

Utah lawmaker driving licenses from wallets to cellphones

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SALT LAKE CITY — Following a trend that's seen credit cards, concert tickets, transit passes, airline tickets and more making the migration from traditional leather wallets to the modern smartphone, a Utah lawmaker wants to pave the way for one of the most ubiquitous personal documents — the driver's license — to follow the same path.

Sen. Lincoln Fillmore, R-South Jordan, said his [SB100](#), if passed, would start the process of vetting ideas and identifying a provider for a digital version of Utah drivers' licenses.

Fillmore said the effort was seeded by feedback he's received from constituents, noting that while the technology is new, some other states are working toward implementing digital license programs.

"We're helped out because some other states have cracked the ice on this," he said.

Right now, Louisiana is the only state that has adopted an opt-in digital driver's license, and Iowa is in a digital license beta test with a statewide rollout expected later this year. In addition, a handful of other states have launched pilot programs aimed at vetting a digital license system.

While there are a few variations in approach, digital licenses essentially transfer the data typically found on a state-issued driver's license — photo, name, date of birth, height, weight, current address, etc. — into a digital document that is stored on a smartphone.

There are also a couple of options for "no touch" sharing of information. One is simply visual and the other requires a digital transfer that takes place via a unique and secured link, created by the license holder, that can be shared with a relevant party, like a store clerk or law enforcement officer through a scan by another phone or mobile device.

To keep that data secure, biometric and password lockouts, encryption and access permission levels controlled by the license holder could all be part of the equation.

A Baton Rouge-based software development firm, Envoc, helped develop and launch the Louisiana digital drivers' licenses. Envoc co-founder and CEO Calvin Fabre said it took about two years to get the digital license app LA Wallet ready for a statewide rollout. The effort was coordinated with multiple entities to ensure both a secure digital document and one that would be convenient and practical for users.



Laura Seitz, Deseret News

Wittney Simpson has her photograph taken for her driver's license at the Driver License Division in West Valley on Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019.

"This project started off on a very good basis with all the relevant agencies in the same room talking to each other," Fabre said. "Each entity had its own set of concerns and questions, so by getting their input early ... we avoided later surprises that could have slowed down the process."

A driver's license stored in LA Wallet has simple visual cues to help make it easy to use for both the licensee and those who may need to verify the holder's age, for validity of driving privilege. In LA Wallet, license holders under 21 have their license image appear vertically, along with a bright and easy to read "under 21" message, while those who are older have their licenses appear horizontally with a similarly easy to read "over 21" message.

There are also other keyable verifiers like a time-stamped refresh and a security seal that appears when a holder touches the screen when the license is displayed.

Fabre said his 18-year-old company and its products are compliant with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard as well as Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act requirements.

He noted that LA Wallet, which launched last July, has had about 90,000 downloads without a big marketing effort, and he expects that number to increase significantly when an ad effort launches later this year. A user needs to pay a one-time fee of \$5.99 for the app to display the license. While the document does not replace the physical, plastic card version of a Louisiana driver's license, it is acceptable proof for law enforcement and as age verification by most retailers.

For the moment, it is not accepted by federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Agency, so the digital license won't get a user on a plane. But Fabre and his team are working on it.



Laura Seitz, Deseret News

People wait at the Driver License Division in West Valley on Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019.

"We're continuing to talk with federal agencies, like the TSA, about how to move toward acceptance," Fabre said.

Fillmore said security concerns are very much on his radar and expects that should his proposal find favor with Utah legislators and the governor, it will take about two years to get an appropriate digital license program in place, in part due to the work required to ensure a safe system. He also noted potential costs to the state will be assessed as part of that work.

Personal privacy issues have been raised in other states where digital license efforts are underway, and Fabre noted input from the American Civil Liberties Union chapter in Louisiana informed how LA Wallet was designed.

Marina Lowe, legislative and policy counsel for the ACLU of Utah, shared her concerns over Fillmore's proposal with the Deseret News.

"We are wary of any move to make driver's license data available in a digital format," Lowe said in a statement. "While a traditional driver's license can contain only a finite amount of personal information, the storage available on a digital driver's license is almost infinite.

"Can we be certain that when we hand over a digital license to be scanned — either by law enforcement or someone checking our identity to cash a check — that all of our personal data remains protected?"

Fillmore noted that, like Louisiana, a Utah digital license would be an option for Utah drivers and not a replacement, for now, of the physical version.

"It is important to note that no one will be required to use it," Fillmore said. "Everyone will still need to have a physical driver's license ... at least until the feds get on board."

On Tuesday, the Senate Transportation, Public Utilities, Energy and Technology Committee gave SB100 its unanimous support and the bill now moves to the full Senate for further consideration.