

DMV / DOT

Expert Exchange

Q1 Executive summary
January 15, 2026

kyndryl.



Overview

A cohort of state motor vehicle and transportation leaders came together for a candid discussion on modernizing legacy systems — from mainframe exits to digital platforms. They shared real-world lessons on change management, adoption barriers, and mobile credential implementation, offering practical insight for peers leading complex transformation.

Host

Brian Shell
Kyndryl, Vice President

Key topics

PAGE

- 03 Strategic Modernization Approaches
- 04 Collaborative Code Sharing
- 05 Managing Organizational Change and Public Perception

Strategic Modernization Approaches

Agency leaders outlined multiple paths to replacing legacy systems, from reusing existing code to adopting SaaS, noting that the right approach depends on internal skills and organizational risk tolerance.

- One agency shared a successful lift-and-shift strategy, adopting a code base from another state to avoid the cost and risk of a full custom rebuild. By starting with proven functionality, the team was able to concentrate on gap analysis, configuration, and testing rather than recreating core business processes from scratch.

- Another leader advocated moving away from custom development altogether in favor of SaaS and CRM-based platforms. This model shifts organizational energy away from maintaining complex infrastructure and toward solving business problems, improving service delivery, and enabling more proactive engagement with customers.
- Differing perspectives emerged around when to make these transitions. Some agencies are ready to move quickly, while others emphasized the importance of a comprehensive market assessment before selecting a vendor or platform. These leaders stressed evaluating SaaS, low-code, and

specialized solutions through a structured decision matrix to ensure long-term viability and flexibility.

- Participants agreed that modernization is a multi-year journey requiring parallel investment in legacy systems. Agencies must keep existing environments stable and secure while new platforms are designed and deployed — a transition that can realistically take four to six years.
- Leaders also noted that legacy mainframes often struggle to meet modern capacity demands. One agency shared that a surge in claims overwhelmed its system, exposing hardware constraints and reinforcing the urgency of modernization.

"The frontier we are opening now is determining how we can consume these digital credentials ourselves at our service windows and online."

— DMV / DOT Expert Exchange Member

Collaborative Code Sharing

The conversation emphasized the efficiency of sharing modular code and design patterns among agencies to meet universal federal requirements. Participants agreed that a collaborative ecosystem could drastically reduce redundant engineering hours across the country.

- The group explored the concept of "sharing is caring," noting that many state functions follow identical federal mandates. Sharing modules for standard integrations, such as state-to-state verification, allows agencies to implement complex requirements more rapidly.
- A leader cautioned that successful collaboration requires strict adherence to modular standards. If

the core function is not reusable or if states do not agree on a common development framework, the shared code may require too much customization to be effective.

- Agencies that have already modernized offered to share specific assets, such as frameworks for mobile licenses or license plate issuance. This support is particularly valuable for smaller departments with limited IT staff who face significant learning curves with new technology.
- One example highlighted cross-pollination: a state enhanced a donated code base and returned improvements to the original contributor, demonstrating the practical value of a shared ecosystem.

“Fifty different entities should not perform the same tasks when new federal rules are issued; we need a shared platform for actual code.”

— DMV / DOT Expert Exchange Member

View the Kyndryl DMV Modernization Hub

Learn more



Managing Organizational Change and Public Perception

Executives emphasized that modernization is as much about managing people and processes as it is about deploying new software. The group shared best practices for navigating internal staff turnover and public resistance to digital-first services.

- Internal reorganizations often occur during modernization, and one leader warned to expect up to 50% staff turnover during the process. Preparing for this "journey" rather than a "destination" helps leadership manage expectations and maintain operational continuity.

- Public resistance can stall technical rollouts if the community perceives a loss of personal interaction. A participant shared an anecdote about a local community boycotting modern kiosks because they preferred traditional, manual service models.
- To mitigate "baggage" during process redesign, agencies recommend hiring external business analysts. These neutral observers can evaluate workflows clinically to ensure the agency does not simply code existing inefficiencies into the new system.
- The participants agreed on the vital importance of educating legislative

bodies. Lawmakers who understand the fiscal and accessibility benefits of a project are more likely to support the agency when vocal constituents complain about changes.

- One leader suggested that messaging should focus on "fiscally responsible government" and "accessibility" rather than the technology itself. By highlighting benefits to taxpayers, agencies can frame modernization as a necessary service improvement rather than just a technical update.

"No matter how great the technology is, you cannot be successful if the people do not want it."

- DMV / DOT Expert Exchange Member



The DMV / DOT Expert Exchange is hosted by Kyndryl. Please contact Brian Shell with any questions about Kyndryl or this Exchange.

© Copyright Kyndryl, Inc. 2026

Kyndryl is a trademark or registered trademark of Kyndryl Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. Other product and service names may be trademarks of Kyndryl Inc. or other companies.

This document is current as of the initial date of publication and may be changed by Kyndryl at any time without notice. Not all offerings are available in every country in which Kyndryl operates. Kyndryl products and services are warranted according to the terms and conditions of the agreements under which they are provided.

