



Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-106](#), a report to the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

As part of a multilayered effort to strengthen port security, the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) of 2002 calls for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to issue a worker identification card that uses biological metrics, such as fingerprints, to control access to secure areas of ports or ships. Charged with the responsibility for developing this card, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), within DHS, initially planned to issue a Transportation Worker Identification Credential in August 2004 to about 6 million maritime workers.

GAO assessed what factors limited TSA's ability to meet its August 2004 target date for issuing cards and what challenges remain for TSA to implement the card.

What GAO Recommends

To help ensure that TSA meets the challenges it is facing in developing and operating its maritime worker identification card program, we are recommending that the Secretary of Homeland Security direct the TSA Administrator to employ industry best practices for project planning and management, by developing a comprehensive project plan for managing the remaining life of the project and other specific, detailed plans for risk mitigation and cost-benefit and alternatives analyses. DHS and TSA generally concurred with GAO's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-106.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Margaret Wrightson at (415) 904-2000 or wrightsonm@gao.gov.

PORT SECURITY

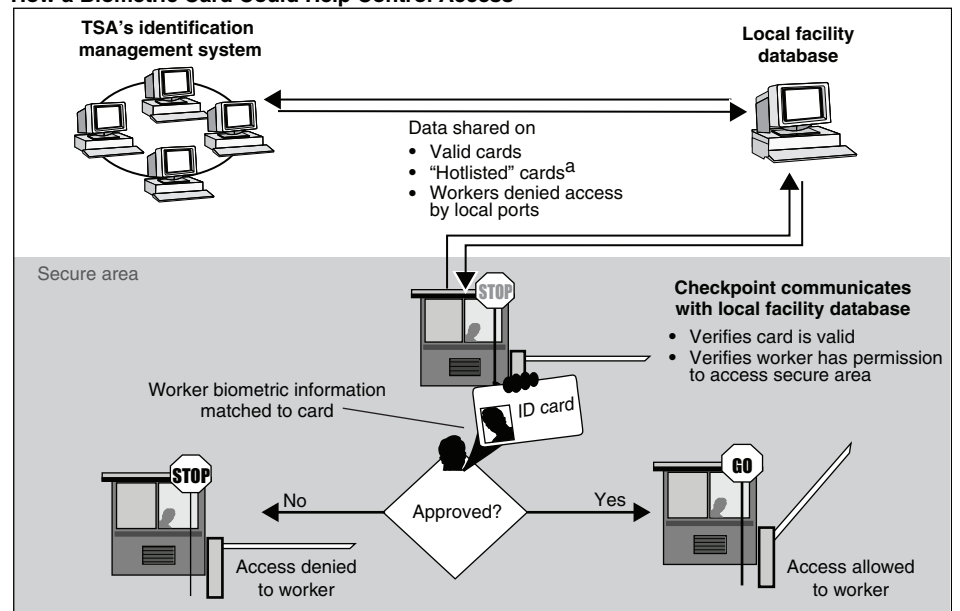
Better Planning Needed to Develop and Operate Maritime Worker Identification Card Program

What GAO Found

Three main factors, all of which resulted in delays for testing a prototype of the maritime worker identification card system, caused the agency to miss its initial August 2004 target date for issuing the cards: (1) officials had difficulty obtaining timely approval to proceed with the prototype test from DHS, (2) extra time was required to identify data to be collected for a cost-benefit analysis, and (3) additional work to assess card technologies was required. DHS has not determined when it may begin issuing cards.

In the future, TSA will face difficult challenges as it moves forward with developing and operating the card program, for example, developing regulations that identify eligibility requirements for the card. An additional challenge—and one that holds potential to adversely affect the entire program—is that TSA does not yet have a comprehensive plan in place for managing the project. Failure to develop such a plan places the card program at higher risk of cost overruns, missed deadlines, and underperformance. Following established, industry best practices for project planning and management could help TSA address these challenges. Best practices suggest managers develop a comprehensive project plan and other, detailed component plans. However, while TSA has initiated some project planning, the agency lacks an approved comprehensive project plan to govern the life of the project and has not yet developed other, detailed component plans for risk mitigation or the cost-benefit and alternatives analyses.

How a Biometric Card Could Help Control Access



Source: GAO analysis of TSA and state of Florida data.

^aCards that are no longer valid due to new threat information or because they are lost, stolen, or damaged.