

FROM OBSOLETE TO COMPLETE: COBBLINC'S NEW CAD/AVL SOLUTION



The management team at CobbLinc, the public transit system in Cobb County, Georgia, was hamstrung by obsolescing technologies. The agency's then-current CAD/AVL deployment was performing poorly. "The daily dispatching activities were reliable," said Mark Lambert, CobbLinc's business manager. "But almost everything else wasn't meeting our needs."

Lambert cited several factors, including a lack of system updates, inadequate training, uncertified passenger counters, and excessive time spent processing numerous exceptions. "It was 'clunky' when we attempted to retrieve the data we needed for our regular NTD and compliance reporting," he added. To make things even worse, with staff turnover and a learning curve that was difficult to climb, the transit agency was only spinning its wheels.

With a countywide population of more than 760,000, seventy 40-foot vehicles, nearly 200,000 passenger trips per month, and a service day that runs from 5 a.m. to midnight, the CobbLinc team knew they had a situation that had to improve — and fast.

So, how did Lambert and the CobbLinc team accomplish their goals and achieve a deployment that was the solution they needed?

IT STARTS WITH A CLEARLY DEFINED RFP AND TEAM EXPECTATIONS

The CobbLinc team learned from its challenges and recognized that a new solution would start with a well-defined scope of services and a rigorous procurement process. They researched the marketplace for solutions and crafted an RFP that included specific reporting requirements, training minimums, up-to-date dispatching, MDTs, wireless data transfer, real-time data feeds, a passenger app, interfaces with head signs and cameras, and five years of tech support.

At the end of their procurement process, Lambert and the team had selected a partner who best satisfied all these requirements and who they believed would truly meet or exceed their expectations: Avail Technologies. "There was a belief that any of the proposing companies would improve the situation, but with Avail, CobbLinc believed we would be selecting a partner whose company culture was built around ensuring that we would be successful," said Lambert. "That was exactly the partner we needed — and as it turns out, we were correct."

CASE STUDY



A THOROUGH IMPLEMENTATION LEADS TO AN “AWESOME” DEPLOYMENT

Despite an aggressive implementation timeline and some high expectations, Lambert could not be happier with the results of an implementation he called “simply awesome.” He credits a methodical process managed by Avail, whereby they evaluated every vehicle, presented all available options, and crafted an original design unique to CobbLinc. “Avail’s attention to detail was so thorough, some might even perceive it as tedious at times, but this was the key to our success,” said Lambert.

According to Avail project manager Neal Castles, who oversaw the implementation for CobbLinc, “We built a relationship with the CobbLinc team, so they knew we were with them throughout the process.” Robert Manaseri, Avail vice president of programs, added that Avail “even did some things that were technically outside of the required scope of services because it was the right thing to do.”

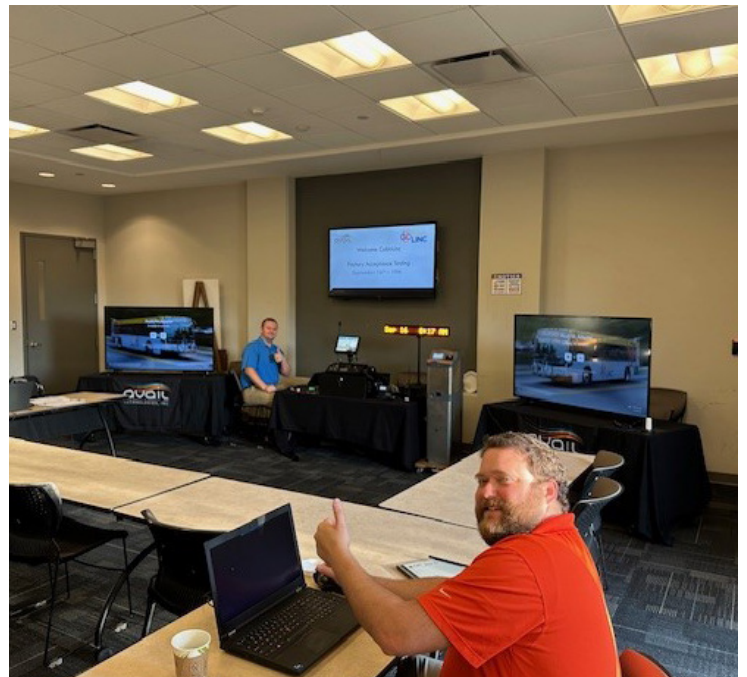
“The implementation was so well planned and managed that the entire process was not as painful as we thought it could be,” said Lambert. “We knew we were on the right track when it became clear that our dispatch staff were completely on board despite the number of changes they were experiencing.”

SUPPORT CONTINUES WELL PAST DEPLOYMENT

The team completed the full deployment on schedule. But the service and support did not end at that point. In fact, within a month of the deployment concluding, Avail provided an update to the software. “The update was planned into the process from the beginning to get CobbLinc into the cycle of our support,” said Castles.

“The Avail training and documentation were excellent, readily available, and easily integrated into our standard operating procedures,” said Lambert. “Support has been very strong. The entire deployment team is still available to address any follow-up details. They have never abandoned us.”

As Lambert summarized it, “Mostly, it’s about the people. The team at Avail cared about us at CobbLinc and was always here for us. They have a deeply ingrained sense that if we are not successful, then they have also failed. That’s the single most important characteristic of their approach to their customers’ success.”



“The team at Avail cared about us at CobbLinc and was always here for us. They have a deeply ingrained sense that if we are not successful, then they have also failed. That’s the single most important characteristic of their approach to their customers’ success.”

MASS TRANSIT

avail
TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

CASE STUDY

COBBLINC'S NEW SYSTEM ENHANCES SAFETY AND THE PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

Of course, the CAD/AVL solution in and of itself does not directly improve the passenger experience. But as a tool, it facilitates communication, vehicle location, and improved data collection to enhance safety and convenience.

Lambert explained that the passenger-facing aspects of the Avail myStop mobile app are receiving rave reviews. "The passenger app has greatly improved the ability of our passengers to predict the next pick-up timing. It reduces the time needed to be standing at the bus stop, and because transit stops are, by definition, located alongside busy roadways, this certainly creates a safer situation for our passengers when they use the app. It is a vast improvement over our previous solution."

With the greatly improved data collection under the new system, CobbLinc is now a more reliable partner with the community. Lambert explained that passengers are already experiencing the improvements. "We can more quickly communicate detours or delays. We are processing system data more efficiently to reduce

or avoid vehicle downtime and the delays that can result from that. Additionally, our operators can better communicate in an emergency situation, including a discreet emergency alarm button that can alert dispatch and the authorities," he said.

"We value passenger and operator safety and security as much as CobbLinc and all of our transit agency partners do," Castles added. "We like to think we helped CobbLinc 'relaunch' its relationship with their passengers."

The benefits for CobbLinc even extend into improved ridership numbers. In fact, the transit agency has seen more than a 30% increase in ridership since switching to Avail's CAD/AVL solution. According to Lambert, "The increase is due to more accurate recording of ridership and is not reflective of any new services."

More than just CAD/AVL, myAvail ETMS offers features to support your entire organization. To learn more about how a partnership with Avail Technologies may work for your agency, request a demonstration at www.availtec.com or via email to bisdev@availtec.com. You can also connect with the Avail team at industry events or trade shows.

MASS TRANSIT

