Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

It is a pleasure to address the committee this morning about the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission’s plans for the year ahead.

While the last two fiscal years have been full of challenges, the MVC, like its counterparts throughout state government, have made the tough decisions to weather the crisis and keep its priorities on track. It is because of those decisions that we are now better positioned to push ahead with critical projects and initiatives.

When making budgetary decisions, we kept a sharp focus on our core mission, performance goals and, most importantly, the needs of your constituents – our customers.

As I sat before you this time last year, we were about to unveil the next generation of digital driver license and embark on a renewed effort to advance long-standing projects and bring an even greater level security and service to MVC operations.

I also made a public commitment to embark on an aggressive campaign to reduce wait times and better manage customer volumes at all agencies statewide with specific attention on a handful of typically busier sites. I’m pleased to say that the many steps we took had the intended impact.

From an increase in part-time staffing and expanded camera equipment to physical infrastructure changes and employee cross-training, wait times were reduced. Additional enhanced digital driver license (EDDL) equipment was installed at higher volume locations resulting in reductions in wait times, including at Lodi, Edison, Rahway, Wallington, Springfield, Randolph, Newark and Wayne. In addition, the MVC extended its hours of operations by re-opening on Mondays and moving from 45 service hours per week to nearly 55 hours per week. This is the most hours of operation in MVC history.

As a result of these combined changes, wait times have been reduced. For example, when comparing August 2011 average wait times to February 2012 average wait times at our three busiest agencies in Eatontown, Lodi and Wayne, we saw a dramatic drop from 52 minutes to 13 minutes, 120 minutes to 24 minutes and 125 minutes to 20 minutes, respectively.

Along with these agency-specific changes, we will soon roll out what promises to be an even more effective customer tool – driver license renewals by mail. Beginning with expirations this coming July, MVC customers born on or before December 1, 1964 will
be told to Skip the Trip and simply renew their license or non-driver ID by mail. There will be absolutely no need to visit an agency; a move that potentially eliminates the need for more than a million customers to stand in line at the MVC in the months ahead. Rest assured we will not stop there. I intend to keep the progress going to make certain that the MVC is fully meeting the needs of its customers.

I know that you are all familiar with the impact that our outdated technology has had on our operations. Since joining the MVC just over two years ago, I have expedited critical technology upgrades that had slowed to a snail’s pace and put them back on track, which is why we have been able to begin implementation of so many items I discussed here today. The largest piece of our technology puzzle is the completion of MATRX. The end is in sight and we are pushing full steam ahead to finally bring this long-awaited project to a conclusion.

From there we can begin to look at new methods of service and other enhancements that will make customer experiences much more efficient and pleasant. This includes introducing online renewals shortly after the completion of the MATRX project. Items like a customer queue system, a mobile agency or self-serve kiosks, are also some of the ways we can accomplish our service goals.

Although customer service is one of the key factors in many of our decisions at the MVC, so too is security. Many of the advancements we’ve made or will make through our technology upgrades not only put us in a better position service-wise, but also aid with fraud prevention and identity protection.

Even our new mail renewal system will have an impact on security at the MVC. With the ability to offer mail renewals to a specific segment of our customer population, we will be able to better manage customer volume in our agencies as we begin to implement new federal REAL ID requirements.

From information I just shared with each of your district offices, you’ll see that REAL ID is a federal law that places stringent guidelines on how DMVs across the country are to issue driver licenses and IDs. The law stems from actions taken following the 9/11 terrorist attacks where hijackers utilized fake or fraudulently procured ID documents.

While other states have begun or are already in compliance with REAL ID, the MVC will officially begin its issuance of compliant driver licenses beginning in May this year. As the law reads, the federal government is prohibited from accepting non-REAL ID-compliant documents from anyone after its final deadline on December 1, 2017. This means that without a compliant license or ID, you will not be able to board a domestic flight or enter a federal facility.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is phasing in REAL ID by age, so to ensure that we get compliant documents into everyone’s hands, we are focusing first on those customers who were born after December 1, 1964. The federal deadline for this age group is December 2014, which is why we’re offering the benefit of Skip the Trip to those who do not have to be compliant until 2017.
To help our customers become more familiar with the federal changes, we have created a new TRU-ID brand, which stands for The Real U. It is three simple steps that will replace the current 6 Point ID Verification that we’ve been using for nearly a decade. We’ll be out speaking with our customers and stakeholders over the coming months to ensure that they are well aware of the new requirements, as well as the many positive service initiatives available now and in the future.

Toward the end of 2011, our internal teams began the work of implementing a facial recognition technology system that will bring us on par with what many other state DMVs are already doing – ensuring one record for each driver and that only those individuals who are legally entitled to possess a license may get one.

Although our service goals may have remained the same for some time, actual motor vehicle services and how they can be delivered have greatly evolved from even 10 years ago. This requires us to be forwarded thinking. Decisions made now, must take into account what may be on the horizon a decade from now.

This is why during my tenure as MVC Chairman and Chief Administrator, with your support, I will continue to push this organization forward and make sure that it is well positioned for serving its customers in the decades ahead.

I want to thank Chairman Prieto and members of this committee for the opportunity to testify today.

I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.