**NASCIO 2014 State IT Recognition Awards Nomination**



# OntheGo (OtG) – Mobile Payments

**Category:** Improving State Operations

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**State:** Idaho

**Initiation:** February 1, 2013

**Completion:** December 1, 2013

**Executive Summary**

To increase citizen convenience and improve internal efficiencies, OntheGo (OtG) mobile payments was conceived to allow government entities to take credit and debit card payments (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express) on any Android-based smartphone or tablet anywhere, anytime.

Developed by Idaho's portal manager, Access Idaho, under the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), the free application meets Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards and ties into the state's payment engine, which is designed exclusively for government use and securely processes more than $150 million in payments annually. A swipe card reader that plugs into the audio jack of the device is optional.

OtG's uniqueness lies in its capability to take payments securely whether or not the Android device is within cell or Wi-Fi coverage. Upon connecting to a service area or a secure Wi-Fi network, its payments will automatically process.

OtG's potential is huge, because it's immediately available to any of Idaho's city, county and state government entities. Additionally, the service is available to any government organization outside of Idaho, such as federal, state, and local agencies that serve 97 million people across the United States.

Whether it's a motor carrier, a safety inspector on the side of the road, an official issuing building permits in the field, or a tax collector, OtG makes it easy to accept credit/debit cards no matter where or when government business needs to be done to its secure store-and-go capability.

**Description of the Business Problem and Solution**

Not all government business takes place in the office. And Idaho's vast rural landscape often does not support data connectivity for instant payment processing on mobile devices. So when public safety officers or tax collectors are in the field, they are often without an affordable, secure, reliable way to take electronic payments.

To remedy the connectivity issues, OtG goes beyond run-of-the-mill mobile device payment processing by combining the importance of security with the flexibility of true "store-and-go" capability. The app's value lies in its ability to encrypt and save pending transactions until the device is within range of a service area or Wi-Fi network, when the app will automatically process.

The app takes advantage of new mobile technology to untether payment processing from a walk-in government office. Secure citizen–to-government payments can now take place remotely on tablets or smartphones. The technology opens up a new dimension of face-to-face customer service for citizens.

OtG allows government entities to pass on the credit/debit card processing fees to customers because they do not hold the merchant account (Access Idaho does). Access Idaho retains the fees and electronically deposits the statutory funds into the pertinent government agencies' bank account.

If an agency does not already have a government-issued Android device and/or a cell coverage plan, they can literally buy a $50 "bare bones" Android smart phone at a retailer like Walmart, load the OtG application, and take payments using free Wi-Fi. This approach provides a virtual no-cost barrier for any government office to begin taking remote payments.

OtG is perfectly poised for the expected "bring your own device" (BYOD) policy trend, where employees will be allowed to use their personal tablets and/or smart phones for use in their government jobs.

To promote the service, Access Idaho created a site (http://www.onthego.idaho.gov/) that allows users to review the benefits and features of OtG then download the app from

the Google Play Store for free. Financial officers at the city, county and state levels have received promotional materials directing them to the site. Access Idaho even offers a program where it loans out Google tablets and smartphones at no cost for departments to pilot the app without risk. The final part of the communications strategy has been to gain earned media in local and national government publications, such as Government Computer News (http://gcn.com/articles/2014/04/30/idaho-onthego.aspx).

## Significance of the Project

The OntheGo mobile app delivers consolidated financial reporting and creates an additional way for government entities to take guaranteed payments.

The backend payment reports seamlessly integrate with existing financial accounts. Moreover, the reports are also accessible from the mobile site itself. If a government entity already uses Access Idaho's payment engine, OtG feeds its transactional data into all existing backend accounting and deposit reports. Each online, over-the-counter and OtG payment reports into a central account data warehouse for simplified financial reconciliation. This feature has the potential to save government thousands of dollars in man hours for financial reconciliation and integration costs.

For example, when an inspector or tax collector meets with a citizen, payment can be quickly and efficiently rendered. No more "the check is in the mail" issues or work stoppage until a payment is received. Government and citizens can now work together to get payment issues resolved face-to-face anywhere. The result is a more cost-effective way to complete government business.

While the government entity improves its financial and auditing position with the app, citizens also gain greater and faster access to services when a government employee equipped with OtG is in the field. The government entity also realizes efficiency and security improvements when handling taxpayer funds. In addition to citizens, below are some of the government users who benefit when using the app on their mobile device:

State:

- Tax collectors
- Park employees
- Health inspectors
- Law enforcement
- Health and Welfare field staff
- Fish and Game enforcement officers

County:

- Parole officers
- DMV inspectors
- Courts

City:

- Building inspectors
- Parking services
- Sanitation facilities

With the proliferation of Android devices, such as tablets and smartphones, mobile computing will see a huge expansion in government in the very near future. The OtG application is ahead of the curve in providing new customer service capabilities to government employees, while providing the safest and most secure way of processing citizen financial data.

**Benefit of the Project**

This year an industry study was released which tracked more than 13 million social media comments across Twitter, Facebook, online blogs and forums around the world. The research points to 2013 as the year mobile payments transitioned from "concept to

adoption." The study demonstrates that consumers and merchants have moved from "why use mobile payments?" to "which mobile payment option should be used?"

As the wave of users move from confusion over what mobile payments are to adoption, the discussions are focusing on the quality and staying power of various products. The research shows consumers have moved from questioning whether to use mobile payments to deciding which mobile payments option to use. As consumers shift from discussing, to trying out various options, merchants are experimenting with figuring out the benefits for both themselves and consumers and, in many cases, as a differentiator for their business.

Will government be part of this mobile payment trend? In Idaho the answer is a resounding yes. The OtG service is designed to make accepting mobile payments convenient for government departments and citizens. The first step on this mobile government roadmap was to develop an app specifically for government workers to take debit and credit card payments on any Android phone or tablet. With that accomplished, we look forward to expanding and improving the citizen's experience when conducting financial transactions with their government in the field.

The OtG service is huge game changer for government-to-citizen interaction. The question is, are citizens ready for a mobile program? Based on trends like Square, which focuses on small business, mobile payments are here to stay. There is potential for these services to change how citizens interact with government cashiers and clerks.

Idaho is leading the way with its efforts to eliminate the walk-up counter historically associated as a barrier between citizens and their government. The current revolution in Idaho mobile e-payments is breaking that barrier.