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Your Driver's License Will Become a Vaccine Passport

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- U.S. states are increasingly rolling out digitized versions of driver's licenses that "go way beyond what a driver's license is about"
- An international standard for mobile drivers' licenses and mobile IDs was approved for publication August 18, 2021, clearing the way for global use
- Mobile IDs will act as a digital identity that will ultimately tie in to retail, health care, law enforcement and travel sectors
- Ultimately, the IDs will also act as vaccine passports, making it easy to display whether you've gotten a COVID-19 injection — and any other future injections that come about — in order to go about your daily life
- Some have speculated that the introduction of digital IDs and vaccine passports in the U.S. is laying the infrastructure for a social credit system like the one being used in China

Little by little, it's becoming easier and more convenient to "present your papers" upon request. You're accustomed to keeping your driver's license with you, but states are increasingly rolling out digitized versions that "go way beyond what a driver's license is about."[1] Arizona, for instance, released a mobile driver's license (mDL) app in March 2021, and Eric Jorgensen, director of the motor vehicle division of Arizona's Department of Transportation, told Government Technology:[2]

> *"I actually hate the term 'mDL' because it doesn't recognize the power of what we're doing here … The whole concept is that we're providing a way to remotely*

authenticate a person, to provide a trusted digital identity that doesn't exist today.

Once we provide that, we're opening doors to enhanced government services. Also, the government can play a key role in facilitating commerce, providing a better citizen experience and providing for the security of that citizen …"

Mobile IDs Tied to Health Care, Law Enforcement

GET Group North America is working fervently to create "secure ID credentials,"[3] which includes the release of an international standard for mobile driver's licenses and mobile IDs (mID). The standards were approved for publication August 18, 2021, clearing the way for "global ID and driver's license issuers to confidently deploy mDL solutions, and for verifiers around the world to implement or adopt mDL readers."[4]

GET's Mobile ID also intends to go far beyond a typical driver's license to act as a digital identity that will tie in to retail, health care, law enforcement and travel sectors. The pandemic accelerated what was previously a gradual transition to digital, using the public health dogma that it would be better to not pass physical documents and IDs back and forth.

"Being able to empower customers to have a credential that they can use in a transaction where they're not passing back and forth a physical document has been further accelerated by the pandemic," Ian Grossman, vice president of member services and public affairs for the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), told Government Technology.[5]

mDLs and mIDs are also intended to provide a streamlined identification verification system that can be used globally, doing away with different IDs for individual states.

"[El]lectronic authentication can give the mDL verifier confidence in the presented ID without requiring specialized knowledge of the hundreds of card design and security features applicable to the driver's licenses (and their variants) that are issued by 56 states and territories," the Secure Technology Alliance wrote.[6]

Ultimately, the IDs will also act as vaccine passports, making it easy to display whether you've gotten a COVID-19 injection — and any other future injections that come about — in order to go about your daily life.

DMVs Turned Into Identity Management Bureaus

Only a handful of states currently offer mDLs and uptake is facing hurdles because, while the mobile driver's licenses are available, the technology to read them isn't being widely used — yet. The plan is that police departments, businesses, state agencies and more will accept, or require, mDLs in order to verify identity. In Colorado, at least 100,000 residents have downloaded the state's myColorado app,[7] which offers a digital ID and vaccine record.[8]

In Delaware, more than 10,000 people downloaded the state's digital ID app in a six-week period.[9] The initiatives are being headed up by different departments, including technology, transportation and motor vehicle, depending on the state, but some believe DMVs could be easily transitioned into the role across the U.S. Government Technology explained:[10]

> *"One person working at the center of the mobile ID movement believes state CIOs should form closer partnerships with DMVs. Matthew Thompson is senior vice president for civil identity, North America, at IDEMIA, a company that partners with 34 state DMVs on physical driver's license solutions.*
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> *The company has partnered with three states on mDLs so far. He says that governors and state CIOs should look at their DMV not just as an agency that provides driver and vehicle services, but as one that can operate as an identity management bureau for the entire state and provide verification services to enable e-government.*
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> *'State CIOs need to better understand the [role] that trusted identity plays in driving their entire digital transformation,' Thompson said. 'They have a built-in identity bureau in their state that has a system of record that provides a route of trust that other agencies can benefit from immediately.'"*

Apple Teams Up With Government to ID You

In certain states, including Arizona and Georgia — and soon Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Iowa, Utah and Connecticut — residents can use their iPhone and Apple Watches as a form of digital ID. Once your state ID is added to your device's wallet, along with a photo of the card and your face, it will ask you to complete facial and head movements to set up your digital ID.

"In effect," Vox reported, "this system appears to be a new form of government-supported biometric ID verification that goes beyond a regular photo in a process that potentially provides new data to state governments as well as to Apple."[11] Already, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is planning to add lanes that accept digital IDs for travelers, where you'll be able to tap your iPhone or Apple Watch to verify your identity.[12]

In the state of New York, where those aged 12 and older are required to show proof of a COVID-19 shot to visit restaurants, gyms, meeting spaces and entertainment venues like aquariums, movie theaters and professional sports arenas, may use New York State's Excelsior Pass to prove they've been injected. Now, New York is also working with IBM to possibly expand the Excelsior Pass to include driver's licenses.[13]

There are also a number of other vaccine passport apps that can be added to digital wallets, including VaxYes from GoGetVax, which works with Apple Wallet and Google Pay.[14] This raises red flags that digital ID verification is only the beginning of the surveillance that's planned. Vox reported:[15]

> *"The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project also obtained a contract revealing that the state of New York has bigger plans for its Excelsior Pass than it initially disclosed, which could reveal the risks of similar digital ID programs.*
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> *'It's hard to trust the claim from officials that these apps are only going to do X or Y,' Albert Fox Cahn, an attorney at the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project, warned in June, pointing to the potential expansion of the Excelsior*

> *Pass. 'We see this clear pattern of them being installed for one purpose and then expanded for another.'"*

Fox also raised concerns over New York's Covid Safe app, which allows users to add a photo ID, vaccination card and COVID-19 tests results.[16] But as for security, Fox tweeted, in August 2021, "New York City's new #NYCCovidSafe app isn't exactly cutting edge technology. It accepted this portrait of Mickey as proof of vaccination."[17]

Laying the Infrastructure for a Social Credit System

Some have speculated that the introduction of digital IDs and vaccine passports in the U.S. is laying the infrastructure for a social credit system. China's social credit system, a massive undertaking of government surveillance that aims to combine 600 million surveillance cameras — about one for every two citizens — with facial recognition technology, has an end-goal of being able to identify anyone, anywhere, within three seconds.[18]

At present, the system is still disjointed and focused on corporate social credit more so than individual social credit, but it's "evolving rapidly."[19] Here's an example of how social credit can work, from 2019 — before the pandemic, which has only accelerated data collection and surveillance measures — from Wired:[20]

> *"The criteria that go into a social credit ranking depends on where you are, notes [Mareike] Ohlberg, [research associate at the Mercator Institute for China Studies]. 'It's according to which place you're in, because they have their own catalogs,' she says. It can range from not paying fines when you're deemed fully able to, misbehaving on a train, standing up a taxi, or driving through a red light.*
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> *One city, Rongcheng, gives all residents 1,000 points to start. Authorities make deductions for bad behavior like traffic violations, and add points for good behavior such as donating to charity.*
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> *One regulation Ohlberg recently read specifically addresses stealing electricity. Of course, you'll have to get caught first or be reported by someone else. While*

facial recognition is infamously used to spot jaywalkers, in some cities it's not so automated, Ohlberg notes.

Private projects, such as Sesame Credit, hoover up all sorts of data on its 400 million customers, from how much time they spend playing video games (that's bad) to whether they're a parent (that's good). That can be shared with other companies. One infamous example is Sesame Credit linking up with the Baihe dating site, so would be partners can judge each other on their looks as well as their social credit score; that system is opt-in."

Majority in Favor of Privacy-Encroaching Technology

Driven by fear, acceptance of "privacy-encroaching technology" that promises an illusion of safety is high. In the U.K., researchers from the University of Bristol conducted two large surveys about such technologies, with overwhelming positivity reported.[21] This is the first measured public acceptance of location tracking through your cellphone that would allow health agencies to monitor your contact with others to target social distancing and quarantine measures.

About 70% of the respondents said they would accept such an app that they could choose to download and, surprisingly, 65% also said they would accept such an app even if it was mandated by the government and used to locate those violating lockdown orders and issue fines and arrests.[22]

A second survey evaluated acceptance of vaccine passports, with 60% stating they were in favor and only 20% stating they were strongly opposed. The study's lead author, professor Stephan Lewandowsky, described those opposed as "surprisingly low," adding, "It's fascinating how people seem increasingly receptive to their personal data being used to inform themselves and others about what they can and can't do."[23]

The technology being used to roll out digital IDs is very similar to that being used to create vaccine passports. It's only a matter of time before the two are merged, and your entire identity, including your medical history, finances and more, could be stored in a

mobile app that's increasingly required to partake in society. While some might call this convenience, others would call it oppression.

Sources and References

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