

Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)

Driving efficiency at scale: How PBOT reduced permit processing time by 60%

OVERVIEW

Facing rising volumes of utility permit requests and a heavily manual, opaque approval process, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) set out to fundamentally rethink how permitting work gets done. By modernizing its utility permitting operations and consolidating fragmented processes into a single, automated digital system, PBOT dramatically reduced staff workload, accelerated permit turnaround times, and improved transparency for customers and reviewers alike.

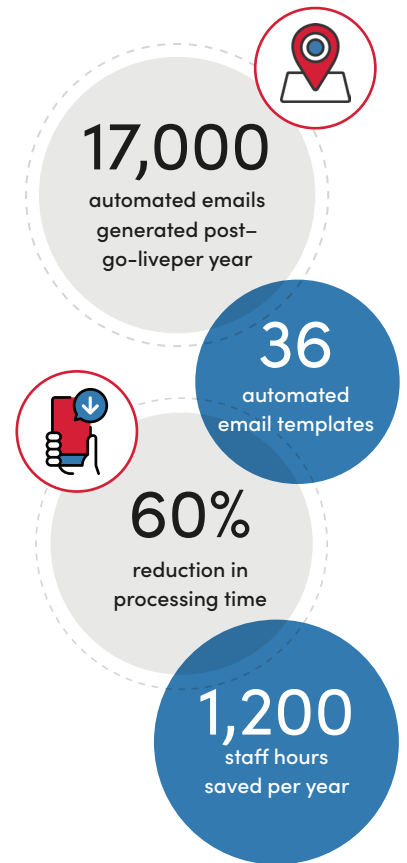
SITUATION | RISING PERMIT VOLUMES, FRAGMENTED SYSTEMS

PBOT plays a critical role in supporting safe, coordinated infrastructure work across the city by reviewing and issuing utility permits. As demand increased, the agency faced growing pressure to process applications quickly while maintaining accuracy, fairness, and accountability.

Before modernization, the utility permitting process relied heavily on email-based workflows and disconnected systems. Applicants and staff navigated long email threads, unclear timelines, and repetitive manual steps. Key information lived across multiple inboxes and platforms, making it difficult to track application history or ensure nothing was missed.

MUST HAVE SOLUTION

Permitting, Compliance, & Licensing Enterprise



“

These advancements have transformed operational efficiency, most notably reducing the average technician time by 60% for a Level One request. Beyond time savings, the transition to a single-system architecture has significantly improved accuracy and accelerated turnaround times from payment to delivery.”

Kalise Rucker | Supervisor, Utility Permitting | Portland Bureau of Transportation



“Both the customer and the permit technician were stuck in a cycle of manual processes that provided no transparency,” said Ryan Mace, division manager of utility management & compliance.

Technicians spent significant time:

- ✓ **Manually converting email content and attachments** into usable files.
- ✓ **Re-entering data** across siloed systems.
- ✓ **Managing permit fees** in multiple, non-integrated tools.

Reviewers were similarly constrained, often limited to reviewing a single email thread to understand an application’s history. This lack of visibility created inefficiencies, increased the risk of errors, and slowed approvals – impacting both internal staff capacity and public confidence in the process.

SOLUTION | CENTRALIZATION, STANDARDIZATION, AND AUTOMATION

Rather than simply digitizing existing steps, PBOT focused first on fixing the process itself – creating a more transparent, standardized, and efficient way to manage utility permitting end to end.

To accomplish this, PBOT implemented Granicus’ Permitting, Compliance, & Licensing Enterprise solution (AMANDA) to centralize permit intake, review, communication, invoicing, and issuance within a single system.

The solution emphasized:

- **Automated data capture** to eliminate manual transcription.
- **Standardized workflows** that guide permits from intake through approval.
- **Centralized permit records**, creating a single digital folder for each application.
- **Automated communications**, ensuring consistent updates throughout the permit lifecycle.

“The implementation of AMANDA has eliminated previous inefficiencies,” said Andrew Wightman, business systems analyst. **“The platform provides a unified digital folder where stakeholders can access all correspondence and attachments instantly.”**



The team also prioritized clear, proactive communication. PBOT configured 36 automated email templates that trigger at key points in the process, providing applicants and reviewers with timely, consistent information without increasing staff workload.

RESULTS | EFFICIENCY GAINS AND A CLEARER, FASTER PROCESS

PBOT's move to a centralized, automated utility permitting system delivered immediate efficiency gains and long-term operational improvements. By eliminating manual handoffs and fragmented workflows, permit technicians reduced processing time for Level 1 requests from 30 minutes to just 12, a 60% decrease that significantly changed how work gets done across the team.

Those gains translate into meaningful capacity every year:

- ✓ **1,200** staff hours saved annually
- ✓ **Faster reviews** due to complete, centralized permit records
- ✓ **Fewer errors and less rework** across intake, review, and approval

“Beyond time savings, the transition to a single-system architecture has significantly improved accuracy and accelerated turnaround times from payment to delivery,” said Kalise Rucker, supervisor of utility permitting.

Transparency improved just as dramatically. Since go-live, PBOT has sent more than 17,000 automated emails, keeping applicants informed with consistent, reliable updates. Integrated invoicing and itemized fee breakdowns clarified costs and sped payment-to-permit timelines – reinforcing trust with contractors and utilities and creating a permitting experience that is faster, clearer, and more dependable for everyone involved.

*This story highlights the hard work and innovation that earned the Portland Bureau of Transportation recognition as a winner in the 15th Annual **Granicus Digital Government Awards**, honoring exceptional achievements in digital government.*

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