



Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) Streamlines Procurement with PROACTIS

PROACTIS strengthens authorisation controls while improving efficiencies

Goals

- Improve purchase authorisation controls
- Eliminate authorisation bottlenecks and delays
- Improve grant fund management
- Improve visibility of purchase commitments and overall spend

Profile

Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) provides public bus transportation throughout the city of Des Moines, Iowa and nearby communities in surrounding Polk County – an area with approximately 350,000 residents.

DART operates a fleet of 130+ transit coaches, 25+ smaller buses, and 90+ vans to support fixed routes, general public demand-response routes, fixed route deviation services, complementary paratransit services and a vanpool RideShare program. Vehicles are both purchased and leased. Maintenance and administration functions are performed from a central facility. Most services are operated in-house with a few services contracted to taxi companies.

In 2009, DART had approximately 260 employees and operating expenses of \$23 million.

Challenge

Transporting citizens safely, reliably and within budget can be a significant challenge for public transportation authorities and operators. Equipment and facilities must be kept in consistently good working order while managing within tight budgets. The use of grant funding must be closely controlled and tracked. And accurate financial information must be provided to a host of agencies and stakeholders on a regular basis.

When Sharon Cramer took over as DART's new Financial Director, all this was especially challenging because the organisation's operational and financial systems were out-dated and ineffective. Financial reports required extensive use of spreadsheets

outside the main system and took an enormous amount of time and effort to produce. The purchasing process was completely paper based, resulting in loose approval processes, poor visibility of purchase commitments, and frequent delays in urgently needed items.

"Paper requisitions had to be physically taken to someone for approval. For lots of reasons, they would often sit gathering dust while, for instance, a bus sat waiting for a part," says Cramer. "At the same time, our Grant Manager, General Manager, and I did not have clear visibility of expenses until invoices arrived. That made it very difficult to manage budgets and produce meaningful financial reports."



Results to Date

- Effective authorisation controls in place for all types of purchases
- Managers can quickly approve purchase requests from anywhere
- Greatly improved control of operating budgets and grant funds
- Considerably better financial visibility with drill-down to source transactions
- Personnel additions avoided in Finance department

Why PROACTIS?

DART decided it was time for a complete systems overhaul and selected PROACTIS partner TriBridgE to implement a comprehensive new system, including Microsoft Dynamics GP financials, a fleet maintenance and inventory management system from AssetWorks, and the PROACTIS spend control and eProcurement solution.

"In terms of purchasing, we knew we wanted a solution that made the request and approval process electronic instead of paper-based for a number of reasons," says Cramer. "The things that set PROACTIS apart were the power of the business rules and workflow engine, the fact that it's web based, and the way it uses email to notify the right people when something needs to be acted upon. Another key capability was the fact that it allows us to allocate the cost of a single PO line item across multiple accounts. That is something we often need to do – especially for capital items and major projects."

Results

Today, DART is using PROACTIS for the purchase of just about all goods and services, including inventoried fleet maintenance items. It is tightly integrated with the Dynamics GP financials, giving managers direct visibility of GL account, budget, and balance information when they are approving purchase requests, and passing electronic payment authorisations to GP once invoices are approved. Integration with AssetWorks enables that system to automatically pass inventory requirements to PROACTIS as requisitions which then follow the prescribed authorisation process. Goods receipts are entered into PROACTIS and passed automatically to AssetWorks to show inventory availability.

"We're now able to consistently comply with clearly defined authorisation rules for all types of purchases based on category, dollar amount, and other factors," says Cramer. "Once a request is entered into the system, it's instantly routed to the person(s) who need to approve it. That may include the General

Manager, a department manager, and/or myself. It also includes our Grant Manager if it is to be funded by one or more grants."

But improved authorisation control is only part of the benefit. *"Everything is so much faster and easier now," continues Cramer. "We all love the way PROACTIS uses email to alert us when something needs to be done, then gives us instant access to all the details we need to either approve or question the request. Initiators always know exactly where their request stands and who still needs to approve it. Our Grant Manager has gotten rid of her spreadsheets and now rarely needs to revise budgets due to surprises. People who sometimes work away from their office can even approve requests from their BlackBerry – our General Manager especially likes that capability."*

In Accounts Payable, many invoices are now electronically matched with the PO and receipt and automatically approved for payment. When discrepancies are found, invoices are routed via workflow to the originator for review and approval. Approved invoices go straight to Dynamics GP for payment.

"With PROACTIS tied into our other systems, we can now control our budgets on a daily basis, and I can answer just about any financial question the Commission asks quickly and confidently," says Cramer.

The productivity improvements from the integration of the new financial, maintenance, and purchasing systems have been great enough that DART has been able to avoid what had been a planned personnel addition within Finance even though operations have grown significantly over the past couple years. Cramer has also received kudos from DART's outside auditing firm for how much easier the PROACTIS audit trail has made their job.

In summarising DART's experience with PROACTIS, Cramer says: *"We are extremely pleased with PROACTIS and the way it's integrated with our financial and operational systems. It gives us far greater authorisation controls while making us much more efficient. I would recommend it to anyone!"*

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Sharon Cramer Finance Director, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART)