The El Paso County Treasurer's office has been researching packaged tax collection software as an alternative and replacement of the out-dated VAX system. In speaking with software vendors and other Colorado counties, there are really only two tax collection software companies that hold promise. These systems are Eagle Treasurer by Tyler Technologies and GRM Tax by Thomson Reuters. As part of this research, we have been reaching out to other counties for their input, both positive and negative, about these systems, the implementation process, and continuing support along with upgrades and updates.

Currently there are 25 Colorado counties on or moving to the Eagle Treasurer software, including Douglas County who has just recently signed an agreement with Tyler Technologies. These 25 counties represent both large and small counties throughout Colorado, including similar counties such as Weld and Adams. From feedback we have received, Tyler Technologies values input from Colorado counties about enhancements to the software, as well as being focused on Colorado Treasurer's offices first and foremost with the software.

The GRM Tax software currently only has two counties in Colorado, Arapahoe and Jefferson, who are set to go live by the end of 2013. Douglas County is currently on an older version of this software, but as mentioned above, they have signed on with Tyler Technologies. Overall GRM Tax is used by some 50-60 large counties throughout the country and a version of their Records software is currently used by the Clerk and Recorders office here in El Paso County.

These prepackaged tax collection software can provide many advantages for the Treasurer's office. Both companies have a long history of working with governments on the specific applications needed to accurately collect and disburse tax payments in accordance with Colorado state regulations. A frequent request received by our office is for ACH disbursement of payments to tax sale participants and the software packages already have this as a feature. Also of note is the ability to provide PDF statements to tax payers and tax districts, an all-in-one method for storing documentation with a schedule number, and an extensive line of on-line capabilities to provide customers with more information and history than is currently available to them.

Basic estimates for software and conversion run around $500,000 with an additional $70,000 needed yearly for software support. The Treasurer's office believes we can fund these expenses if allowed to keep our excess tax sale proceeds (anticipating $80,000) and funds unspent in our yearly budget (about $90,000 plus $50,000 restored funding) over the next few fiscal years. As acquiring and converting to new software can take almost two years, it is very important that we move forward with this initiative now before additional major issues arise with VAX.

Tax Collection Software

- Tax collection calculations are a very complicated process
  - What to charge and collect on over 260,000 schedules
  - Disburse to 160+ taxing districts according to state statute
- Two viable commercial software options
- These systems are being used in over 25 other Colorado counties, including other large counties such as Weld, Adams, and Douglas
- One of the two software options was built with assistance from a large Colorado County and continues to highly value the input of Colorado Treasurers
- Proactive changes to the tax collection software based on user feedback and changes in state statute
- For the tax payer, we can provide easily accessible online statements, payment receipting, and payment history
- For the taxing districts, we can provide both current and historical monthly reports online
- The extensive line of online capabilities will save the County staff hours, printing costs, and postage costs
- Enhanced capabilities to automate ACH disbursements to both tax districts and tax lien sale buyers – a highly requested capability that we do not currently have
- Ability to store documents within the software so that they are readily available for front line staff when assisting customers with questions
- All documents that can be printed are in PDF format which will allow for us to easily e-mail information to tax payers and districts when requested
- Proven ability to interface with current County software such as JD Edwards and DotNet systems
- Ability to automatically e-mail tax lien buyers with pertinent information such as redemptions, issuing of tax sale certificates, and when they should anticipate funds being deposited into their accounts
- A wide array of reports and statistics come standard with the tax collection software, with the ability to create ad-hoc reports at the user level

Benefits of converting to EagleTreasurer packaged software

Twenty-five Colorado Counties Treasurer Offices are already utilizing or are in the process of switching to EagleTreasurer:

Adams	Archuleta	Boulder
Broomfield	Clear Creek	Delta
Douglas	Elbert	Fremont
Garfield	Grand	La Plata
Las Animas	Mesa	Montezuma
Montrose	Morgan	Otero
Phillips	Pitkin	Rio Blanco
Routt	San Miguel	Teller
Weld		

Douglas County has just signed an agreement to convert to EagleTreasurer software.

EagleTreasurer has the ability to offer our customers more options and information online – a rapidly growing customer expectation. Example: (http://www.co.weld.co.us/Departments/Treasurer/index.html)

The software has the ability to automate aspects of the annual tax sale including issuing tax sale certificates, electronic redemptions, and ACH payments. Communicating with this group can also be automated and thus more frequent. These items have been highly requested by the buyers who participate in the tax sale.

EagleTreasurer has the ability to automate both payments and reports to the districts which we collect taxes for. The reports can provide historical data which is often needed by the districts in planning and for audit documentation.

Ability to store historical data (check copies, tax statements, etc.) within the software which will reduce research time and provide a central database for documenting transactions and communication with tax payers.

Tyler Technologies, the maker of EagleTreasurer, has a proven track record of good response time as well as listening to and adapting to the needs of their Treasurer Office clients.

All printable documents created in EagleTreasurer are in PDF format which allows for easier storage, ability to reproduce copies of original documents, as well as the ability to easily e-mail information to customers upon request.

EagleTreasurer has an option where a tax payer can opt into tax statements and communication via electronic delivery only – potential for big postage savings.

The system has the ability to integrate with our existing database systems, including the Assessor's office software and JD Edwards.

After the initial purchase of the software, all upgrades and updates are included with no extra licensing fee ever due.

Issues with current system:

For the past sixteen plus years, the Treasurer's Office has been anticipating new software to replace the current VAX system which is outdated and unreliable.

The key IT person who was the most familiar with VAX is no longer with the County; therefore the historical knowledge base for VAX is gone.

In December 2012 there were major hardware issues with VAX that left the Treasurer's Office in a pinch.

Any new problems that arise in VAX, like recent issues with check printing or printing statements, take several days to resolve as each new problem causes IT to have to "reinvent the wheel." There is little institutional knowledge of the VAX software among current IT staff.

As the major revenue collection engine of the County, as well as being responsible for getting districts their funds timely, it is imperative that the Treasurer's Office have a reliable software program to handle the many intricacies involved in the collection and processing of tax revenue and disbursement.

Outdated software issues:
- No ability to reprint receipts for customers.
- No ability to break up payments by tender type.
- Segregation of duties is limited in the processing of payments.
- Interfacing with other County programs is manual and time consuming.
- Accounts are only updated once a day, when the batch process is run, so timely up-to-date tax records are not available.
- The ability to create new reports for ad-hoc situations is non-existent.
- Payments of more than one schedule number by one check are disjointed.
- All reports, special tax statements, and other documents must be manually scanned into a separate database. When doing research for a tax payer, staff must access several different systems, utilizing several different methods, to provide the information requested.
- Processing of mass payments (i.e. from mortgage companies) is labor intensive and a huge drain on resources (paper, ink, time).
- The mass payment process does not allow for multiple payments by the same payer during a calendar year and to override the system assigns a non-descriptive code for each successive payment. Many mortgage companies are sending in multiple payments – either paying in halves and/or sending in multiple files for each pay date. The non-descriptive code makes it difficult to provide quality customer service timely, as the codes must be looked up or TRINFed on thousands of payments.
- The mortgage industry is requesting up-loadable data via AutoAgent on a daily basis to make the payment of taxes more efficient and accurate. Our current system only updates the tax tables once a month