IDASH

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND AUDIT

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Contents

What We Found

What's Working Well

The iDash system brings great value to Metro Transit by serving as a hub for employee management. Specifically, iDash system administrators are adequately controlling user access to the iDash system. User access is terminated in a timely manner, and managers have adequate access to iDash to complete their daily tasks.

What Needs Improvement

Controls around change management should be improved to align with industry best practices. Additionally, information may only exist in iDash or another system, such as PeopleSoft or AX, and staff rely on institutional knowledge to review both systems when needed.
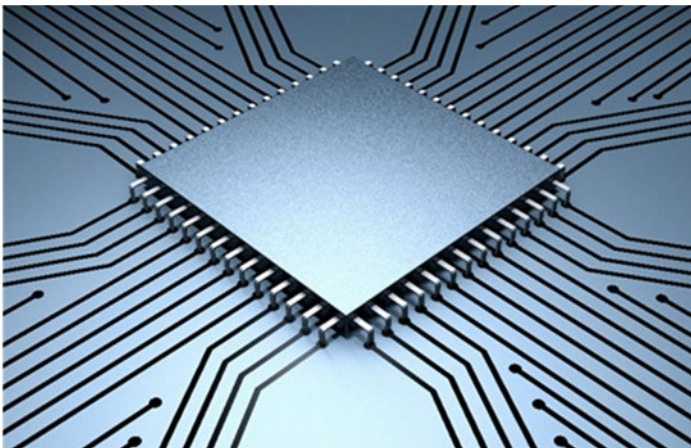
What We Recommend

Metro Transit should define, document, and implement a change management process for the iDash system.

Human Resources should document the process of managing employee disability within iDash. Additionally, HR should work with Information Services to review additional iDash processes to determine if other information should be automatically from iDash to PeopleSoft or AX.

Why We Did This Work

We did this audit to ensure that user access to the iDash system is controlled. We also verified that data is communicated accurately between systems. We ensured that any changes made to the iDash system were controlled and documented.

What We Reviewed

We reviewed data entered in the iDash system, as well as systems that communicate with it, including PeopleSoft and AX.

How We Did This Work

We reviewed access and user permissions to iDash, interviewed staff members from Metro Transit Bus Transportation, Information Services, and Human Resources (HR). We also reviewed user access to information in PeopleSoft and TxBase to ensure it has the same or similar access restrictions. Data was sampled to ensure that as it is communicated between PeopleSoft, iDash, and TxBase, that it retains its integrity. Finally, we reviewed changes to iDash to ensure that they adhered to the ISO 12207 standard.

Summary of Findings

Number	Description	Recommendation	Follow-up Action	Page
Observation 1	Controls for iDash Change Management Should be Improved	Formally define, document, and implement a change management process based on the ISO 12207 standard and/or other similar standards.	Retest	7
		IS and Metro Transit should review the need for two change management systems, or if LanDesk can solely be used for requesting changes and identifying issues. If it is determined that two systems are needed, then IS staff in collaboration with MT staff should determine if all the fields in the iDash Case Log should be filled out.	Retest	
Observation 2	Not all information is communicated to or from iDash	HR and Metro Transit staff should review the iDash processes and determine which system (iDash, PeopleSoft/AX, etc.) is the system of record and this should be documented. Information should automatically be synchronized, if possible, if not the manual process of reviewing information in systems should be documented.	Confirm	9

Introduction

Background

iDash is an application used by Metro Transit Bus Operations staff to handle and monitor absenteeism, FMLA, disability management, injury and incident reporting, accidents, discipline, coaching/counseling, and probation. The application was developed by IS and Metro Transit staff between 2014 and 2015 to reduce the number of systems that were being used previously. Through the various modules, iDash helps Metro Transit managers communicate with employees, Occupational Health, and Human Resources (HR). In addition, the system allows the user to track actions to be taken as well as actions that have been performed, statuses, and timelines. iDash also communicates with multiple systems such as TxBase, PeopleSoft, AX, and other databases. While iDash is used to store and communicate critical information, there is nothing formally documenting what the system of record is.

Objective

The objectives of this audit were to:

- Ensure that access to iDash and the information it contains is controlled.
- Verify data integrity when information is communicated between systems.
- Ensure changes to iDash are controlled and documented.

Scope

This audit reviewed data entered in iDash and the systems that communicate with iDash, changes to iDash, and access given or removed from 2022 through 2023.

This audit did not review the processes in iDash, such as FMLA, probation, discipline, injury or incident reporting.

Methodology

Audit staff interviewed staff members from Metro Transit Bus Transportation, Information Services, and HR to understand data entry into the iDash system, and how iDash interacts with other Council systems. Audit also reviewed access rights to iDash for various previous and current employees, and user access to information in PeopleSoft and TxBase to ensure it has the same or similar access restrictions. Audit sampled data to ensure that it retained its integrity as it was communicated between iDash and other systems. Finally, Audit reviewed changes to iDash to determine if IS follows guidance from the ISO 12207: Software Life Cycle Processes standard. This is the standard that IS staff interviewed by Audit stated they follow for changes to iDash.

Limitations

iDash did not have a user access role that enabled Audit to get independent, read-only access to the iDash system for any portion of the audit testing. Instead, we relied on accessing the iDash test system to complete testing, as well as working alongside Metro Transit and IS employees to complete testing. While Audit was able to complete all testing reliably and accurately, this lack of access resulted in several delays in completing audit testing.

Thrive 2040 – Strategic Planning - Equity

This audit considered the Council's Thrive MSP 2040 Principles of Accountability and Integration. This audit supported Accountability by ensuring the information in and access to iDash is controlled according to Council policies, procedures, and best practices. Integration was promoted by reviewing how iDash interacts with PeopleSoft and TxBase.

Recognition

We want to thank Metro Transit, Human Resources, and Information Services managers and staff for their cooperation and collaboration during this audit.

Observations

User Administration Controls Operating as Intended

Audit reviewed access and user permissions to iDash and found that iDash system administrators are adequately controlling user access to the iDash system. Audit reviewed 19 Council employees to verify that their level of access aligned with their business need. Additionally, Audit reviewed 10 Council employees who had left employment and had their credentials deactivated. From this testing, Audit concluded that user access is terminated in a timely manner, and managers have adequate access to iDash to complete their daily tasks. Therefore, we did not issue any findings related to access and user permissions.

Controls for iDash Change Management Should be Improved

There are two systems to handle change requests for iDash: the iDash Case Log on MetNet and the Change Management system, LanDesk. Authorized Metro Transit employees submit their requests for change in the iDash Case Log. Then IS staff either take that request and transfer information over into the LanDesk or combine multiple requests into one LanDesk change request. Of the six change requests sampled, five started from the iDash Case Log. The remaining one was started by an IS employee that recognized a need for a change and therefore a request starting from the iDash Case Log was not needed. In the five change requests that started in the iDash Case Log there were several fields that did not contain any information such as Process, Release, Resolution, Area, Category, % complete, due date, date closed, etc. Also, some of these fields only exist in the iDash Case Log and not in the LanDesk system.

Of the six change requests that were sampled, two change requests were missing an approval, the date the request was made was unclear for four requests as dates were noted but no date explicitly stated when the request was made or there were multiple dates referenced, the description for one request was vague in that it simply noted the iDash process name, there was no indication whether testing was performed prior to release for one change, and finally, risks were not considered prior to implementing the changes being requested for the six changes sampled.

The IS team responsible for managing iDash follows the ISO 12207: 2017 Systems and Software Engineering standard. Per the ISO 12207 standard:

- Track and manage approved changes to baseline, Requests for Change, and Requests for Variance (Section 6.3.5.3.c.3)
- Capture, store, and report configuration management data Section (6.3.5.3.e.2)
- Coordinate, evaluate, and disposition Requests for Change and Requests for Variance (Section 6.3.5.3.c.2)
- Perform configuration evaluation (Section 6.3.5.3.f)
- Develop and maintain the change management status information for software elements, baselines, and releases (Section 6.3.5.3.e.1).
- Identify and record Requests for Change and Requests for Variance Section (6.3.5.3.c.1).
- Consideration of the level of risk and impact in approval of configuration baselines and regular and emergency change requests (Section 6.3.5.3.a.1.ii).

The issues with iDash change management primarily originate from the lack of formal documented processes and associated controls, per the ISO 12207 standard, that outline what steps should be performed and what information should be recorded. This issue was also identified in Audit's Technology Change Management audit from 2022. Additionally, LanDesk does not have the capability to combine multiple requests into one ticket. As a result, Metro Transit and IS staff worked together to create the iDash Case Log, so that multiple issues or requests could be combined into one change request in LanDesk.

Without change management controls, changes could be made that negatively impact the functions of iDash. Specifically, changes that are not thoroughly reviewed, tested, and approved may make private or confidential information available to those who should not have access to view that information. This ultimately could result in legal action and reputational damage to the Council which could result in financial loss as well.

By having two systems to enter and record information regarding a change to iDash, information is being entered twice, which is not an efficient use of resources. Also, having some information in one system and not in the other could result in delays implementing a change as staff may need to check both systems.

Recommendation:

1. Formally define, document, and implement a change management process based on the ISO 12207 standard or other similar standards.

Management Response: We are in the process of aligning our change management process with recognized standards such as ISO 12207 or other similar standards. This will ensure that our approach covers all aspects of the software lifecycle, including development, maintenance, and production changes. States if management agrees with the observation/recommendation, and what they will do.

Our planned steps include:

1. Formal Definition:
   We will document a comprehensive change management process, outlining roles, responsibilities, approval workflows, and tracking mechanisms. This process will follow the key principles of ISO 12207, focusing on software development, maintenance, and release.

2. Training and Awareness:
   We will ensure that all stakeholders, including business owners and development teams, are trained on the new process to promote consistency and compliance.

3. Implementation:
   The documented change management process will be integrated into our existing IT systems, utilizing tools like Azure DevOps for tracking and LanDesk for recording Request for Change (RFC) approvals.

4. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement:
   We will regularly audit the change management process to ensure adherence and make improvements as needed, following ISO 12207 or similar standard guidelines for process assessment and refinement.

By following this approach, we will enhance the change management controls, ensuring that they meet industry best practices for software lifecycle management.

Timetable: Planned steps will all be completed by Q1 of 2026.

Staff Responsible:

Sujatha Duraimanickam – Director of Software Engineering, IS
Donathan Brown – Asst Director of Bus Operations

Audit Follow-Up: States what follow-up action Audit will perform.

2. IS and Metro Transit should review the need for two change management systems, or if LanDesk can solely be used for requesting changes and identifying issues. If it is determined that two systems are needed, then IS staff in collaboration with MT staff should determine if all the fields in the iDash Case Log should be filled out.

Management Response: The iDash case log is a list of proposed changes to iDash and is not used for tracking actual changes. LanDesk is the system used to track and manage requests for changes being deployed to production. When defining the change management process, as outlined above, we will optimize and, where necessary, unify the tools used for different functionalities to ensure efficiency and consistency.

Timetable: Q4 2025

Staff Responsible:

Sujatha Duraimanickam – Director of Software Engineering, IS
Donathan Brown – Asst Director of Bus Operations

Audit Follow-Up: States what follow-up action Audit will perform.

Not All Information is Communicated To or From iDash

Data synchronization is not always consistent, as expected, for two of the nine iDash processes. Audit reviewed the data for two employees for each iDash process. In one instance for the Absenteeism process, information regarding a "no show" existed in iDash, but not in PeopleSoft/AX. For the Disability process, no information is communicated to or from PeopleSoft. HR staff simply go into iDash to retrieve any necessary disability related information. However, there is nothing instructing HR staff to go into iDash to review relevant disability information.

The GAO Green Book outlines the following principles for maintaining documentation:

- Principle 3.09: Management develops and maintains documentation of its internal control system.
- Principle 3.10: Effective documentation assists in management's design of internal control by establishing and communicating the who, what, when, where, and why of internal control execution to personnel. Documentation also provides a means to retain organizational knowledge and mitigate the risk of having that knowledge limited to a few personnel, as well as to communicate that knowledge as needed to external parties, such as external auditors.

There is no documented requirement that information needs to exist in iDash & PeopleSoft/AX and, specifically, there is no documented process noting to review information in iDash for disability management. By not having consistent information in all systems, Council staff could make incorrect decisions (approvals, denials, discipline, etc.) regarding an employee, which could result in delays or litigation, that ultimately would cause both reputational damage to the Council and financial loss.

There is also a risk of losing institutional knowledge if an employee leaves the Council, since knowing to look information up in multiple systems is not documented. This could lead to either delays in processing disability claims or making incorrect decisions. Both of which could, again, cause reputational damage and financial loss for the Council.

Recommendation:

1. HR and Metro Transit staff should review the iDash processes and determine which system (iDash, PeopleSoft/AX, etc.) is the system of record and this should be documented. Information should automatically be synchronized, if possible, if not the manual process of reviewing information in systems should be documented.

Management Response:

1. HR and Metro Transit will review the current documentation within iDash and when it is synchronized.
2. Each module within iDash will be reviewed to determine which system is the system of record. Documentation will be made available for employees. This documentation will be updated as additional systems or modules are implemented.

   Timetable: Review of the current state will be completed by Q2 2025.

   Staff Responsible: HR and Metro Transit staff.

   Audit Follow-Up: States what follow-up action Audit will perform.

Conclusions

The iDash system effectively enables Metro Transit to manage employee functions. While user access is appropriately maintained, improvements around change management and communication between data systems will support continuous operation and agility of the iDash system to support needs of employees and managers at the Council.

October 1, 2024
Matthew J. LaTour, Chief Audit Executive
Program Evaluation & Audit

Appendix A

Program Evaluation and Audit recommendations are categorized according to how Audit will follow-up on them. The categories are:

- **Retest** — Audit will retest the area using the same or similar procedures after a recommendation has been implemented and sufficient time has passed for the changes to take effect. The retest will take place on a specified timetable. The recommendation will be closed once the change has occurred. A new audit project will be opened for retesting and any new findings will include new recommendations
- **Confirmation** — Audit will confirm that an adequate risk response has been completed on the agreed upon timeline. The recommendation will be closed once the change has taken place.
- **Assess Risk** — Audit will not plan for specific follow up to these recommendations. Audit will discuss the area as part of its annual risk assessment activities and consider future audit work in the area.

Distribution List

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- Members of the Audit Committee
- Regional Administrator
- General Manager/Division Director
- Department Director
- Process Manager