New Command Center improves IT management

GTA officially opened its new Command Center for the state's wide area network (WAN) and data center operations in January.

The center uses advanced technology to monitor the flow of data across the WAN and the operation of computers at the data center, including mainframes, UNIX systems and the Advanced Windows Environment. The center operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

GTA Senior Operating Officer Renee Herr described the center as "the heartbeat of operations." It combines the

Every week, GTA's Command Center repels over 1 million unauthorized attempts to access state information systems. These incidents often involve viruses, worms and denial of service attacks.

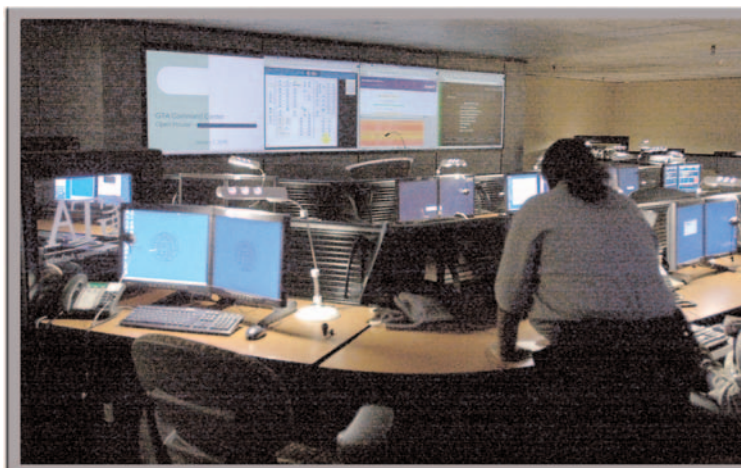former Monitoring Center and the Enterprise Network Operating Center, both of which were located in separate parts of the state data center, into a single, secured facility in the Floyd Building.

A single monitoring and response center is a "best practice" GTA adopted from the private sector.

The goal is "to know what's going on in our environment before the customer knows it," Ms. Herr said.

GTA lines up vendors for wireless devices, services

As many as 11 separate contracts for wireless devices and services are expected to be available for use by state agencies in the first quarter of 2005.

The contracts will provide agencies with a range of vendors and service options to meet their needs for digital cellular, mobile radio, one- and two-way paging and a variety of advanced wireless services.

Several contracts are already available for use. As contracts are finalized, links to vendor Web sites are posted on GTA's Web site at www.gta.georgia.gov. Click on Procurement, Services Contracts.

GTA is negotiating the contracts on behalf of state agencies. Their use is required by all departments, institutions, boards, bureaus, agencies, authorities, colleges and universities as set forth in the state's policy on the acquisition and use of telecommunications services and equipment. The contracts are also available to local governments.

The contracts consolidate the purchasing power of state agencies so they can obtain the most cost-

effective pricing possible. They also make it easier for agencies to remain current with technology as it advances.

In addition, the contracts save agencies the time

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Bringing the benefits of technology to Georgia government

GTA
Georgia Technology Authority

Agencies seeing benefits of MPLS upgrade

Upgrading the state's wide area network to newer technology – and the benefits it brings – is becoming a reality for state agencies.

GTA and BellSouth began upgrading relatively small numbers of circuits to multi-protocol label switching (MPLS) in September 2004, and by the end of the year, 80 circuit conversions had been completed. These early conversions were scheduled on a circuit-by-circuit basis to address a specific, urgent need. The pace will pick up significantly in the first quarter of 2005 when GTA and BellSouth begin agency-wide conversions according to carefully planned schedules.

> **"It takes much less time to pull up needed information….The line upgrade has increased the productivity of the office."**
>
> **– Karen Smith**
> **Office of Child Support Enforcement**

As many as 200 circuits each month are expected to be upgraded. More than 1,800 circuits statewide will eventually connect to the MPLS network.

Through competitive bidding, GTA contracted with BellSouth in July 2004 to upgrade and manage the state's wide area network.

Agencies already benefiting from MPLS include DHR's Office of Child Support Enforcement. Workers report increased productivity due to significantly faster response times for the child support system.

- The time required to register a case has been reduced from 30 to 14 minutes.
- The time required to establish an order has been reduced from 18 to 6 minutes.
- Searching for information about a case used to take 4 minutes; it now takes less than a minute.

Upgrades taking place in phases

The upgrade of agency circuits is taking place in phases. Here's how the process works.

- GTA and BellSouth set up a meeting to go over an agency's existing state WAN circuits and services and to discuss future needs.
- GTA and BellSouth engineers use the information gathered at the meeting to develop up to three proposals for a new agency network. The proposals include detailed pricing.

- GTA and BellSouth schedule a second meeting with the agency to present the proposals. They work with agency officials to modify the proposals as necessary.
- After the agency approves a final network design, circuit orders are submitted and conversions are scheduled.

Here's the schedule GTA and BellSouth are following to set up initial meetings with agencies.

- **Phase 1** – Corrections, Motor Vehicle Safety, Revenue, State Board of Workers Compensation, and Technical and Adult Education
- **Phase 2** – Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Human Resources, Public Safety, Secretary of State
- **Phase 3** – Georgia Forestry Commission, Juvenile Justice, Labor, Pardons and Paroles, Transportation
- **Phase 4** – Administrative Office of the Courts, Administrative Services, Banking and Finance, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, Teachers Retirement System
- **Phase 5** – Board of Regents, Community Affairs, Drugs and Narcotics Agency, Employee Retirement System
- **Phase 6** – Agriculture, Defense, Georgia Ports Authority, Georgia Public Broadcasting, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority, Homeland Security, Public Service Commission, SCOG, Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Subsequent Injury Trust Fund and World Congress Center Authority
- **Phase 7** – Numerous local law enforcement and county commission offices

> **"Words cannot express what this effort means to us. We have been working to get improved performance for our STARS application for almost a year….Thanks for making things better for the children of Georgia."**
>
> **– Cindy Moss**
> **Office of Child Support Enforcement**

Quicker response, better communication

The center's Network/Security Management Group constantly watches the state's WAN, and the Platform/Applications Management Group monitors data center operations. If either group confirms a problem, staff notify the Incident Management Group, which is responsible for resolving it.

By issuing regular status reports, the Incident Manage-ment Group keeps IT managers in GTA and state agencies fully informed about progress in resolving problems.

This division of responsibility promises to shorten the time it takes to identify and fix a problem. It also strengthens GTA's ability to provide customer

Technicians at the Command Center monitor for computer hardware failures, slow applications or networks, failure of computer systems to complete specific tasks, and similar problems.

agencies with up-to-date information about situations that could affect their operations.

For example, when GTA noticed unusual activity on the state's firewall in December 2004, technicians realized a specific agency was being targeted for a denial of service attack. GTA identified the IP addresses of the outside computers involved in the attack and blocked their access to the state's network.

The Network/ Security and Platform/ Applications management groups also oversee systems changes, such as upgrades, to prevent disruptions to agency operations.

Consolidating network monitoring and problem resolution in a single facility is strengthening GTA's ability to deliver secure and reliable technology services. ▌

Circuit upgrades for agencies in a particular phase do not have to be completed before GTA and BellSouth begin scheduling initial meetings with agencies in the subsequent phase.

Processing circuit moves, adds and changes

In addition, GTA and BellSouth can process circuit orders for moves, adds and changes in any agency regardless of the schedule for initial agency meetings and prior to beginning large-scale circuit upgrades in the agency. However, completion of moves, adds and changes takes 30-45 days at existing sites and 60-90 days at new sites. Expedited service is available for an additional one-time fee. ▌

MPLS offers other advantages besides reliability, speed and more service options

- MPLS offers many advantages, including greater reliability and speed. It's also easier to reroute data transmissions around bottlenecks and broken links.
- Network administrators are able to assign a different priority, also known as class of service, to network traffic on a case-by-case basis. Certain transmissions—such as video conferencing or those related to law enforcement and public safety—can take precedence over other transmissions.
- MPLS is an important step toward convergence. It lays a solid foundation for transmitting voice, data and video together on a single network.
- MPLS makes it easier to meet demands for better security. It also provides greater technical support for teleworkers and wireless services.
- As the state's demand for network capacity increases, MPLS promises to limit future growth in the cost of services because it can easily be expanded. It also offers more service options.

Agencies spent $503.4 million on IT in FY '04

State agencies reported spending a total of $503.4 million on information technology during FY 2004.

This and related findings are contained in GTA's annual IT expenditures report, which provides detailed information for each state agency. GTA issued the report in January 2005.

State funds accounted for $211.1 million of the total amount spent on IT resources. The remainder came primarily from the federal government.

The largest amount – $218.4 million or 43.4 percent of total expenditures – was spent on health and human services. Other service categories, amounts and percentages are
- general government: $104.9 million or 20.8 percent
- public safety: $62.3 million or 12.4 percent
- physical and economic development: $81.5 million or 16.2 percent
- education: $36.3 million or 7.2 percent.

State law requires GTA to collect information about IT expenditures from agencies each year and compile a report for distribution to state leaders. Its purpose is to ensure accurate budgeting and accounting for IT expenditures, which include staff, hardware, software, telecommunications and data services, and computer supplies.

IT expenditures by the Board of Regents are not included in the report.

The full report is available on GTA's Web site at www.gta.georgia.gov. ∎

Summary of state IT expenditures	FY 2003 $434.9 million total ($236.9 in state funds)		FY 2004 $503.4 million total ($211.1 in state funds)	
Health, human services	$178.5 million	41 percent	$218.4 million	43.4 percent
General government	$95.3 million	21.9 percent	$104.9 million	20.8 percent
Public safety	$66.3 million	15.2 percent	$62.3 million	12.4 percent
Physical, economic development	$73.7 million	17 percent	$81.5 million	16.2 percent
Education	$21.1 million	4.9 percent	$36.3 million	7.2 percent

*These figures do not include expenditures by the Board of Regents.

Wireless contracts, from page 1

and expense of having to conduct their own competitive bids for wireless services, although agencies are still urged to compare products and services among the approved vendors.

Each vendor will be required to maintain a Web site with a list of available products and services, a pricing schedule and ordering instructions. Vendor sites must also include coverage maps showing where different wireless services are available throughout the state.

Examples of advanced wireless devices include smart phones, wireless connection cards, dual cellular and WiFi phones, and devices integrating voice, e-mail and Web services, such as Blackberrys, Treos and iPAQs.

At least one contract is expected to cover integration services, which enable a wireless device to access data stored on an agency server or a state mainframe computer.

The contracts will require 24/7 technical support for most products and services and for reporting lost or stolen equipment. They will prohibit vendors from charging activation fees to agencies and will give agencies the option of testing and evaluating a wireless device or service for up to 30 days before committing to a purchase or service agreement.

The statewide contracts and the telecommunications policy are both efforts by the state to more effectively control the use and costs of wireless devices and services. Besides requiring use of the new wireless contracts, the policy also requires all state entities to maintain inventories of wireless devices and to assign them to employees based on job responsibilities. The policy gives examples of the types of jobs and work situations where wireless devices may be justified.

For a copy of the policy, visit the Office of Planning and Budget's Web site at www.opb.state.ga.us. ∎

UGA unveils Web-based chemical tracking system

The University of Georgia has developed, pilot tested and now is implementing an innovative, Web-based system to track hazardous chemicals used in research and instructional programs. University officials say the new system, developed in conjunction with SIVCO, Inc., will be operational campus-wide in 2005.

Other Georgia research universities are also planning to implement the system beginning in 2005.

> "There's nothing in the nation like this system."
>
> **– Ken Scott**
> **UGA Associate VP**
> **for Environmental Safety**

Called Chematix, the new system will enable authorized UGA personnel to compare prices and order chemicals, track shipping, monitor inventory, receive automatic notifications of hazardous chemical expiration dates, and arrange for chemical disposal using a password-protected desktop computer and a commercial Web browser.

Chematix complies with U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) documentation standards for chemical acquisition and disposal. It also adheres to federal cost-accounting standards for institutions receiving federal research funds.

Colleges and universities are among the nation's biggest consumers – and disposers – of toxic substances, said Ken Scott, UGA's associate vice president for environmental safety. For example, in an average week, UGA generates about 2,000 pounds of chemical waste. The new system, which will be used in about 1,200 UGA labs, will be able to handle 1,000 users simultaneously.

Mr. Scott proposed developing the system in 2001, a time when the EPA began imposing multi-million dollar fines on universities that failed to meet the federal government's strict chemical-disposal guidelines.

"It made us look at how we do business with chemicals," said Mr. Scott, who spent 20 years at Texaco before coming to UGA. "EPA said: 'You've got to figure out a way to control ordering, tracking and disposal.'"

In developing the system, Mr. Scott, members of the UGA Laboratory Safety Committee and other campus officials developed a detailed list of specifications for the new system. The **Georgia Technology Authority** assisted in developing a technology-related request for proposals and evaluating vendor responses. Following a rigorous evaluation, SIVCO, Inc., was selected in January 2002 to help UGA develop the tracking system. SIVCO has expertise in developing environmental and laboratory safety software using state-of-the-art computer technologies.

Maria Kuhn, program specialist with UGA's Environmental Safety Services, and Jerry NeSmith, director of UGA's Office of Research Services, worked closely with SIVCO programmers in developing, testing and revising the system.

"There's nothing in the nation like this system," said Mr. Scott, who has met and discussed Chematix with officials at other research universities, including the Texas Board of Regents, the University of New Mexico, the University of South Carolina, Carnegie Mellon University and Columbia University.

In January 2005, Georgia Tech began implementing the new system, which also is under consideration at Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University and Kennesaw State University.

For more information, visit: Chematix, www.chematix.com or UGA Environmental Safety Division, www.esd.uga.edu. ▪

IT strategic plan compares state to industry trends

The state's new Information Technology Strategic Plan provides an overview of technology in Georgia government in the context of emerging trends in the IT industry.

The plan, which was published in January, uses examples from several agencies in laying out the direction state government is taking in three areas: managing IT, improving the infrastructure and developing applications.

The plan is the result of the work and contributions of many state agencies, along with GTA.

Highlights include:
- what agencies are doing to combat spam
- the viability of open source alternatives for desktops
- the increased speed and reliability of the state's outsourced wide area network
- steps toward a unified e-mail system
- wireless options
- how IT can foster collaboration and efficiency

For a copy of the plan, visit GTA's Web site at www.gta.georgia.gov. ▪

How to avoid the high cost of long distance dial-around services

How can your agency avoid the high cost of long distance dial-around services?

It's easy. Just make sure your employees place long distance calls by entering 9+1+area code+telephone number. By doing so, your agency will be charged the state's discount rate of 3.2 cents per minute.

GTA negotiated this special rate specifically for state agencies, and it's significantly lower than any you're likely to find elsewhere.

For comparison, GTA researched rates charged by dial-around services. The typical service charges 99 cents for up to 15 minutes and about 15 cents per minute thereafter. At these rates, a 15-minute call costs more than twice the state's discount rate. Dial-around services may also add taxes and federal universal service fees, and some charge set-up fees or monthly plan fees. To access a dial-around service, callers enter 10+10 and a three-digit number before entering the long-distance number they are calling.

GTA does not block access to dial-around services on state telephone lines because the blocking service costs $1.50 per line per month. Instead, we encourage agencies to ask their staffs to place their long distance calls by entering 9+1 and the number they are calling.

If you have questions about dial-around services, please contact your GTA Regional Office or Account Manager. ❚

GTA earns national procurement award

GTA was recently awarded the National Purchasing Institute's Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award for 2004. The award recognizes innovation, professionalism, productivity and leadership in procurement.

GTA is responsible for the procurement of all IT products and services for state government. On behalf of state agencies, GTA's acquisition management office administers more than 650 contracts and has contracted for almost $300 million worth of products and services during the past three years. In addition to administering all statewide contracts, GTA also provides consulting services for acquiring IT, preparing and issuing solicitation documents, evaluating proposals and awarding contracts.

"This award recognizes our professionally certified staff's commitment to assisting agencies and conducting procurements effectively and efficiently," said Tom Wade, GTA executive director and state CIO.

GTA is one of only a few organizations to receive the national award at least three times. The selection process requires entrants to meet exacting standards and submit documentation on 100 evaluation criteria.

The Achievement of Excellence in Procurement is sponsored by the National Purchasing Institute, the California Association of Public Purchasing Officers, the Florida Association of Public Purchasing Officers, the Institute of Supply Management, and the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. ❚