Auditor's Home Page | List of Audit Reports

Table of Contents

Table of Exhibits

Introduction

In accordance with the City Auditor's 2002-2003 Workplan, we performed an audit of the City of San Jose's (City) Customer Service Call Center's (Call Center) Service Request Process. We conducted this audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and limited our work to those areas specified in the Scope and Methodology section of this report.

The City Auditor's Office thanks the management and staff of the Customer Service Call Center, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement for their cooperation during the audit.

Audit Scope, Objectives, And Methodology

Our audit objective was to evaluate whether the Call Center is effectively handling service requests. The scope of this audit was service requests received by the Call Center between July 2001 and December 2002. Specifically, we reviewed open and closed service requests. For those service requests that had been open over 47 days, we contacted the responsible department to determine the status of the requests. If we were unable to determine the appropriate staff to contact on a specific service request, we contacted the resident who had requested the service. We reviewed closed service requests to determine the timeliness of completion by the responsible departments. Further, we reviewed the Department of Transportation's (DOT) database of streetlights requiring Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) repair that were open over 30 days as of April 2002. Finally, in order to facilitate inspections, we used mapping software to provide the DOT with maps of geographically-grouped streetlights requiring PG&E repair.

We interviewed the staff from the Call Center, the DOT, the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement (PBCE), Environmental Services Department (ESD), and PG&E.

The documentation we reviewed included:

- Call Center management reports;
- Call Center service request detail reports;
- Call Center procedures; and
- DOT streetlight repair reports.

We performed only limited testing to determine the accuracy and reliability of information in the various computer reports used. Such testing included third party verification of the information and comparison of management reports with service request detail reports.

Background

In June 2002, the City Auditor's Office issued a report entitled "An Audit of the City of San Jose's Customer Service Call Center". In the report, we addressed Call Center staffing issues that had budget implications for 2002-03. In this report, we assess the Call Center's handling of requests for City services.

The City's Call Center opened in January 2001 to answer resident questions and respond to resident requests for City services 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. The Call Center is staffed with Customer Service Representatives (CSR) who are responsible for handling telephone calls, staffing the information desk during business hours, and processing resident requests for City services. During off-peak hours, an answering service contracted by the City performs the duties of the CSRs. In addition, the CSRs perform various other duties such as issuing City employee identification badges and building access codes, and scheduling meetings for City conference rooms.

The Call Center receives and processes residents' requests for City services. Residents frequently contact the Call Center with problems that require the City to perform a service to address the residents' problems. For instance, residents routinely report problems such as abandoned shopping carts or abandoned vehicles. For these and most other complaints, the Call Center prepares a service request and enters it into a database, which is available to the liaisons at the responsible departments.

During 2001-02, Call Center CSRs entered 3,303 requests for City services into the service request database. For the first six months of 2002-03, the CSRs entered another 1,066 requests into the service request database. Also, CSRs accepted an additional 3,463 service requests that were handled manually during the Recycle Plus transition period. Most of the resident requests for City services were for removal of abandoned shopping carts and abandoned vehicles, and streetlight repairs. Other service requests from residents include wanting new streetlights or traffic lights. The Department of Transportation

(DOT), the Environmental Services Department (ESD), and the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement (PBCE) respond to about 92 percent of the requests for City services.

The number of Call Center service requests is a small part of both the Call Center's workload and a small part of the responsible departments' workload. For example, the Call Center receives about 10,000 calls per month for requests for information. The following are examples of the number of service requests received by the responsible departments:

- PBCE receives about 2,100 abandoned vehicle complaints monthly and
- DOT receives about 800 streetlight repair requests monthly.

However, the Call Center receives all of the service requests for abandoned shopping carts.

Exhibit 1 shows the number of issued service requests by department and by type for 2001-02 and the first six months of 2002-03.

Exhibit 1 Call Center Request For City Services By Type And Department For 2001-02 And The First Six Months Of 2002-03

Department/ Request Type	FY Ended 6-30-02 Type Count	FY Ended 6-30-02 Total Department Count	7-1-02 Through 12-31-02 Type Count	7-1-02 Through 12-31-02 Total Department Count
Airport Department		3		0
City Council		3		0
City Manager's Office				
Customer Service Call Center	174		56	
Other City Manager's Office	8		8	
Office Total		182		64
DOT				
Carts - Abandoned	1,745		659	
Pothole - Priority	n/a		11	
Streetlight Repair	406		57	
Other DOT	111		78	
Department Total		2,262		805
ESD				
Garbage and Recycling*	493		3,551	
Other ESD	9		3	
Department Total		502		3,554
Finance Department		2		1
Housing Department		0		2
Human Resources		1		0
Independent Police Auditor		1		0
Parks, Recreation & Neighborhood Services		13		6
PBCE				
Abandoned Vehicles	280		23	
Other PBCE	52		34	
Department Total		332		57
Police Department		15		3
Public Works Department		15		9
Total		3,331		4,501

Source: Call Center Request for Services Database

* The Garbage and Recycling service requests include 28 requests received in June 2002, and 3,435 requests received from July through September 2002, that were created manually using a check-box form during the Recycle Plus transition period. The ESD performed the service request follow-up during the transition period.

Exhibit 1 shows a significant increase in the number of service requests for the first six months of the 2002-03 fiscal year. However, the increase is mainly attributable to a one-time increase in service requests during the Recycle Plus transition period from July 2002 through September 2002. Other service

requests that were not Recycle Plus-related actually declined during the first six months of the 2002-2003 fiscal year. This decline was because of changes in the Call Center's procedures. For example, the Call Center used to issue service requests for abandoned vehicles. Now, the Call Center transfers these calls to the automated Vehicle Abatement Hotline unless the caller does not wish to be transferred. Code Enforcement requested this procedural change so it could handle these service requests more efficiently.

The Call Center uses SunTRACK database software (Service Request Database) to manage and track service requests. Specifically, the Service Request Database manages the receipt, routing, and resolution of resident requests for City services. Upon receiving a request for service, a Call Center CSR enters the request into the Service Request Database. All of the liaisons at the departments that are responsible for providing requested services have direct access to the Service Request Database through the City's computer network. However, only the DOT staff access service requests in this manner. The Call Center faxes or e-mails service requests to the other City departments.

The Call Center or the responsible department closes out the service requests in the Service Request Database when the City has completed or resolved the service request. Whether the Call Center or the responsible department follows-up and closes out the service request depends on the type of request. For instance, while the DOT closes out service requests for abandoned shopping carts, the Call Center closes out service requests for abandoned vehicles.

For those service requests the Call Center handles, the CSR who originally accepts the service request is responsible for following up on it. On a weekly basis, the responsible CSRs should check the Service Request Database to ensure that requests are closed out within expected timeframes. If the City has not provided the requested services within expected timeframes, the CSR should contact the responsible department. The CSR should then determine the reason for any delay and update the status of the service request in the Service Request Database.

Exhibit 2 outlines the service request process for the four most common service requests: abandoned shopping carts, abandoned vehicles, garbage and recycling service, and streetlight repairs.

Exhibit 2 Types Of Call Center Service Requests, The Number Processed In 2001-02, And Call Center And Responsible Department Processes

Type Of Service Request/ Department	Number Of Requests Processed In 2001-02	Call Center Process	Responsible Department Process
Abandoned Shopping Carts Department of Transportation (DOT)	1,745	The Call Center telephone number is the designated number for the public to use to notify the City of an abandoned shopping cart on public property. A CSR enters the service request into the Service Request Database and notifies the caller that the cart will be picked up within three days.	Daily, the DOT staff access the Service Request Database and print out a list of the work orders. After the DOT picks up the shopping carts, the DOT staff closes out the service requests in the Service Request Database.
Abandoned Vehicles Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement (PBCE)	280	PBCE receives most of the abandoned vehicle service requests directly from the public through the Vehicle Abatement Hotline during the day and after hours. However, the Call Center receives some abandoned vehicle requests from the public and transfers the call to the Vehicle Abatement Hotline. If the caller does not wish to be transferred, a CSR enters the service request into the Service Request Database and faxes a copy of the request to Code Enforcement. The CSR notifies the caller that the request will be handled within 45 days.	PBCE assigns appropriate staff to the service request for an abandoned vehicle and enters it into their Code Enforcement System (CES). Upon resolution of the service request, PBCE staff close the service request out of the CES. They should also contact the Call Center CSR who closes out the service request in the Service Request Database.

Type Of Service Request/ Department	Number Of Requests Processed In 2001-02	Call Center Process	Responsible Department Process
Garbage & Recycling Service Requests Environmental Services Department (ESD)	493	The ESD receives most of the garbage and recycling requests directly. However, the Call Center receives some garbage and recycling requests from the public and transfers them to the ESD. If the caller does not wish to be transferred, a CSR accepts the request and enters it into the Service Request Database. The Call Center also accepts garbage and recycling service requests during non-business hours. In 2002, many of the Call Center's calls for garbage and recycling service occurred during the Recycle Plus transition period. From 6-29-02 through 9-19-02, the Call Center received 3,463 service requests. Because of the high volume these were not entered into the Service Request Database, instead, CSRs manually used a check-box form that was faxed to the ESD. Currently, most of the garbage and recycling service requests the Call Center receives are for missed or sloppy pick ups. The Call Center faxes these service requests to the ESD for resolution.	ESD staff contact the hauler and then contact the resident. The ESD's target turnaround time is the same day for requests received before 3 p.m. For requests received after 3 p.m. the turnaround time is the next day. Prior to July 2002, the CSRs contacted the ESD for the status of requests. Currently, the ESD e-mails the Call Center weekly with a list of the completed requests. The Call Center CSR then closes out the service requests in the Service Request Database. The ESD did not notify the Call Center on the resolution of 3,463 service requests received during the Recycle Plus transition period because of the high volume and because they were not entered into the Service Request Database.
Streetlight Repairs (DOT)	406	The DOT receives most of the streetlight repair requests directly to its 24-hour automated telephone number. However, the Call Center receives some streetlight repair requests from the public and transfers them to the DOT. If the caller does not wish to be transferred, a CSR accepts the request and enters it into the Service Request Database.	DOT Streetlight Division staff access the Service Request Database once a day. DOT staff enter the request into the DOT streetlight repair database and generate work orders for the work crews. After the streetlight is repaired, DOT staff close out the service request in the DOT streetlight repair database and the Service Request Database.

Finding I

The Call Center Handles Most Service Requests In A Timely Manner, But Procedural Improvements Are Needed

To evaluate the Customer Service Call Center's (Call Center) effectiveness in handling service requests, we reviewed both completed and open service requests. We found that while the Call Center handles most requests for City of San Jose (City) services in a timely manner, procedural improvements are needed. In our opinion, the Call Center should work together with the responsible departments to develop written follow-up procedures for service requests. In addition, we recommend that the Call Center develop written procedures to ensure that supervisors follow up on service requests in a timely manner. Further, we recommend that the Call Center and the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department (PBCE) provide training for using their respective service request database software. We also reviewed the Department of Transportation's (DOT) streetlight service requiring Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) repair. As of April 2002, the DOT's database showed 133 streetlight service requests open over 30 days. For all these requests, PG&E was responsible for the repairs. At our request, DOT crews inspected 26 of the 133 streetlights and found that all 26 streetlights were working. In our opinion, the DOT should work with PG&E on methods to communicate the status of streetlight repairs requiring PG&E repair, such as phone, fax, or e-mail. Further, for those streetlights that it is unable to obtain a repair status from PG&E, the DOT should either inspect the streetlights or contact the residents to determine if the streetlights are working, then update the status of the requests and, if necessary, make additional requests for repairs.

The Call Center Follows Up On Most Service Requests In A Timely Manner, But Procedural Improvements Are Needed

We reviewed both the timeliness of service provided by the responsible departments and the timeliness of Call Center follow-up on service requests. We performed our review by analyzing the completion time on all of the completed requests for streetlight repairs and for removal of abandoned shopping carts and abandoned vehicles for service requests received by the Call Center between July 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002. In addition, we reviewed all 26 service requests of any type that were open for more than 47 days as of November 20, 2002.

We found that most of the Call Center's completed service requests that were received between July 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002 were completed by the responsible departments in a timely manner and therefore did not require follow-up by the CSRs. Specifically, we found the following:

- PBCE's performance target is to resolve abandoned vehicle complaints within 45 days. Of the 21 abandoned vehicle service requests, 17 were resolved within 45 days. According to the Code Enforcement Administrator, inspectors kept these other four abandoned vehicle complaints open because they involved repeat and/or multiple complaints from the neighborhood's residents. Keeping the complaints open allowed the Code Enforcement inspectors to monitor the vehicles that people were, essentially, improperly storing in the neighborhood. These complaints could have been closed within 45 days. The PBCE resolved the abandoned vehicle service requests in an average of 28 days.
- Of the 654 abandoned shopping cart requests, 93 percent were picked up within three days and 96 percent were picked up within seven days; and
- Of the 55 requests to repair streetlights, 84 percent were repaired within seven days compared to the DOT's performance target of 92 percent. Of the two streetlight repairs that took over 30 days, one required a City electrician to correct the problem and the other required PG&E to repair the streetlight. These types of repairs typically take more time.

We also reviewed all 26 Call Center service requests of any type that were open for more than 47 days as of November 20, 2002. We found that many of these service requests appeared to be open for several months. However, upon further review we found that the responsible departments had completed many of these service requests. Further, for these completed service requests, the departments had not notified the Call Center or the Call Center had not followed up with the department. Specifically, we noted the following:

- The responsible departments had resolved 17 of the 26 service requests;
- Of the 26 service requests, six were still open because they were of the type that typically take more time to resolve; and
- Of the 26 service requests, three were still open because the responsible departments did not have a record of receiving a service request fax from the Call Center.

Although the responsible departments completed most of the Call Center's service requests in a timely manner, we identified several opportunities for the Call Center to improve its effectiveness and the reliability of its Service Request Database information. Specifically, we noted that some of the responsible departments' staff 1) are not familiar with the Call Center's service request process; 2) are not aware of the need to communicate completed service request information to the Call Center; or 3) did not believe it was necessary to provide completed service request information to the Call Center or that service request follow-up was the Call Center's responsibility. Further, we found that the Call Center CSRs did not always follow-up on open service requests and that the Call Center's supervisors were not reviewing service requests that were open for a long time. Therefore, we recommend that the Call Center work together with the responsible departments to develop and communicate written procedures for follow-up on service requests. Also, the Call Center needs to develop written procedures to ensure that CSR supervisors periodically review open service requests.

We recommend that the Call Center:

Recommendation #1:

Work together with the responsible departments to develop written procedures for following up on service requests. (Priority 3)

Recommendation #2

Develop written procedures to ensure timely supervisory review of service request follow-up. (Priority 3)

Finally, we found that departments and the Call Center are not using all available service request software. For example, only the DOT is using the Service Request Database software to access the Call Center's service request information. The other departments have the Service Request Database software, but staff are not trained to use it. On the other hand, the Call Center staff needs to be trained on the Code Enforcement System database software. This database would allow the Call Center staff to identify completed service requests during the follow-up process. The Call Center has the software, but its staff are not trained to use it. In our opinion, the Call Center needs to provide training to the other departments' liaisons to allow them to use the Service Request Database. In addition, PBCE needs to train the Call Center staff on how to use the Code Enforcement System database software.

We recommend that the Call Center and the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement:

Recommendation #3

Provide training for using their respective service request database software. (Priority 3)

Pacific Gas And Electric Company Streetlight Repairs

During our review of the Call Center's service requests, we identified some streetlight repairs that had been open for over seven months. The DOT's performance target is to repair 92 percent of streetlight malfunctions within seven days. According to the DOT, the Call Center's requests for streetlight repairs that were open for more than seven months were Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) responsibility. The types of PG&E repairs include such problems as electrical power not reaching the streetlight pole or lighting circuit and repairing lights within 10 feet of high voltage lines. According to a DOT Division Manager, PG&E was not communicating the status of the streetlight repairs to the City. To assess whether the streetlights requiring PG&E repair were a problem, we reviewed all of the streetlight repair requests open over 30 days requiring PG&E repair in the DOT's database. As of April 2002, the DOT database showed there were 133 PG&E streetlight repair requests that were more than 30 days old. This information is summarized in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3 Summary Of The DOT's Database Of PG&E Streetlight Repair Requests That Were Open Over 30 Days As Of April 2002

Length Of Time Service Request Open	Number Of Open Streetlight Repairs	Percent Of Total
30 days to 1 year	40	30%
Between 1 and 2 years	38	28%
Between 2 and 3 years	25	19%
Between 3 and 4 years	29	22%
Over 4 years	1	1%
Total Open PG&E Requests	133	100%

As shown above, some of the PG&E repair requests had been open for as long as three and four years. The DOT was under the impression that some of the streetlights had not been repaired by PG&E, but most were repaired and not confirmed through PG&E. However, when we asked the DOT to check a sample of 26 of the open streetlight repair service requests, it found that PG&E had repaired all 26 of the streetlights and that they were working properly.

Based on our sample results, it appears that while PG&E is repairing streetlights, there is a lack of communication between the DOT and PG&E regarding the status of these repairs. We contacted the PG&E Project Manager (Project Manager) in charge of the City's streetlight repairs and he stated that PG&E completes most of its streetlight repairs within several days. The Project Manager also stated that if the City would periodically contact a PG&E Operations Clerk responsible for streetlight repairs, PG&E would provide the DOT with the status of the streetlight repairs. The Project Manager added that this communication could be efficiently performed using e-mail and provided us with the e-mail address. However, according to a DOT Division Manager, the DOT has made several efforts over the past years to establish a consistent and reliable process to resolve streetlight problems and communicate the status of a problem. He stated that PG&E historically has not been responsive in making timely repairs or to provide status of repairs. He added that communications vary by how individual PG&E staff respond to attempts by the City to communicate, whether it be by phone, fax, or e-mail. Further, he noted that this process is complicated by the fact that PG&E has three service centers in San Jose that handle different geographical

areas and that there is not a central contact for communications. Each service center has its own processes for taking and completing service requests and communicating with the City. These processes change as staff and other organizational changes occur within the service centers. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the DOT should work with PG&E on methods to communicate the status of streetlight repairs requiring PG&E repair, such as phone, fax, or e-mail.

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #4

Work with PG&E on methods to communicate the status of streetlight repairs requiring PG&E repair, such as phone, fax, or e-mail. (Priority 3)

We spoke with a PG&E Operations Clerk and he stated that he could research recent open service requests. Further, a DOT Division Manager stated that residents provide the DOT with their phone number when reporting streetlights in need of repair. Therefore, in our opinion, for those streetlights that the DOT is unable to obtain a repair status from PG&E, the DOT should either inspect the streetlights or contact the residents to determine if the streetlights are working, then update the status of the requests and, if necessary, make additional requests for repairs.

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #5

For those streetlights that it is unable to obtain repair status from PG&E, that the DOT should either inspect the streetlights or contact the residents to determine if the streetlights are working, then update the status of the requests and, if necessary, make additional requests for repairs. (Priority 3)

CONCLUSION

We found that the Call Center handles most service requests in a timely manner. However, we identified several opportunities to improve its effectiveness and management information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Call Center:

Recommendation #1 **Work together with the responsible departments to develop written procedures for following up on service requests. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #2 **Develop written procedures to ensure timely supervisory review of service request follow-up. (Priority 3)**

We recommend that the Call Center and the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement:

Recommendation #3 **Provide training for using their respective service request database software. (Priority 3)**

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #4 **Work with PG&E on methods to communicate the status of streetlight repairs requiring PG&E repair, such as phone, fax, or e-mail. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #5 **For those streetlights that it is unable to obtain repair status from PG&E, that the DOT should either inspect the streetlights or contact the residents to determine if the streetlights are working, then update the status of the requests and, if necessary, make additional requests for repairs. (Priority 3)**

Other Pertinent Information

We reviewed a specific incident that was reported to the Call Center in its first month of operation in January 2001. The request required three calls before the streetlight was repaired, and each time the Call Center told the caller that the streetlight was fixed. According to the Department of Transportation's (DOT) records, the streetlight bulb was changed in August 2000, then again in February 2001. In March 2001, the streetlight fixture and fuse were replaced. According to the DOT, although it replaces most streetlight bulbs without a problem, some lights burn out soon after the DOT replaces them because the bulb, fuse, or fixture was faulty.

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Administrator's Response

Appendix A