
**United States Postal Service Consolidation Plan Survey
Tucson: Economic and Community Impact
July 24, 2015**

In February 2013, the United States Postal Service (USPS) implemented the first phase of its national consolidation plan, targeting postal processing centers including the Tucson Postal Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC)/Cherrybell. As a result, the Tucson P&DC/Cherrybell stopped processing some outbound mail. Then, in January 2015, USPS enacted changes to its service delivery standards nationwide as a continued rollout of its phase one consolidation plans, increasing the average processing and delivery time for First-Class mail.

In response, Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, Vice Mayor Richard Fimbres, the Tucson City Council and various local business and community organizations launched a set of public surveys in an effort to provide the residents of Tucson a platform in which to share opinions about, and impacts of, the Tucson Postal Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC)/Cherrybell consolidation plans. More than 1,700 Southern Arizona residents, who live in areas from Tucson to Rio Rico to Tubac and beyond, submitted comments and opinions to share the myriad ways they have been personally and professionally impacted by the disruptions to the region's mailing processes.

The second phase of consolidation, originally planned for July 2015, would have reduced Cherrybell's services to limited retail operations with little-to-no mail processing. From the first announcement of consolidation at Cherrybell, City leadership challenged this decision. Shortly after the release of the public surveys, USPS announced that phase two consolidation plans are delayed until 2016.

Excerpts from the public surveys are included in the following pages. Residents and business owners reported impacts of the changes in the postal service that affect the economic vitality of the region as well as the health and security of its residents. From Medicare benefits to medications to legal documents, deliveries are moving inefficiently, causing delays that can be felt across the region.

While the impact of the change in service standards may vary from respondent to respondent, the vast majority -- 84.0% of individuals, 86.0% of businesses -- of survey participants reported a noticeable delay in their mail delivery services since the beginning of 2015. Additionally, there are several key messages community and business respondents deliver in their survey responses.

Themes that have emerged from the survey responses:

- Threats to Public Health: The delay in mail caused many seniors and other vulnerable populations to have to wait additional days for timely medicines.



CITY OF TUCSON

- USPS Failing our Veterans: Veterans who served our country are experiencing delays in VA benefits and medications they rely on.
- Negatively Impacting Local Businesses: Delays in receipts and payments have prevented small businesses from meeting their payrolls or forced them to use more costly products to conduct transactions.
- Creates Financial Instability for Non-Profits: Direct mail fundraising is a popular and critical way for Southern Arizona non-profits to reach funders. Delays in receipt of payments and membership applications create an unstable financial climate for non-profit organizations.
- Major Personal Disruptions: Many residents complain of mail delays beyond five days for the transmission of personal correspondence. The impact results in substantial personal disruptions ranging from late tax payments, bills, school transcripts and personal holiday cards. The extra time has affected all correspondence in the community.

Tucson's leadership will share these stories with Arizona's Members of Congress who can take the first-hand testimonials of the business, economic and community impact of the USPS consolidation plan to the Postmaster General of the United States and their colleagues in Congress.

**Southern Arizona Postal Service Consolidation
Regional Community Impact**

Community Impact Categories:

- Bills
- Child Support Payments
- Income/Paychecks
- Legal Documents
- Medicare
- Military benefits
- Passport renewal
- Personal mail
- Prescriptions (cancer medications, insulin, thyroid, blood pressure)
- School notifications
- Social Security
- Taxes
- VA benefits
- Voting

Testimonials

Many of my medical prescriptions are mail order. I worry about any increase in delivery time; will I get them before my medicine runs out? I live in a 55+ community; most of its 5,000+ residents get mail order prescriptions; we're very concerned about delayed delivery and increased transit time exposing the drugs to environmental extremes that begin their deterioration. – **Kathleen S.**

My Dad gets his prescriptions in the mail. There have been a few times he runs out of his medicines before the next prescription comes in. My sister gets her disability check in the mail. She used to receive it by the 3rd of each month before. Now it may be the 6th or 7th when she gets her check, and it's very hard on her. – **Respondent #1135**

I am an insulin-dependent diabetic. Shipments now take an additional day (or three, if over a weekend) to arrive. With summer heat now upon us, the safety of receiving medication such as insulin is compromised even further by the delivery delay. – **John H.**

I am disabled. I am on medical disability and in a wheel chair. I get critical correspondence from multiple doctors and labs. – **Respondent #958**

I am very much against the harsh cuts to our postal service. It seems to me that the measures instituted to "save" money are more designed to see our postal system fail in what seems like the ongoing attempts of corporate interests to privatize and profit from every service that benefits the citizens/tax payers of the USA. – **Charlene Green**

With a city the size of Tucson (almost 1 million in Pima County) and other smaller cities in Southern Arizona depending on our processing center, it does not make sense to close this facility. Stop delivery on Saturday if USPS needs to save money. That would be way more cost effective. And people would not lose their jobs. – **Susan Hitchye**

Tucson is a HUGE city; it's incomprehensible that we would even consider closing the main post office for a city this large. We're treated like a stepchild or an afterthought. We are very fortunate in Oro Valley to have a wonderful Post Office but it can't "fix" this! – **Respondent #1175**

It makes no sense to close down the post office on Cherrybell. Tucson is not a ghost town by a long shot. It is a huge metropolitan city. I don't understand. Is it just politics? – **Rita Martinez**

I use the USPS on a consistent basis not only for personal uses but also for work AND additional campaigning needs as they happen. I am an elected official and the City of Tucson does all Vote by Mail elections. We need secure, accurate delivery and what happened to me with my holiday cards really puts a huge doubt in my mind that Phoenix cannot process Tucson's mail....they are unfamiliar with our city and addresses!!! – ***Tucson City Council Member Regina Romero***

I have always done my state and Federal taxes and mailed them from the Cherrybell post office. This year I used one of the tax service companies because I wanted to make sure it was sent securely. It costs a lot more to use one of those services than it does for postage on two 8x10 manila envelopes! I don't understand why a city of almost a million people (greater Tucson metro area) and the surrounding counties don't rate having a post office mail handling facility. We have one of the highest growth rates of population in the USA, we are trying to attract major industry to Tucson and Pima County, and the postal service is trying its damndest to foul up these efforts. – ***Michael Huber***

Since I have lived in Tucson for over 50 years now, in which Tucson has developed into a very large city over these years, me and my family feel that having our mail delivered, with a Phoenix Post Mark on it is wrong: Personal mail like cards and letters makes the recipient feel like Tucson doesn't exist. Businesses will be hurt by this and will refuse to settle in Tucson because of the inability to have this service, which will mean fewer jobs and more crime. If the funding is a problem with leaving the Processing Center in Tucson, then I suggest that you close down a few Post offices if you have to, but leave the Processing Center in Tucson. Thank you! – ***Respondent #1005***

It's ridiculous for Tucson's mail to go to Phoenix when we have the facility and employees to distribute OUR mail within our community. I'm sure it's all about money and politics but Tucson is not a small town. Tucson is growing and is being looked at as a place to move to for people who retire or families who do not want to live in a big city. I don't understand how anyone can make the decision to send the mail to Phoenix to process. How about we take care of our own people, our own community? – ***Laura Montano***

The postman is someone you build a relationship with. The closing of Cherrybell preparations have cost many dependable employees their jobs. The rural areas in southern Arizona benefit from having that Tucson postmark. Closing of the sorting center makes no sense. None of the arguments in favor of closing has convinced me that sending Tucson mail to Phoenix is efficient. I am fed up with deliberate policies aimed at destroying the post office.
– ***Sandra Spangler***

We have an amazing mail carrier and we've have heard stories about schedule difficulty and the demands of their jobs. We are so grateful for all that they do. – ***Patricia Wisnom***

Since the most recent changes, overnight mail does not exist south of Tucson where we live. What will it mean when the Tucson facility is shut down? We have had instances where we needed overnight mail and had no options with the post office. – ***Respondent #1326***

I have my prescriptions mailed to me and we have a dog that gets the valley fever meds mailed to our home. As a retired person, I am more reliant on the mail service but can't justify the more expensive options for delivery if I want to see it sometime in the next two weeks. – ***Kathy Brown***

My daughter recently graduated from Vet School at CSU. She mailed two boxes of books to our house worth more than \$1000. The post office delivered one empty box folded up and is "very sorry they can't find the books." Although they are investigating and are nice about it, no books are likely to be found. I have a hard time understanding why a city this large wouldn't have some services. – ***Georgia Ehlers, University of Arizona***



The reduction in services at the Cherrybell Station significantly reduced the number of locations in Tucson where passport services are offered. In the course of a week, my family made three trips to the site on campus. The first time the office was locked and shuttered because all of the afternoon time slots had been filled before lunch time. The second time we waited for as long as we could before leaving. On the third trip we waited in line for close to six hours, even though we had arrived only about an hour after the office opened in the morning. A city the size of Tucson needs to have more passport offices. Please help address this issue. – **David Herring**

I have had far too much "lost" mail in the past years including credit and membership cards that had to be replaced because they never arrived. This additional transit distance allows for more theft and fraud.
– **Michele Manos**

We purchase many items through the mail including food items. We stopped ordering medication through the mail due in part to the delayed mailing times – **Mrs. Peter Buchin**

I notice that sometimes I have no mail on Fridays and lately I have to use Paypal to pay some of my bills--especially my rent. I like the convenience of the Cherrybell processing center, if I have a package to send out it is easy to do it from there. – **Vivian Enos, Pima County Library**

**Southern Arizona Postal Service Consolidation
Regional Business/Economic Impact**

Business/Economic Impact Categories:

- Accounts receivable
- Billing
- Business efficiency
- Delays in litigation and settlement
- Employee clearance and verification
- Extra labor: researching late checks, billing notices
- Insurance cards/applications
- Mortgages
- Payroll
- Scholarships
- Volunteers

The delay in receiving checks from our clients has created the need to borrow money to cover payroll. The cost to date in 2015 is over \$2,000 to our small, woman-owned business. – **Respondent #216**

As a furniture consignment business, we send out hundreds of checks every month to our consignor partners. We have been in business for almost 20 years. We are dependent on the USPS running efficiently to maintain the good reputation of our business – **Catherine Morton, HomeStyle**

Our non-profit provides scholarships to needy families attending private school in Southern Arizona. Any delay in payments reaching the respective school the child attends negatively impacts our business of providing timely payments for tuition assistance. – **Respondent #194**

We're a small startup. The 2-3 days to process check payments on businesses is already challenging, now we're lucky if we can get them paid in 5-7 days. If someone sends a payment to our old remittance address, it can take weeks to forward from PHX. We also sell used, in-working-condition electronics online, and by losing Tucson as a primary facility, the late or delayed shipment of our packages is incredibly damaging to our reputation. – **Andrew Slattery, IronFist Design LLC**

For the Tucson Symphony, the elimination of the 4.4 cent discount would result in between \$5000 - \$6000 in additional mail costs. – **Mark Blakeman, Tucson Symphony Orchestra**

In the legal/attorney office business, time is of the essence. Delay in time of delivery results in delay in time of response to deadlines. Each court and case law may require a different deadline (i.e., 10 days; 20 or 30 days, etc.). Delay in receipt of mail could cause disqualification of a client's case. Very risky business for an attorney to fail at. – **Respondent #120**

The saying "time is money" is literally true in my business. In my business, I receive by postal mail my receipts and payments. Delays of one or two days can mean a transaction will not go through and I have lost the sale. – **Respondent #142**

Our payment checks are late, causing pain to those we pay. – **Respondent #239**

Being a 501 c3 non-profit organization, many of our contributors' monthly donations have been delayed. This has caused a delay in deposits, which causes a delay in funds accessible, and thus creating an unstable financial situation. Furthermore, our volunteers must renew their membership annually; this transfers over to ten to thirty renewals per month. They must fill out a four-page application and send it in with their renewal membership via US Mail. This has also been delayed and causes delays throughout the renewal clearance/verification process, thus causing at time cancellation of some religious programs for inmates of the Pima County Jail. – **Rev. Steve Martinez, Pima County Jail Ministry / R.A.C.**



We operate a refuse collection business in Santa Cruz County in Southern Arizona. Operating on a cash basis, we rely on the timely receipt of our customer receivables for operating expenses. Financing for small businesses has become scarce and any delay causes us operating problems, not to mention the sleepless nights. – **Respondent #158**

I send many notes, invitations, receipts, and packages to my clients. Time is of the essence. Time is money for us. When the mail is slowed, we lose sales. – **Cheryl Prendergast**

We hold meetings monthly and send out notifications of these meetings. Due to the delay, the notifications were not getting received until after the meeting. – **Sarah F., Santa Clara Elementary School**

Our business is financial lending, so when payments are late, customers pay more interest. With the delay customers are now paying an extra day or two of interest, thus causing a bad customer service experience and both short- and long-term customers look for other lending institutions. – **Respondent #212**

I work for a community service non-profit as a case manager. I am required to maintain contact with my clients on a monthly basis and when that has elapsed, I am required to try and contact them by mail. Since the transition to the Phoenix processing center, I have noticed an increase delay in when my client/families receive their written attempt at contact. The consequence of this increase is that more and more client/families will be dis-enrolled from our services due to lack of contact as once the attempt at contact process has started it can only be resolved with either reengagement of services or disenrollment. Before the transition, on average the mailed attempt at contact took on average between 3-5 days and now is taking between 5-8 days. Please highly consider retaining the Tucson Mail Processing Center. – **Jessie R.**

We've sent checks to our vendors and because we didn't know that it would take so long to get to them, several called and said they hadn't received their checks in the usual time frame. Consequently, our company sent replacement checks by FedEx, costing us more than the normal postage. When the vendors received the original checks, they had to send them back, costing them money. Some vendors never did receive the first check so our company had to put a stop payment on them, which cost us even more money. – **Barbara Taylor, Exquisite Designs Originals Gallery LLC**