so that everyone knows where the management team has decided to devote resources and attention when choices must be made.

The following projects/initiatives were identified as key tactical priorities (not in any order).

- Economic Recovery Act Payments,
- Government-wide Accounting Modernization Program (GWAMP)/STAR,
- Financial Information and Reporting Standardization (FIRST),
- Consolidated Financial Report of the Federal Government and Corrective Actions to Close Audit Findings,

- Recruitment, Development, and Retention of Employees,
- Payments Application Modernization (PAM), PrinCE,
- Go Direct/Direct Express,
- HROC to PROC Relocation,
- Modernization of TOP,
- Increasing Debt Collection,
- Collections and Cash Management Modernization (CCMM),
- Oversight of Financial Agents.

Many of these tactical priorities relate to the significant modernization efforts we have underway to improve the underlying infrastructure of our core collections, payments, debt collections, and accounting and reporting functions. These efforts are exciting as they will directly improve our ability to provide efficient and effective financial management services.

Since this edition of the Financial Connection focuses on the FMS Annual Conference, I'll mention that some of the items listed above will be discussed at the conference. This is the "19th Annual Government Financial Management Conference." It is truly a great financial management education event that will be held in Washington, D.C. on August 4-5, 2009.

Government requirements are constantly changing and staying current with changes in government financial management has never been more challenging. This conference offers training for government employees, especially those involved with financial accountability.

The agenda will be filled with dynamic sessions presented by financial experts from the private sector and Federal Program Agencies, including the Department of the Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget. It offers up to 16 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) hours and it promises to be an excellent learning opportunity for government financial managers and accountability professionals.

Please accept my personal invitation to attend. I think you'll find it informative and beneficial.



FMS Creates CAC to Send "One Voice" to Federal Program Agencies

By Carolyn Dunston, Agency Relationship Management Division

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FMS Commissioner, Dave Lebryk, shares his vision for the CAC with those in attendance at a Washington, D.C. Liberty Center meeting.

into FMS's multiple modernization efforts, upcoming events, resources and daily operations.

It is essential to FMS's role that our internal program areas be consistent in the information conveyed to FPAs, in order that our goals and objectives remain clear. One area, in particular, that FMS is focusing on currently is its annual customer service questionnaires. Presently, there are three or four separate

FPAs, we expect to achieve the following goals:

- Coordinate a single view from FMS and speak with a unified message to FPAs,
- Utilize communication technology/ social networking, such as wikis, blogs and Quickr to communicate with internal and external customers,
- Provide a council of peers to communicate and exchange ideas about issues and events,
- Know what FMS is doing bureau-wide on major projects, initiatives, and outreach areas within the agency, and
- Improve communication between the various FMS AC areas and FPAs.

Customer Advisory Council (CAC) to improve the coordination of our outreach efforts to FPAs. This new strategic effort is in alignment with FMS's vision to provide FPAs with world-class government financial management services. Unlike private sector councils, the CAC will not establish policies or dictate customer outreach agendas to FMS's Assistant Commissioner (AC) areas. Several liaisons from each of the six AC areas (including FMS's Regional Financial Centers) serve as Board Members, along with Commissioner, Dave Lebryk, FMS's Office of the Chief Counsel, and the Office of Public Affairs, who serve as legislative advisors.



ARM Director, Carolyn Dunston (left), along with Rhonda Lambert, Management Analyst (right), listens to CAC feedback regarding FMS questionnaires.

FMS recognizes that having such diverse business lines within each of the AC areas can provide a real challenge in communicating effectively with our FPAs. However, it is with the development of this newly created Council, and its resulting "One Voice" concept, that we intend to continue our commitment, as a bureau, of ensuring FPA needs are met.

For more information about the CAC, please contact Fay Rurup (pictured below), San Francisco Regional Financial Center Program Manager and CAC Lead, at 510-594-7330 or fay.rurup@fms.treas.gov.

Initially, monthly conference calls were held to discuss agency outreach efforts, customer issues and concerns, ways to meet customer needs, and to explore technology as a means of improving information sharing. A face-to-face meeting was held next and as the Council is now fully functional and operational, conference calls are being scheduled for the future on a quarterly basis. Board members of the Council also serve as a conduit, sharing information and messages with their respective program areas and in gaining insight

questionnaires that request agency feedback at various times throughout the year. Recently, the Council decided unanimously to distribute a single consolidated FMS questionnaire to FPAs in calendar year 2010, thus eliminating the need for them to provide duplicate feedback to FMS.

As FMS moves forward speaking with "One Voice" to





Pay.gov Expands Service Offering to Include Pre-Authorized Debits

By JoDee DeVillier, General Revenue Collection Division

Pay.gov is the Internet Channel Application for processing the federal government's non-tax collections. Throughout its history, Pay.gov has been committed to offering Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) a variety of services to help them make efficient, electronic collections that utilize the Internet. As part of Treasury's Collection and Cash Management Modernization initiative (please see page 6), other Internet-based collection programs are being decommissioned and their functionality is being added into Pay.gov. One of those systems to be decommissioned is the Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) application operated by the Financial Management Service's Kansas City Financial Center.

The Pay.gov team saw the addition of the PAD collection option as a chance to expand its current service offerings and offer the PAD agencies a new and improved way to collect their PAD payments. The primary way Pay.gov sought to improve the FPAs' collection process was with the addition of the Payer Profile functionality.

The payer profile functionality

allows agencies to store their customers' Automated Clearing House (ACH) account information in Pay.gov for ease of use through the OCI-I (Open Collection Interface-Interactive) and the Collections Control Panel (CCP) services. Each account is assigned a unique payer profile ID, created by the FPA, which is used to retrieve the account information when a transaction is created in Pay.gov.



Every service offering within Pay.gov is role-based and with the PAD application there are two user roles associated with payer profile functionality: Payer Profile Administrator (PPA) and Payer Report Administrator (PRA). The PPA role allows FPA users to create, manage, and verify payer profiles. Pay.gov also made sure to incorporate automated features into the Payer Profile that would increase accuracy, efficiency and ease of use for the FPAs. For example, Pay.gov may be configured to send an ACH pre-

notification transaction to the FPAs' end user's financial institution to confirm that the account and routing numbers are correct. If the financial institution determines the account information received is incorrect, they can send a notification of change (NOC) containing the correct information in response to the pre-notification. The payer profile will be updated automatically with the corrected account information.

As with every Pay.gov service, offering customer service is paramount. Pay.gov customer service is provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Assistance is available for FPA customers for issues with accessing the website, hosted forms processing, collections, and similar issues. Technical support is also available for problems such as balancing payments, database integrity, information security, and other issues relating to the smooth operation of the services provided to the FPA. If you have additional questions about the new PAD service offering within Pay.gov please contact, JoDee DeVillier, Pay.gov Financial Program Specialist at 202-874-6920.

The OTC Channel Assists FPAs with OTC Deposits

By Tepricka Morgan, Over the Counter Revenue Collection Division

Checks, cash and coins received at agency Point of Sale (POS) locations worldwide are considered over the counter (OTC) collections – a form of federal government revenue. These collections or receipts represent monies received at the agency location by way of a face-to-face transaction, by mail or by drop box. They are organization-specific items tendered to the agency for a wide range of goods

and services offered by the government insurance payments, civil penalties, lease repayments, loans, merchandise purchases at commissaries and visitor centers or even employee travel reimbursements and parking fees paid to the agency. Essentially, the acceptance of checks, cash or coins deposited into the Agency Location Code (ALC) or Disbursing Station Symbol Number (DSSN) for funds received at the POS.

The OTC Channel at the Financial Management Service (FMS) manages the OTC collections process for the federal government with exciting plans to modernize the revenue collections infrastructure. Paper Check Conversion Over the Counter (PCC OTC) and the Treasury General Account Deposit Reporting Network (TGAnet) are two electronic collection

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GTAS — Change is Coming

By Joseph Berneticb, Financial Reports Division

Currently Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) report financial information to the Financial Management Service (FMS) in a variety of formats and groupings using several individual systems. These individual systems act independently and do not communicate with each other. In addition, these independent reporting methods hinder reconciliation across FMS systems, which leads to incomplete and inconsistent financial reporting of the federal government's activities.

FPAs currently use the following individual systems to report financial information to FMS:

- Federal Agencies' Centralized Trial-Balance System I (FACTS I) to report proprietary adjusted trial balances
- Federal Agencies' Centralized Trial-Balance System II (FACTS II) to report budgetary trial balances that support the SF 133 Report on Budget Execution, the FMS 2108 Year end closing Statement, and the prior year column of the President's Budget.

- Intragovernmental Fiduciary Confirmation System (IFCS) to confirm fiduciary intragovernmental transactions.
- Intragovernmental Reporting and Analysis system (IRAS) as a tool to reconcile fiduciary and non-fiduciary intragovernmental transactions.

Change is coming. FMS will replace the functionality of these four systems with Governmentwide Treasury Account Symbol Adjusted Trial Balance System (GTAS) in an effort to address the deficiencies in the current reporting structure.

FPAs will use GTAS as the primary means to report agency trial-balance data to FMS. GTAS will facilitate data consistency checks, save FMS significant maintenance costs, and save agencies substantial reporting costs. Agencies will submit proprietary and budgetary data simultaneously in one submission, saving the user time and avoiding the need to use four separate systems. A single data collection system will result in more consistent and complete financial data

and will allow for better analytical reporting. Data validations will verify the integrity of the data, and accounting edits will check the data for both budgetary and proprietary reporting. In addition, GTAS will enable FMS to provide agencies with better feedback and to identify key discrepancies in financial information.

The expected GTAS implementation date is first quarter fiscal year 2012. When GTAS is implemented, it will be available to FPAs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, allowing the FPAs to verify their data during the non-reporting windows. Prior to implementation, FPAs will be able to test bulk files in GTAS beginning third quarter fiscal 2011.

FMS has held several GTAS outreach sessions to get the word out to the FPAs about the changes that are coming. The next upcoming opportunity for the FPAs to hear about GTAS will be at the FMS Conference on August 4th, 2009. In the meantime, FPAs and all other interested parties may find out more about GTAS on the GTAS website at www.fms.treas.gov/gtas.

OTC Channel Assists FPAs

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mechanisms with a longstanding history of positively impacting those that handle OTC collections at the Federal Program Agency (FPA) level including cashiers, remittance processors, accounting specialists and management.

In conjunction with the Collections and Cash Management Modernization (CCMM) initiative, an integration of PCC OTC and TGA^{net} is necessary to create a one-system solution for over the counter deposit activity. This consolidation of systems under the OTC Channel will bring to life a robust business line

capable of handling FPA cash and check deposits seamlessly with one application and, futuristically speaking, one hardware device. The benefits of this new application include the following features:

- improved deposit and reporting process,
- complies with the Governmentwide Accounting Modernization Project (GWAMP), and
- transfer of detailed and summarized revenue collection transactions to the Transaction Reporting System (TRS).

Even with this dynamic integration aggressively underway, the OTC Channel continues to expand the use of PCC OTC and TGA^{net} throughout the government. To date, more than 45 and 30 FPAs, respectively, use each system, individually, or in tandem to facilitate the collection and reporting of billions of dollars in receipts. For more information on how PCC OTC or TGA^{net} assists with over the counter deposits and reporting, please contact the Over the Counter Revenue Collection Division at FMS by email at OTCD@fms.treas.gov or via phone at 202-874-6786.



The FC Asks: What Do FPAs Need to Know about CCMM?



Recently we met with Greg Till, Director of Federal Finance's Modernization Planning Office (MPO) to ask what Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) need to know about FMS's Collections and Cash Management Modernization (CCMM) initiative.

What follows are his responses, specific to helping FPAs prepare.

Teri Hoehn
Editor, Financial Connection

What is CCMM?

The Collections and Cash Management Modernization initiative is a multi-year effort to simplify and modernize FMS's and Treasury's collections and cash management programs.

CCMM involves a re-architecting of processes that have built up over decades. It impacts over two dozen programs that process collections for hundreds of Federal Program Agency (FPA) cash flows (taxes, customs duties, coin sales, etc.), conduct over 400 million transactions a year, and collect over \$3.1 trillion a year.

What are its objectives?

CCMM has three main objectives:

- Simplify collection processes and eliminate duplicative functionality
- Provide FPAs with detailed, centralized access to collections information
- Promote and expand the use of electronic collection of receipts

What are the problems that FMS faces in the current state?

FMS faces several problems with the current architecture. While FMS uses highly effective collection processes, these processes could be more efficient. In addition, the current architecture could cause FMS to become dependent upon particular agent banks. (FMS uses financial institutions that it designates as agents to provide services to FPAs.) Finally, the complexity of the collections architecture might render it unable to adapt to changing FPA needs.

What are the problems that FPAs face in the current state?

Agencies face three main problems with the current architecture. First, FPAs have to obtain their detailed

transaction reports from FMS through a variety of systems, formats, and media, rather than through a central, standardized source. It is costly for FPAs to consolidate this information and maintain these connections.

Second, the transaction information that FPAs receive is not necessarily reconciled with summary deposit reports that FPAs receive from FMS's cash concentration system (CA\$HLINK II).

Third, when FMS desires to change agents, FPAs need to make changes to their systems to receive reports from the new agents, which can be time-consuming and costly.

How will FMS address these problems?

The root cause of the problems described above is too many programs with redundant functionality. To avoid this, FMS is looking to make greater use of standardized, shared services. For instance, instead of having multiple programs perform Automated Clearing House (ACH) debits (each with its own staff, business rules, and systems), FMS will implement one program for this function, which can be invoked by other programs as needed.

FMS will re-align and consolidate the number of systems it uses, so that there are fewer programs for the channels it uses to **receive** transactions (over-the-counter, mail, Internet, etc.) from FPAs and the public and for the mechanisms it uses to **settle** transactions.

FMS also will consolidate and standardize transaction and deposit reporting with a single system, the Transaction Reporting System (TRS). TRS will provide a single touch point for all reporting details. It will use standard connectivity options and make reporting information available

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through a standard, published XML schema.

FMS ultimately will have fewer programs performing fewer functions. Please note that FMS is not eliminating functionality (for the most part); rather, FMS is eliminating its redundant implementation.

How will the changes solve current problems for FMS?

The changes address the FMS problems described above. The changes will save money while addressing the risk that FMS will be unable to meet FPA needs going forward. By eliminating unnecessary redundancy, FMS will become more efficient. In addition, by breaking the direct and proprietary reporting connections between agent banks and FPAs, the changes will reduce the potential for FMS to be “locked-in” to a particular agent. Finally, because FMS resources won’t be tied up maintaining an overly complex set of programs, FMS will be better positioned to offer new services in the future.

How will the changes solve current problems for FPAs?

CCMM will benefit FPAs in several ways, with the primary benefits arising out of the consolidation and reconciliation of transaction reporting and deposit reporting that agencies will receive through TRS.

By providing reporting information through a single touch point rather than through many, TRS will reduce the costs that FPAs incur in consolidating this information and supporting multiple connections to Treasury systems. By reconciling this data in advance for FPAs, TRS also will simplify FPAs’ accounting

responsibilities. FPAs also will benefit by not having to update their systems every time FMS changes agents; TRS will serve as a buffer between FPAs and agents, so that TRS and not FPAs absorb most of the system changes caused by new agents.

What does a FPA need to do to prepare for the changes?

The biggest changes for FPAs will be related to TRS. FPAs will need to change the way they receive transaction reporting (from the agents that run our many collection programs) and deposit reporting (from CA\$HLINK II) to instead receive that information from TRS. For example, if an FPA receives nightly files from a lockbox bank and another file from Pay.gov, that information will no longer be coming directly from those collection programs, but rather from TRS. FPAs will need to make changes to their system(s) to accept this information and update their receivables from TRS. FPAs also may need to change some of their collection processes, depending on their current collection mix, as legacy systems are decommissioned or consolidated. For example, if the FPA is using the Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) program, it will need to change to Pay.gov.

How does this tie into other FMS initiatives that impact FPAs?

FMS has several initiatives that will impact FPAs, especially changes in its Governmentwide Accounting (GWA) area. CCMM fits with these GWA changes. The same system that will provide information to agencies—TRS—also will provide information to GWA. FMS has established several groups to ensure that the initiatives are rolled out in a coordinated fashion. CCMM will ensure that information

is classified at the time of transaction and is reported the “GWA way.”

When is this going to be completed?

FMS currently estimates that CCMM will be completed by 2012. However, this does not mean that FPAs need to be fully switched to TRS by then. By 2012, TRS will have fully assumed the deposit reporting that currently is made available to FPAs through CA\$HLINK II and will have the capability of supporting transaction reporting needs as well. It is understood that FPAs will need time to switch to TRS for transaction reporting. For a time, then, concurrent transaction reporting—using the legacy transaction reporting done today through multiple agents and the new transaction reporting provided through TRS—will be possible. At this point, FMS does not have a deadline by which a FPA needs to fully convert to TRS; however, FPAs should begin to prepare for these upcoming changes in their future budgets.

What can FPAs do to stay up-to-date on CCMM or even influence some of its changes?

FPAs can attend CCMM sessions being presented at the “19th Annual Government Financial Management Conference” or their Regional Financial Center Customer Advisory Board (CAB) meetings.

They can also sign up to receive email updates from CCMM, which will alert them to upcoming forums, webinars and workgroup sessions. To sign-up or to learn more about CCMM, visit www.fms.treas.gov/ccmm.



TRS Aims for Smooth Transition Through Open Communication with FPAs

By Monica Shelton, Accounting and Data Management Division

When Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) begin general transitioning from CASHLINK II to the new Transaction Reporting System (TRS) in fall of 2009, they will be the beneficiaries of an agency outreach program which has focused on opening channels of communication between agencies, developers, and FMS. That effort has resulted in a better understanding by TRS of how FPAs will use the system and how the transition between systems can be eased. Similarly, ongoing agency outreach through 2010 will assist FPAs to more knowledgeably prepare for TRS.

TRS is an FMS-wide transaction broker, data warehouse, and reporting solution that will provide Trading Partners and FMS with a single touch point for the exchange of all financial transaction information across all collection systems. This will enable FMS to normalize financial transaction reporting and standardize the availability of financial information across all settlement mechanisms and collection systems. TRS is a self-contained system with various related external system interfaces. While TRS will be used instead of CASHLINK II (CLII), its functionality will be somewhat different. Consequently, the TRS team has been actively engaged in soliciting input from a growing circle of agencies about both how to improve the new system and the transition from CLII to TRS.

TRS Pilot Program

TRS will be implemented in phases. In order for TRS to provide collection transaction information to FPAs, TRS must first implement interfaces with various sources of collections data. As these interfaces are implemented,

increasing amounts of transaction data will become available to agencies through TRS. The Treasury General Account Deposit Reporting Network (TGANet) was the first collection source for which data can be processed by TRS and sent through to the Governmentwide Accounting system (GWA). Because agencies with different characteristics have different needs, a cross-section of potential pilot agencies was identified from among FPAs using TGANet with commercial deposits. Potential pilots varied from the very large to the very small. In December 2008 the following FPAs enrolled in and piloted TRS:

- Department of Defense – Defense Finance and Accounting Service
- Department of Homeland Security – Citizenship and Immigration Service
- Department of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Department of Interior – National Park Service
- Department of Commerce – National Institute of Standards and Technology
- Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation

Pilot agencies provided feedback on what they liked about the system and suggested ideas for improvement. They also critiqued the TRS training program, user manual, and enrollment processes. Information garnered from pilot agencies has been considered by TRS team members in design, development, training and

enrollment of the next phases of TRS. Concerns expressed by pilot FPAs which were beyond the purview of the TRS team were provided to other appropriate FMS entities.

TRS Agency User Group Sessions

In January and February 2009 the second prong of the FPA outreach effort began with a set of introductory sessions about TRS. The three all-day sessions launched the TRS Agency User Group. Once again, a diverse group of FPAs was selected for participation in the Agency User Group meetings. Fifty-eight participants, representing thirty four FPAs, attended.

The highly interactive sessions explained plans for the system, implementation, and the transition. Participants had the opportunity to share insightful information about how they would use the system and its reports, as well as challenges they anticipated in making the transition.

During the sessions participants had the opportunity to work in small groups with a mock-up of a detailed financial transaction report that was in development and make suggestions for improving it. Volunteers were solicited to provide ongoing feedback as report development continues.

As with the pilot input, feedback from participants in the TRS Agency User Group meetings has been used by the TRS Team. Every suggestion was logged and tracked. Concerns more appropriate for other FMS entities have been shared. The first quarterly conference held call to report back on what has occurred as a result of participant input and to update members on new

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TRS Communication with FPAs

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developments, occurred in late May 2009.

In July, the TRS Team hosted its first TRS Agency User Group Session in the West. A full-day post-conference session on July 16 followed the San Francisco Financial Center (SFC) Agency Forum at the Denver Federal Center in Denver, Colorado. Another all-day post-conference event is planned following the FMS Annual Government Financial Management Conference in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, August 6. The TRS Team will be conducting personal outreach by email and telephone to encourage potential participants to register for the session.

Getting Ready for TRS

Many times FPAs lament that they do not have enough time or do not know enough to get ready for a new system. Each TRS Agency User Group session provided agencies with a checklist of internal activities which FPAs may find useful to prepare for TRS. In this way, FPAs have both lead time and direction in preparing for the new system.

Participants were encouraged to review policies, processes, and work redesign, to assess what system-to-system interfaces, reports, and data downloads may need to be adapted, and to determine whether budget modifications may be necessary to make internal changes.

In addition, each FPA also had the opportunity to answer a set of questions that would assist TRS Team members who are coordinating agency enrollment to work more effectively with each agency.

TRS Goal: Listening and Learning Leads to Easier Transitions

The goal of the TRS Team is to listen to end users and to learn from them how to improve TRS capabilities and reports, as well as, enrollment and training processes. A limited set of end users from FPAs will be engaged in User Acceptance Testing (UAT). A cadre of volunteers for UAT is growing from the Pilot Program, the TRS Agency User Group, and others who have identified an interest in participating. Those interested in participating in UAT should contact Monica Shelton, TRS Deputy Project Manager as directed at the end of this article.

Early partnering with FPAs in the development and roll out of TRS has been a primary goal of Christina Cox, TRS Project Manager since she started with the project in 2005. Ms. Cox stated, "One of the first questions I asked upon joining the project was if there was an established TRS User Group and what efforts were underway to engage FPAs to participate?" The TRS project has come a long way in its FPA outreach efforts since that initial question and continues to actively look for opportunities to listen and learn from FPAs.

For more information about TRS or to participate in any of its agency outreach events, contact Monica Shelton, TRS Deputy Project Manager at (202) 874-1346 or Monica.Shelton@fms.treas.gov.

TRS AGENCY USER GROUP SESSIONS

One way the Transaction Reporting System (TRS) Team keeps the doors to communication open with Federal Program Agencies (FPAs) is through its TRS Agency User Group sessions. Participants in the "19th Annual Government Financial Management Conference" will have the opportunity to attend a full-day introductory session post-conference on Thursday, August 6 while here in Washington, D.C.

Participants of TRS Agency User Group Sessions learn about TRS and exactly what they need to do to prepare for the new system. Registrants are able to collaborate and exchange information with FMS, the TRS Team, and other FPAs in attendance, providing valuable input that will help refine the development plans for TRS. In addition, those in attendance will learn about FMS's transition plan for FPAs to TRS and when FPAs will be able to enroll.

Topics planned for sessions are:

- A comprehensive overview about TRS and its planned functionality
- A comparison of TRS and CA\$HLINK II
- How FPAs can prepare for the migration
- Data warehouse
- FPA reporting and file transmissions
- Transition planning
- FPA enrollment

Anyone interested in attending a future User Group event, should contact Monica Shelton, TRS Deputy Project Manager, at (202) 874-1346 or Monica.Shelton@fms.treas.gov.



Check Claims Hosts Conference for FPAs

By Jason Jordan-Griffin, Check Claims Branch

Recently, FMS's Check Claims Annual Conference was held at the University of Maryland Conference Center. This annual meeting allows the Federal Program Agencies (FPAs), that play critical roles in the claims process to come together and learn about new and upcoming developments in the claims business line, as well as, share their questions and concerns regarding the check aftermath process.

This year's conference hosted representatives from FPAs across the nation including, Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service, Office of Personnel Management, the National Park Service, Railroad Retirement Board and many others.

These efforts were enhanced with the help of several individuals from FPAs and FMS, who worked tirelessly over the past year to ensure quality service to customers. The individuals who were recognized with the Customer Liaison Specialist Award, included Sharon Walters from the Internal Revenue Service (Philadelphia, PA), Paul Levee from the Social Security Administration

(Baltimore, MD), and Saleema Ross from FMS's Accounts Branch (Hyattsville, MD).

This year's topics included, "Processing Your Payments at the Regional Financial Centers," "The United States Secret Service," "Treasury Offset Program: Debt Collection 101," "Go Direct® & Direct Express®: Electronic Alternatives for the Federal Benefit Check Recipient," "Payment Over Cancellation (POC) Part II," and "The New Treasury Check."

A survey conducted amongst conference attendees reflected a continued appreciation and acknowledgment of the useful material presented at this annual conference.

Approximately 41,000 claims of non-receipt were adjudicated in fiscal year 2008. The Check Claims Branch provides a centralized customer service operation for the resolution of non-receipt of U.S. Treasury checks. For general training on the non-receipt process, please contact 202-874-8445.



DMS Offsets Economic Recovery Payments

In May, Debt Management Services (DMS) offset economic recovery payments made to the Social Security Administration (SSA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) recipients under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. These offsets resulted in the following collections: SSA- 490,471 offsets totaling \$113,548,436.37; SSI- 326,653 offsets totaling, \$78,712,905.13; and RRB- 3,269 offsets totaling, \$669,799.91.

As of June 30, the collections for the Veterans Administration were 152,500 offsets totaling \$34,736,515.38.



(From left) Rita Bratcher, FMS Assistant Commissioner of Payment Management, Sharon Walters, IRS, Saleema Ross, FMS, Paul Levee, SSA, Janice Lucas, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Payment Management, and Dawn Young Johns, Program Manager, FMS Check Claims.

FMS Agency Forum

Austin Financial Center
Agency Forum
August 12-13, 2009
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Topic:
Electronic Payments and Collections at The Dallas Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas, Texas.

For more info, visit
www.fms.treas.gov/afc



An Update on Economic Recovery Payments for FIs

By Dale Walton, EFT Strategy Division

During May and June 2009, the Department of the Treasury's Financial Management Service (FMS) disbursed more than 54 million Economic Recovery Payments under the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009.

These one-time payments in the amount of \$250 were disbursed to individuals receiving benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA), Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Individuals who owed a delinquent child support debt or a debt to federal or state agencies had their one-time payment offset to collect the debt owed.

A significant portion of the 54 million payments were disbursed during the first half of May. This was followed by an even distribution of payments for the remainder of May and June. These were separate payments and not included in regular monthly benefits. The same disbursement mechanism used for an individual's regular monthly benefits were used for these one-time payments.

Payments by Direct Deposit thru the Automated Clearing House (ACH)

The Direct Deposit volume was approximately 46 million payments. The ACH Company Entry Description in Field 7 of the Batch Header Record was "ERP" preceded by the appropriate agency identifier (i.e. SSA, SSI, RRB, or VA).

If a financial institution is aware that an individual is deceased, it should return the payment to FMS. However, these one-time payments are not subject to reclamation under Treasury regulations (31 CFR Part 210) and reclamation notices will not be sent to financial institutions for these payments.

While Direct Deposit is the safest and most secure delivery method, we ask that financial institutions respond promptly to claims of non-receipt. Specifically, financial institutions are asked to

cooperate in providing information to either customers, or FMS, in response to Tele-TRACE non-receipt inquiries conducted by telephone.

Regarding garnishment, these one-time payments are subject to the same statutory protections against garnishment that apply to benefit payments the individual receives. For example, if the payment recipient is receiving SSI payments, the one-time payment is treated as an SSI payment for purposes of garnishment. In general, these payments are not subject to garnishment, with limited exceptions.

Payments by U. S. Treasury Paper Check

The paper check volume was approximately 8 million payments, thereby increasing the check volume presented for payment. Checks were dated the same as the ACH settlement dates above. The

face of the checks had the legend "Economic Recovery Payment" along with the appropriate agency identifier (i.e. SSA, SSI, RRB, or VA).

Check payments are subject to reclamation under Treasury regulations (31 CFR Part 240) for breaches of presentment warranty, typically a forged endorsement or an altered check amount.

Financial institutions are reminded of the security features on U.S. Treasury-issued checks. FMS has implemented security features that enable financial

institutions, Federal Reserve Banks, and the U. S. Treasury to detect alterations and counterfeits

thereby reducing losses to financial institutions.

U.S. Treasury checks have state-of-the-art design features that are manufactured in the check to reduce the number of altered and counterfeit checks. A summary of these features is located at: www.fms.treas.gov/checkclaims/check-security-new.pdf.

Additional Information

The paying agencies are providing information to individuals about these one-time payments. Should you receive any questions from customers, please provide them with the above contact information. They can go on-line for information at any time.

PAYING AGENCY	INTERNET ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Social Security Administration	www.socialsecurity.gov	1-800-772-1213
Railroad Retirement Board	www.rrb.gov	1-877-772-5772
Department of Veterans Affairs	www.va.gov	1-800-827-1000

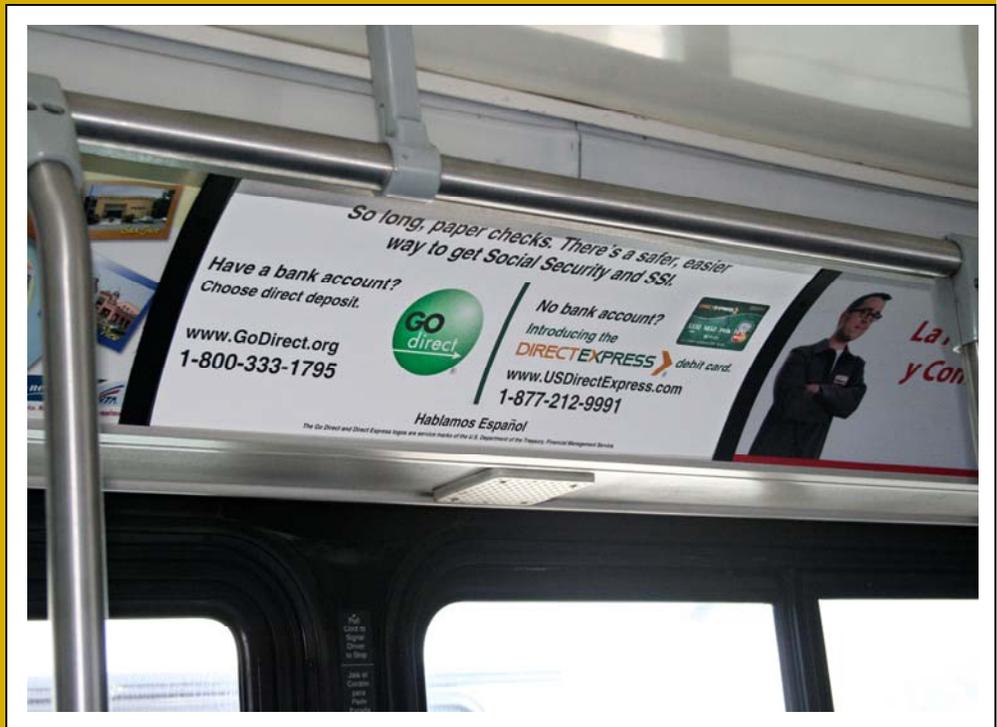


GO DIRECT® AND DIRECT EXPRESS® GO FOR A RIDE IN SILICON VALLEY

By Rick Corrigan, San Francisco Financial Center

The GO Direct® and Direct Express® Debit Card programs took a promotional ride on public transit in the Silicon Valley during March and April, 2009. The San Francisco Financial Center (SFC) partnered with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) in a public service campaign to reach the mass transit population in Silicon Valley.

Advertising bus tails promoting GO Direct® and Direct Express® were visible on the outside of the buses, while card posters were displayed inside on hundreds of the buses and light rail cars during the campaign. Last year, over 33 million passengers rode on buses and light rail cars in Santa Clara County. This was the first time that the GO Direct® and Direct Express® card programs were



Left to Right: Bernice Alaniz and Maria Cambra (VTA), along with Rick Corrigan and AnneMarie Arnold (SFC), display one of the GO Direct®/Direct Express® Debit Card advertising bus tails.

combined into one marketing message reaching two distinct audiences at the same time, those with and without bank accounts. The posters included toll-free numbers to sign up, as well as the Web sites to register online.

GO Direct® is a program to give people receiving federal benefit payments with a bank account a fast, convenient way to sign up for direct deposit. The Direct Express® card is a prepaid debit card that provides a safe, user-friendly alternative for people without a bank account receiving Social Security benefits. Both initiatives are part of a nationwide financial education campaign conducted by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to encourage people to receive their federal benefit payments electronically.

The VTA's public service promotion, valued at \$59,000, was at no cost to the Financial Management Service and the U.S. Department of the Treasury.