

VIDEO ARRAIGNMENT PILOT PROJECT

The Vermont Judiciary was asked by the other two branches of State government to identify structural savings in Vermont's justice system to respond to anticipated State budget shortfalls. During a Summit held by the Judiciary on February 9, 2015, the high cost, risk to safety, and scheduling challenges of prisoner transports in Vermont were identified as factors that call for innovation regarding prisoner appearances.

Consequently, we have been challenged to design a feasible and practical business process and technical solution to implement a secure, private video conferencing network for Vermont's justice system. This solution will remove the inefficiencies in the existing process in the justice system and facilitate proceedings and case flow. Desired outcomes include reduction of the time it takes to handle cases and reduction of the costs and risks associated with transporting alleged offenders and inmates between correctional facilities and the courts.

More specifically, an ad hoc task force reporting to the Chief Superior Judge and the Court Administrator, in consultation with representatives of justice community partners involved in the prisoner transport issue and the Trial Court Services, Facilities, and Security Committee of the Judiciary Advisory Council shall:

- (1) Map the current business processes involved in arraignment of detained defendants, including the flow of documents and activities between and among the correctional center; prosecutors; defense lawyers; court staff; and the arraignment judge; and
- (2) Map the proposed business processes of the above persons using video arraignment.

The Video Arraignment task force will then develop a task plan for a video arraignment pilot project for the State of Vermont. The task force will recommend the period of the pilot and how it should be conducted. As part of the process, the task force will visit one or more video arraignment sessions in New Hampshire. The report of the task force will be delivered within forty-five (45) days.

CAO staff will act as project coordinators, including documentation and reporting. Weekly status meetings will be held with weekly status reports to the Chief Superior Judge and the Court Administrator. Project updates will be held with the Chief Superior Judge and the Court Administrator at mid-point and end-point of the allotted time. A final report of the task force will be produced that summarizes its findings.

Participants:

Superior Judge _____

Vermont DOC _____

Prosecutor _____

Public Defender _____

Sheriff _____

Linda Richard, CAO

Jeff Loewer, CAO

Bill Gerke, CAO

Members of the Trial Court Services, Facilities, and Security Committee