

# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Transportation Strategic Planning

## **Audit Report**

Report Number NL-AR-16-001

May 20, 2016

VISION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MISSION GOAI



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

## **Highlights**

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network. DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected savings through FY 2015 of million, or percent of the overall \$1 billion goal. However, it only realized million of those savings.

### Background

In response to declining mail volume, the U.S. Postal Service is challenged with rightsizing its transportation network and adjusting its **Service**. In fiscal year (FY) 2011, the Postal Service established 36 Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency (DRIVE) initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE aims to bring revenue in line with expenses through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives.

The strategy for rightsizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, Ground Transportation. This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017. In FY 2015, annual network transportation costs of about billion were the Postal Service's largest operating expense after compensation and benefits.

During our audit we did a comparative analysis of strategic planning best practices used by 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards. We found that effective strategies include contingency planning. Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its and network.

## What the OIG Found

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network. DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected savings through FY 2015 of **Margin** million, or **Margin** percent of the overall \$1 billion goal. However, it only realized **Margin** million of those savings.

Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight Transportation process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of million. In FY 2015, six roadmaps and two more process roadmaps did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall of million. Finally, in Quarter 1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional savings shortfall of million.

The surface transportation manager said that an

contributed to



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the savings shortfall. We are reviewing transportation costs in relation to service standard changes in a separate audit and may review the Postal Service's progress on transportation savings programs in the future.

In addition, we found the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings. Contingency planning helps management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

### What the OIG Recommended

We recommended the vice president, Network Operations, update the 1.13 section of DRIVE 1 - Optimize Network Operations to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in FYs 2016 and 2017.

# **Transmittal Letter**

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE			
May 20, 2016			
MEMORANDUM FOR:	ROBERT CINTRON VICE PRESIDENT, NETWORK OPERATIONS		
FROM:	Michael L. Thompson Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Mission Operations		
SUBJECT:	Audit Report – Transportation Strategic Planning (Report Number NL-AR-16-001)		
This report presents the r (Project Number 15XG04	esults of our review of Transportation Strategic Planning 1NO000).		
	ration and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any nal information, please contact Margaret B. McDavid, acting or me at 703-248-2100.		
Attachment			
cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management			

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## Finding

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its

transportation network.

### Introduction

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Service's transportation strategic planning (Project Number 15XG041NO000). Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its transportation network. See Appendix A for additional information about this audit.

In response to declining mail volume, the Postal Service is challenged to right size its transportation network and adjust its while reducing costs and maintaining service. In fiscal year (FY) 2011, the Postal Service established 36 Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency (DRIVE) initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE initiatives aim to bring revenue in line with expenses by FY 2016 through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each strategic initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives. The strategy for right sizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, Ground Transportation. This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

## Summary

The Postal Service needs to improve its strategy to optimize its transportation network. DRIVE Initiative 1.13 projected a savings through FY 2015 of the million, or percent of the \$1 billion goal. However, it only realized savings of the million, which is just percent of the savings goal.

Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight Transportation process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of \$80 million. Further, in FY 2015, there are eight roadmaps that did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall of \$104 million.

In Quarter (Q) 1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional shortfall of million.

The surface transportation manager indicated that an

programs contributed to the savings shortfall. We are reviewing transportation costs in relation to service standard changes in a separate audit and may review the Postal Service's progress on transportation savings programs in the future. In addition, the transportation optimization strategy did not have contingency plans to re-evaluate program process roadmaps that did not yield projected savings.

Our research on the strategic planning best practices used by 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards showed that effective strategies include contingency planning. This helps management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

## **Transportation Strategy**

The Postal Service's DRIVE Initiative 1.13 — which is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017 — could be more effective. Since implementing the initiative, the Postal Service has not met projected cost savings. Specifically, in FY 2014, the Postal Service did not meet projected cost savings in six of its eight process roadmaps, resulting in a savings shortfall of million. The six process roadmaps are:

In FY 2015, of 10 process	
roadmaps, six process roadmaps	
and two additional process	
roadmaps did not meet projected	Further, in FY 2015, of 10 process roadmaps, six process roadmaps and two additional process roadmaps
	did not meet projected cost savings, resulting in a savings shortfall
cost savings, resulting in a	of million.
savings shortfall of <b>second</b> million.	
	The process roadmaps that comprise DRIVE Initiative 1.13, described in more detail below, are loaded into an enterprise-wide,
	web-based tracking tool that provides quarterly major milestones with results (see Figure 1 for projected and actual savings in

FY 2014 and Figure 2 for projected and actual savings in FY 2015).

## Figure 1. DRIVE 1.13 FY 2014 Roadmaps<sup>1</sup>

PROJECTS	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
	\$0	\$85,308	\$85,308	\$85,308	\$255,924
	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0
	\$6,000,000	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	\$27,873,320	\$33,873,320
	Actual: \$1,495,269	Actual: \$1,533,873	Actual: \$3,775,837	Actual: \$3,694,502	Actual: \$10,499
	\$8,750,000	\$11,250,000	\$11,250,000	\$13,968,354	\$45,218,654
	Actual: \$6,248,977	Actual: \$9,936,772	Actual: \$11,086,568	Actual: \$8,115,943	Actual: \$35,388,
	\$2,500,000	\$7,600,000	\$15,200,000	\$15,275,979	\$40,575,979
	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$81,160	Actual: \$110,902	Actual: \$333,324	Actual: \$525,3
	\$2,500,000	\$3,150,000	\$3,211,581	\$3,250,000	\$12,111,581
	Actual: \$310,242	Actual: \$566,137	Actual: \$1,019,059	Actual: \$1,350,570	Actual: \$3,246,0
	\$3,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$5,054,391	\$17,554,391
	Actual: \$729,043	Actual: \$1,756,042	Actual: \$3,825,682	Actual: \$13,314,180	Actual: \$19,624,
	\$0	\$0	\$0	<b>\$500,000</b>	\$5000,000
	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$678,253	Actual: \$678,2
	\$5,146	\$5,146	\$16,199	\$16,199	\$42,690
	Actual: \$3,932	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$0	Actual: \$3,93
TOTAL	\$23,255,146	\$26,590,454	\$34,263,088	\$66,023,851	\$150,132,539
	Actual: \$8,787,463	Actual: \$13,873,984	Actual: \$19,818,048	Actual: \$27,486,772	Actual: \$69,966,

1 This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

## Figure 2. DRIVE 1.13 FY 2015 Roadmaps<sup>2</sup>

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®		\$1 Billion FY15 Quarterly Metrics Snapshot			
ROADMAP	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
	<b>\$10,000</b> Actual: \$57,100	\$10,000 Actual: \$(33,654)	\$10,000 Actual: \$18	\$276,340 Actual: \$(60,855)	\$306,340 Actual: \$(37,391
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$4,000,000 Actual: \$759,126	\$6,000,000 Actual: \$759,126	\$7,062,384 Actual: \$759,126	\$17,062,384 Actual: \$2,277,37
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$5,119,315 Actual: \$519,226	\$5,119,315 Actual: \$3,488,873	\$6,823,754 Actual: \$6,184,811	\$17,062,384 Actual: \$10,192,9
	<b>\$2,000,000</b> Actual: \$2,210,851	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$1,891,208	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$100,551	\$23,863,568 Actual: \$0	\$29,863,568 Actual: \$4,202,61
\$8,750,000 Actual: \$(17,316) \$1,000,000 Actual: \$1,248,731 \$4,500,000 Actual: \$698,684 \$0	\$7,000,000 Actual: \$12,729,162	<b>\$7,000,000</b> Actual: \$7,518,758	\$8,000,000 Actual: \$9,054,233	\$8,145,869 Actual: \$8,973,415	\$30,145,869 Actual: \$38,275,5
		\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,048,141	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,197,377	\$8,750,000 Actual: \$3,760,219	\$35,000,000 Actual: \$9,988,42
		\$1,000,000 Actual: \$171,135	\$2,000,000 Actual: \$838,955	\$2,202,835 Actual: \$583,336	\$6,202,835 Actual: \$2,842,1
		\$4,500,000 Actual: 2,116,490	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$1,093,663	\$33,674,521 Actual: \$1,081,077	\$42,674,521 Actual: \$4,989,97
	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$1,342,603	\$0 Actual: \$0	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$29,752	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$704,331	<b>\$0</b> Actual: \$2,058,68
	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$0 Actual: \$0	\$750,000 Actual: \$0	\$750,000 Actual: \$0
TOTAL	\$23,260,000 Actual: \$18,251,815	\$32,379,315 Actual: \$15,990,430	\$31,879,315 Actual: \$18,562,548	\$91,549,271 Actual: \$21,985,459	\$179,067,901 Actual: \$74,790,2
ource: Postal Service.					

2 This initiative is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion from FY 2014 through FY 2017.

The surface transportation manager said that an increase

contributed to the savings shortfall. In addition, the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings. As a result, in FYs 2014 and 2015, the Postal Service had a total savings shortfall of **million**. Finally, in Q1, FY 2016, none of the roadmaps realized projected cost savings, resulting in an additional savings shortfall of **million**.

#### An increase

contributed

to the savings shortfall.



#### **Table 1: Best Practices Resources**

International Posts	Corporations	Advisory Boards
Canada Post	DHL	Authenticity Consulting, LLC
Deutsche Post AG	FedEx	Center for Applied Research
La Poste	Hexaware Technologies	Corporate Executive Board
Royal Mail plc	Houston Chronicle	Executive Consultancy Service
Universal Postal Union	United Parcel Service	
	The World Bank	

Source: Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis.

## Recommendation

We recommend management update the 1.13 section of DRIVE to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in FYs 2016 and 2017. We recommend the vice president, Network Operations:

1. Update the 1.13 section of Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency Initiative 1 (Optimize Network Operations) to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

## **Management's Comments**

Management disagreed with the finding and recommendation.

Regarding the finding, management stated that by not acknowledging the change in mail mix shape and the significant impact of shape and costs, the report oversimplifies the challenge as simply one of responding to a decline in overall volume. Management stated that their underlying concern is the OIG's failure to acknowledge and consider that the goals set up in the DRIVE process are aggressive stretch goals. Management also stated that, although they did not meet the overall \$1 billion DRIVE goals by million for FYs 2014 and 2015, they met the internal, more realistic budget targets, which would seem to be a more appropriate benchmark for analysis. Further, management requested that the OIG give serious consideration to not publishing this report because it falls short of offering any constructive information or guidance.

Regarding the recommendation, management stated that they use DRIVE as a tool to push the organization as quickly as possible to achieve strategic goals. If management made the DRIVE process less aggressive, the Postal Service would become more conservative and not pursue some of the more complex, risky — but higher return — initiatives.

See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

## **Evaluation of Management's Comments**

The OIG considers management's comments unresponsive to the finding and the recommendation in the report.

Regarding management's disagreement with our finding, during our audit, the surface transportation manager indicated that an increase **and the second strategy**, among other factors, contributed to the savings shortfall. However, the transportation optimization strategy did not have a contingency plan to re-evaluate program process roadmaps when they did not yield the projected savings.

Regarding not publishing the report due to its lack of constructive information or guidance, the audit included an analysis of strategic planning best practices. These practices stress the need to measure and monitor the effectiveness of the initiatives in place and continually assess processes to identify performance gaps that need improvement. We also found that effective strategies include contingency planning to help management mitigate unexpected events and achieve goals.

Regarding the recommendation and management's concern about the failure to acknowledge and consider that the DRIVE goals are aggressive stretch goals, our analysis indicated that DRIVE is a tool for bringing revenue in line with expenses through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. The absence of realistic goals increases the risk that the Postal Service will not meet its performance goals.

We view the disagreement on the recommendation as unresolved but do not plan to pursue it through the formal audit resolution process. We consider the recommendation closed with the issuance of this report.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A: Additional Information

## Background

In FY 2015, the Postal Service's	was its network transportation costs of about billion		
were the largest expense <sup>3</sup> ). This of	ost included		
	See Figure 3 for the components of		
network transportation. In response to declining mail volume, the Postal Service is challenged to right size its transportation			
network and adjust its, while reducing	costs and maintaining service.		

Figure 3: Transportation Components of Network Operations



Source: OIG analysis.

3

was second at billion, 2015 Report on Annual 10-K, U.S. Postal Service.

In FY 2011, the Postal Service established 36 DRIVE initiatives to improve its business strategy. DRIVE initiatives aim to bring revenue in line with expenses by FY 2016 through strategic initiatives with measurable outcomes. Each strategic initiative has process roadmaps that track whether initiatives remain on schedule and achieve their objectives.

The strategy for right sizing the transportation network is DRIVE Initiative 1.13, which is designed to reduce transportation spending by \$1 billion beginning from FY 2014 through FY 2017. The initiative was composed of eight to ten process roadmaps linking major milestones with results (see Figure 4 for the DRIVE structure).



### Figure 4: DRIVE Structure

Source: Postal Service analysis.

## **Objective, Scope, and Methodology**

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's strategy to effectively optimize its **contraction** transportation network. Specifically, we assessed Network Operations' strategy to determine if it had a comprehensive plan linked to the Postal Service's overall strategic and business goals to optimize transportation. The scope for this audit was FYs 2014 and 2015 and Q1, FY 2016, DRIVE 1.13 - \$1 Billion Ground Transportation Initiative roadmaps and measured goals. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed procedures and criteria related to establishing DRIVE initiatives.
- Interviewed the vice president, Network Operations, to obtain information regarding Network Operations' current and planned initiatives and to understand how the initiatives are prioritized or associated to provide an overall strategy to meet long-term goals.
- Interviewed the Postal Service's strategic planning director to determine how Network Operations' strategic planning contributes to the Postal Service's overall strategic plan.
- Interviewed the manager, Surface Transportation, to discuss the objective of DRIVE Initiative 1.13.
- Obtained and reviewed FYs 2014 and 2015 and Q1, FY 2016, roadmap metrics to determine if projected goals were met.<sup>4</sup>
- Reviewed, compared, and analyzed the strategic planning information of 15 international posts, corporations, and advisory boards to identify best practices.
- Reviewed, compared, and analyzed 15 trade and industry organization articles and reports to identify industry initiatives and best practices that may apply to the Postal Service.
- Discussed strategic planning best practices with external stakeholders.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2015 through May 2016, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on April 14, 2016, and included their comments where appropriate.

We did not assess the reliability of any computer-generated data for the purposes of this report.

## **Prior Audit Coverage**

The OIG did not identify any prior audits or reviews related to the objective of this audit.

We plan to review and evaluate each roadmap detailed process in future separate reviews to help facilitate Postal Service development of plans to mitigate unexpected events and ensure project goals are achieved.

## Appendix B: Management's Comments



DRIVE goals, it is very unlikely that all of the million in savings in FY15 would have been achieved. Although, we did not meet the overall \$1 billion DRIVE goals by for FY14 and FY15, we met our internal more realistic budget targets, which would seem to be a more appropriate benchmark for analysis.

If the OIG's approach to auditing is to evaluate management on the basis of whether its stretch goals have been achieved, such an approach could counterproductively influence managers to establish lower cost savings goals to avoid future similar criticism. Such a result would be unfortunate, as it would lead to less aggressive pursuit of savings and leave savings opportunities on the table.

Although the audit faults management for not achieving its overall cost savings goal and recommends the establishment of contingencies, the audit does not constructively identify any potential savings opportunities that were not already specified by management.

By any objective standard, the report falls short of offering any constructive information or guidance. Accordingly, we respectfully urge that serious consideration be given to not publishing the report at all.

#### Recommendation 1:

We recommend the Vice President, Network Operations:

 Update the 1.13 section of Delivering Results, Innovation, Value, and Efficiency Initiative 1 (Optimize Network Operations) to include an achievable projected transportation cost reduction goal and contingency planning to mitigate unexpected events in fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

#### Management Response/Action Plan:

Management disagrees with this recommendation. DRIVE is used as a tool to push the organization as quickly as possible to achieve our strategic goals. The budget process allows for a mechanism for providing more achievable goals. If we change the DRIVE process to become less aggressive we will certainly become more conservative and not pursue some of the more complex, riskier but higher return initiatives.

Target Implementation Date: N/A

Responsible Manager: N/A

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Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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