



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER
580 TAYLOR AVENUE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator
410-260-1295

November 1, 2015

Honorable Edward J. Kasemeyer
Chair, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
121 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Re: 2014_p4-JUD Report on MDEC Savings Report

Dear Chairman and Madam Chair:

Pursuant to the *2014 Joint Chairmen's Report*, page 4, Report on MDEC Savings, enclosed please find the report.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (410) 260-1295, or at pamela.harris@mdcourts.gov.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela Harris".

Pamela Harris
State Court Administrator

Enc.

cc: Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera, Chief Judge, Court of Appeals
Honorable James E. DeGrange, Sr., Chair, Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee
Honorable Keith E. Haynes, Chair, Public Safety and Administration Subcommittee
Kelley O'Connor, Assistant Administrator, Government Relations
Matthew Bennett, Policy Analyst
Matthew Jackson, Policy Analyst
Ben Wilhelm, Budget Analyst
Sarah Albert, Mandated Reports Specialist
Cathy.Kramer@mlis.state.md.us

Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) Savings Report

2015 Update

As noted in the 2014 Maryland Electronic Courts Savings Report (attached for reference), it is not possible to estimate operational savings in staff or support services at this early juncture of project implementation. This report will provide an update regarding the pilot implementation as to areas of benefit noted in the 2014 report.

MDEC Pilot

The MDEC system was introduced for pilot use in Anne Arundel County, the Court of Special Appeals, and the Court of Appeals for civil and family cases on October 14, 2014. It was further introduced for criminal and traffic cases on August 3, 2015. As the previous report noted, the MDEC system is designed to replace 10 failing and outdated legacy systems that operate independently throughout the State. Each jurisdiction in the State will go through data conversion, business process configuration, testing and training. The complete rollout of the system to all jurisdictions in the State is expected to continue through Fiscal Year 2019.

Pilot – Electronic Filing

The MDEC system introduction of electronic filing has been well received. Consistent positive feedback has been received regarding ease of use and convenience. Mandatory for attorneys and optional for self-represented litigants, over 11,000 attorneys / parties have registered to e-file and over 300,000 documents have been electronically filed with the Anne Arundel County and appellate courts to date. Online and in person orientation sessions were provided both before and after implementation and attorney support is provided by both telephone and email.

Pilot – Case Management

As expected with any project of the scope and complexity of MDEC, a period of adjustment and stabilization followed the pilot implementations. Adjustments and refinements were made to processes associated with domestic violence orders, court notices, and intra-court processing during the implementation period of civil and family cases, and to automated case scheduling and high-volume case processing during the implementation period of criminal and traffic cases. All significant issues were refined within 90 days.

Pilot – Case Portal Access

A beneficial feature of MDEC for litigants is the ability to view electronic case documents remotely. For cases initiated after MDEC implementation, this is accommodated via the use of a unique attorney identifying number. Case information converted from the multiple legacy systems, however, did not consistently contain this number. An ongoing process has been established to ‘link’ cases to a specific attorney or litigant as they are identified so as to provide remote access to attorneys and parties to their case files.

MDEC Benefits Updates

As detailed in the 2014 report, the targeted benefits of MDEC are to facilitate faster service, improved public safety, and more effective use of courthouse space.

Faster Service

After the initial period of system refinements and operational adjustments, a reduction in the elapsed time to docket case filings is beginning to be seen in civil cases. Electronic filing provides the ability to do business with the courts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Feedback from attorneys indicates that this provides greater convenience and saves time for court customers. The electronic facility also provides filers with an online, remote vehicle to review their cases and provides important status information. Support services for filers have been established with both our vendor, Tyler Technologies, and locally.

Improved Public Safety

This benefit applies to the adjudication of criminal and traffic cases and will be achieved through an improved ability to share court event information with justice partners. Additional use of the system and mutual development of data exchanges with partners is required before the positive effects of advanced electronic data exchange will be realized. This is exemplified by the benefits already realized with the electronic acceptance of traffic citations through the E-Citation program which continues in the MDEC system. This program also continues to evolve. Automated officer scheduling is being introduced for enhanced scheduling for both the court and our justice partners.

Reduced Space Required for the Storage of Paper

With over 300,000 electronic filings accepted by the courts to date using the MDEC system, we have realized a reduction in storage space for paper files. In addition to storage, the reduction in paper will ease costs on current and future storage of paper and the paper itself as MDEC moves forward. Space will continue to be used more effectively in the future to avoid immediate capital expenses associated with courthouse expansions. This benefit will continue to be realized over time.

Summary

As concluded in the 2014 report, “Embarking on the MDEC initiative was both a technical and business imperative. A collection of outdated systems, based in paper-oriented business processes, have contributed to creating an environment characterized by limited system capabilities, dwindling institutional knowledge, and inconsistent business practices. The Maryland Electronic Courts initiative, and the MDEC system, is the strategic response to these challenges both today and into the future.”

Results of the pilot implementation to date confirm that the goals of the systems can and will be achieved.

Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) Savings Report

A fundamental tenet of our judicial system is the timely and expeditious resolution of cases. The currency of complete, accurate, and timely information is essential to an effective justice system. Since its inception, the operational context for the courts has been based in the creation, use, maintenance, and storage of paper files. With the advent of the Internet, along with ever-improving technological advances, the exchange of information has evolved from a manual paper process, to a more effective automated, digital process. The speed and accuracy at which this exchange can occur is critical within the justice system and could be the difference between life and death. It was within this context that the Judiciary, with the support of the legislature, embarked upon a multi-year, multi-million dollar endeavor in 2006 to move from an internal system of managing nine extant systems, built on aging, unsupported platforms to a single statewide system built on an emergent platform that is fully supported.

The operational context within which the courts work extends far beyond the walls of the courthouses. The use of computer systems by the larger justice community has mimicked that of the courts, with work processes largely based on paper handling and interfacing data in an outdated 'batch' mode.

When the Judiciary undertook this case management planning initiative, it was not done in a vacuum. It was understood from the beginning that the system had to be developed from the perspective of the justice system and not just the Judiciary. As such, the Advisory Committee established three strategic goals for the project:

- Public safety – Share information within the court system and with justice partners, enable and advance information technology interoperability with justice partners, facilitate better-informed decision making, and enable more rapid dissemination and enforcement of court orders.
- Access to justice – Improve support for litigants, reduce barriers to access, such as language, education, and others, and enable access from anywhere.
- Fair and efficient administration of justice – Reduce delays, better enable and manage flexibility and improvement in court operations statewide, better schedule and coordinate use of Judiciary and other government resources, and enable better-informed decision making.

In 2007, a consultancy was engaged to assess the current environment, determine feasibility and readiness, and assist in planning for a new system. Through 2008, the Judiciary addressed necessary upgrades to the technology infrastructure. Additionally, a project management structure was established in the Judiciary's information technology department. With these critical components in place, the Judiciary then began the process to define the project scope, functional requirements and procure an integrated case management and electronic filing system. This process was completed in late 2011.

The Maryland Electronic Courts implementation project (MDEC) officially kicked off in early 2012. Among the first tasks to be undertaken was the laborious, often tedious process of reviewing the software solution in the light of the realities of how Maryland courts operate relative to our rules and local practices. The completion of this critical effort consumed more

than 12 months. This analysis defined a significant amount of customized development needed by the vendor (case management functionality) and by in-house JIS staff (internal data interchange between systems). Two key decisions made in the course of the project have shaped the schedule and cost structure of the project.

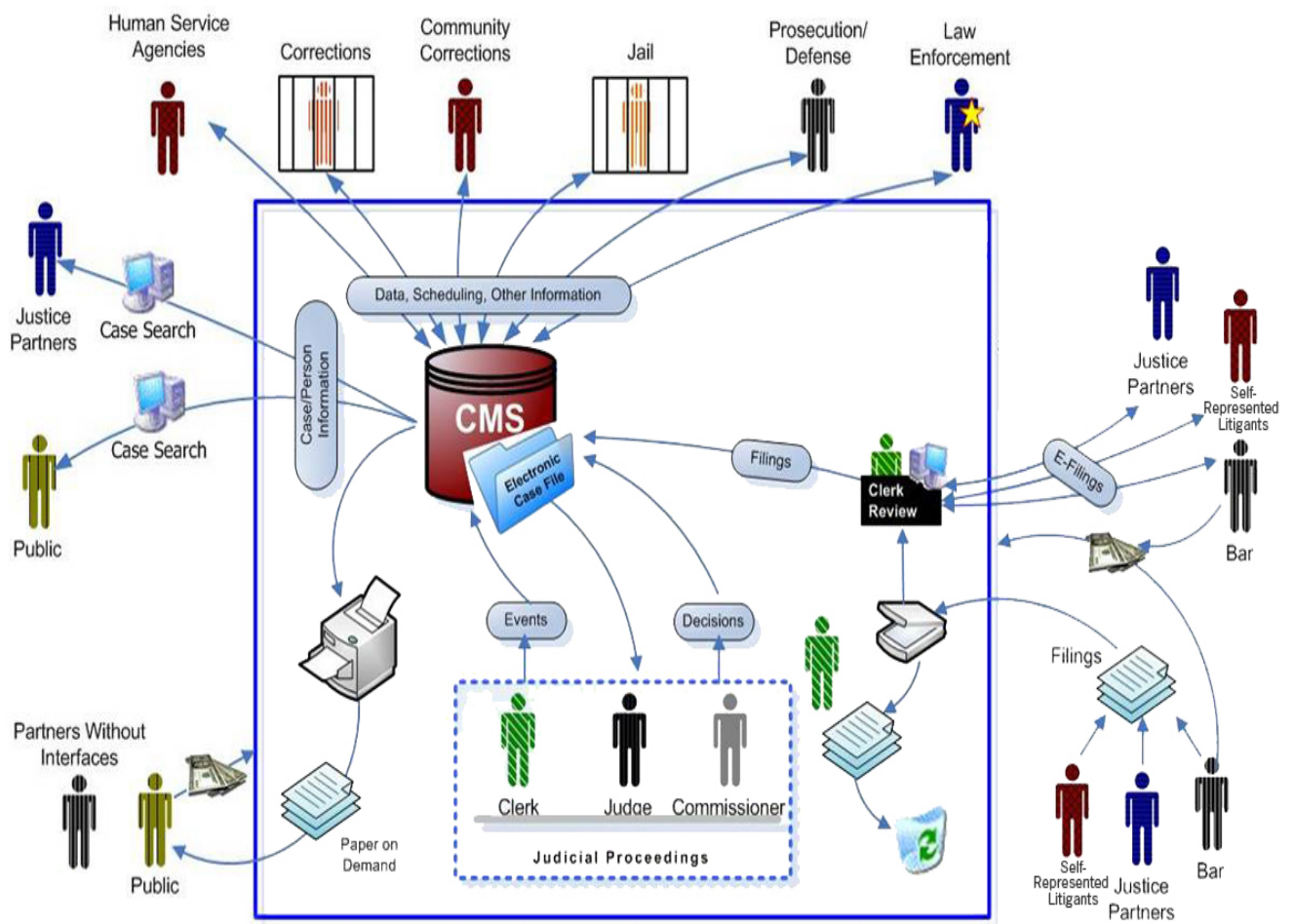
The first decision was to contract with Tyler Technologies to provide electronic filing services. While the Judiciary initially planned to license the software and perform these services in-house, a closer examination of the resource requirements, both in terms of staffing and cost, as well as security implications led to a change of direction. In making this decision, consideration was given to the level of staffing required to train and provide 24-hour telephone support for attorneys and self-represented litigants, as well as the requirements and risk associated with housing and securing the credit card information of the system's e-filers. In addition, the Advisory Committee considered the success and prevalence of the use of Tyler Technologies to perform these services in their other installations. The fees associated with these services were not included in projected costs in years prior to FY 14. To offset these operational costs, the Judiciary introduced, unsuccessfully, SB 32 / HB 102 (attached) in the 2014 legislative session and intends to reintroduce this legislation in 2015.

The second major decision was to defer the launch of the initial pilot of the system six months and to introduce it for non-criminal cases only for the first several months. Consideration in making this decision was given to the additional time needed to complete business process definition and testing; the complexity of modifying and testing existing criminal data exchange practices with justice partners given some of their continued dependence on paper; the need for them to perform internal business process changes; and, the need to manage effectively overall project risks.

The MDEC system was introduced for pilot use in Anne Arundel County, the Court of Special Appeals, and the Court of Appeals on October 14, 2014. Inasmuch as each jurisdiction in the State will go through data conversion, business process configuration, testing and training, the complete rollout of the system to all jurisdictions in the State is expected to continue into Fiscal Year 2019.

Beyond the need to replace decades-old legacy systems from which the timely generation and exchange of data was becoming increasingly more problematic, the Judiciary determined three primary benefits for a new, statewide system, as expressed through the vision diagram below:

- Faster service to citizens through reduced time to receive filings and record case events, and thereby reducing the overall time of case adjudication;
- Improved public safety through improved ability to share court event information with justice partners; and,
- Reduced space required for the storage of paper files. This space can be used more effectively in the future to avoid capital expenses associated with courthouse expansions.



While these benefits will be tangible to litigants and justice partners, it is not possible at this juncture to estimate operational savings in terms of staff or support services for the following reasons:

1. As other court jurisdictions have verified, job focus will change from accepting and filing paper to reviewing filings online for acceptance and scanning paper filings into the electronic file. The clerk function of maintaining the integrity of case files remains the same. It is anticipated that many changes will occur to business processes over time as the MDEC system is used and refinements made. While the job function will change, the staffing needs may not necessarily change.
2. The courts will be operating both the existing and MDEC systems for the next several years. As such, information technology staff will need to be in place to support both processing environments. It is also unclear at this time what the full support requirements will be given the inevitable advances in the use of associated technology over the rollout period.
3. Space reductions that may result from eliminating paper files may be used for additional hearing rooms or courtrooms to reduce case backlogs. In this event, any potential staff savings would be needed to support these additional facilities.

Another cost area that will be affected by MDEC is computer equipment and licensing. Once MDEC is fully implemented, the legacy systems will be retired and the computer equipment on which it operates will no longer be required. However, savings in this area will be offset by increased equipment and licensing costs to handle increased online transaction volumes associated with the transfer, storage, and exchange of data real-time and document images stored and maintained in the electronic case files. The relative offset of these factors is impossible to estimate at this time when consideration is given to the normal variations in case volume and advances in technology equipment and software that will occur over the rollout period.

Likewise, technical staffing demands at JIS to support MDEC, once fully rolled out, may be different than what is required today, but it is not possible to conclusively determine what will be needed until the rollout is completed. Furthermore, staffing requirements will be highly dependent on the combination of in-house and external services determined to be most beneficial for the Judiciary, as well as other adjunct technology to be deployed and supported over the ensuing time period.

Cost savings notwithstanding, there are several areas in which the MDEC electronic court model will provide significant benefits to the litigant community and justice partners, and assist in maintaining technology currency.

The electronic filing model allows litigants to do business with the courts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This provides greater convenience and saves time for court customers. The electronic facility also provides filers with an online, remote vehicle to review their cases and provides important status information. The electronic model also includes a mechanism for service notifications by email, potentially eliminating the need to use the USPS with corresponding costs and time delays.

Through the use of industry standard data exchange models and methods, justice partners can receive data on cases as the events in the case unfold, real-time. This is far different than the 'batch' interface model in standard use today. Batch interfaces collect data on a periodic basis (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) and send it in a rigidly defined manner. Whenever changes are desired to expand the data being sent, both the sending and the receiving side of the interface must make and test programmatic changes. This is a time consuming process that often conflicts with other work priorities and tends to consume relatively large amounts of time to complete.

Contrarily, the use of emerging data exchange standards and methods remove these impediments and provide a flexible and adaptable framework to exchange data on an 'event' (real-time) basis or as desired by the receiving party with no intervention needed by the sending party. This method of exchange allows both the courts and its justice partners to effectuate the exchange of data in a timely manner that helps to optimize their business processes. The Judiciary has established the technical infrastructure and capabilities for this exchange method and is working with justice partners to implement them. In most cases, the implementation of this method of exchange will require changes to the technical capabilities and business processes of the receiving agency. The Judiciary will continue to work with its partners to transition to this new model.

Maintaining currency in the rapidly changing world of technology has become a greater challenge in the last decade. Led by the emergence of mobile devices and social media platforms, almost daily advances in the presentation, connectivity, and integration between data and systems continue to be at the forefront of both consumer and business user expectations. An increasingly important part of IT support involves establishing partnerships with vendors that have the capability, capacity, and commitment to 're-invent' their products as technology changes. Tyler Technologies, the software vendor for the core MDEC system, is the established leader in the field of court case management and devotes a significant amount of financial and human resources to constantly upgrade their product. As a customer, the Judiciary will benefit from these investments at significantly less cost than what it would require to deliver the same capabilities using in-house staff.

Embarking on the MDEC initiative was both a technical and business imperative. A collection of outdated systems, based in paper-oriented business processes, has contributed to creating an environment characterized by limited system capabilities, dwindling institutional knowledge, and inconsistent business practices. The MarylanD Electronic Courts initiative, and the MDEC system, is the strategic response to these challenges both today and into the future.