MTA's Project Management Software Proves its Value

By BILL HEARD, Editor

Jeff Christiansen, deputy executive officer, Program Management, points out a feature of the Contract Control System to Dennis Partridge, configuration management manager.

(May 15, 2001) In 1991, MTA analysts developed a unique computer program to help manage the progress and control the cost of Metro Rail construction projects. The agency recently closed a $225,000 deal to sell the source code marketing rights for the now upgraded system to an East Coast construction management firm.

By using the Contract Control System – CCS – the MTA has saved more than $10 million in construction costs since 1995.

Impressed by the system's potential, the Federal Transit Administration not only endorsed CCS, in 1994 it recommended its use on all federally funded projects. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and Tren Urbano, a transit project in Puerto Rico, both used CCS software.

In addition to revenues from the recent sale, the MTA has earned another $62,000 over the years from CCS, according to Jeff Christiansen, deputy executive officer, Program Management.

Value of the CCS system

But, the real importance of the system has been its on-going value in helping the MTA track millions of dollars in contract changes, and the thousands of documents generated by its construction projects and procurement activities.

"Prior to creation of CCS, we had six or eight people performing change control for just one project, Metro Red Line Segment 1," says Christiansen. "At the peak of our activity, five people were doing change control for four or five projects."

CCS permitted the MTA to reduce its reliance on agency construction staff by 75 percent, while increasing productivity by 300 to 400 percent, Christiansen said.

"Everyone talks about the promise of computers, but no one ever gives any good examples," he adds. "We think this is an excellent real-life example of how we did things quicker and with fewer people because of the system we designed."

Got end-users involved

Dennis Partridge, configuration management manager in Program Management, was a key member of the team that developed CCS. The team divided the construction management process into 12 elements, got end-users involved in the design and – over the course of two years – created the software package.

Partridge also has taken the lead in adding new modules called PATS (Procurement Acquisition Tracking System) and COTS (CloseOut Tracking System). He has trained some 450 MTA employees to use the new

modules, which track procurement activities and monitor the close-out status of projects.

"Operations is using CCS to view as-built drawings of the rail lines before they do repairs," he says. "CCS is now being used on all capital improvement projects and we're focusing on building efficiencies into the procurement process."

Christiansen expects CCS will continue to evolve as it proves to be useful in other areas of the MTA. "We're trying to stay on the leading edge of project management."

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