Medford Branch, Medford, MA: Delivery Operations

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 26-120-5-R27 | November 10, 2026



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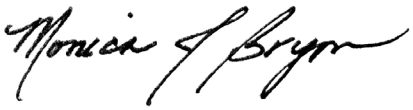
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Transmittal Letter

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

November 10, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: CARISSA ANN SHEA
MANAGER, MASSACHUSETTS-RHODE ISLAND DISTRICT



FROM: Monica J. Brym
Director, Field Operations, Atlantic and WestPac

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Medford Branch, Medford, MA: Delivery Operations (Report Number 26-120-5-R27)

This report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Medford Branch, Medford, MA.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Frank McElligott, Audit Manager, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Chief Retail and Delivery Officer and Executive Vice President
Chief Solutions and Strategy Officer and Executive Vice President
Vice President, Network Solutions and Performance Excellence
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail and Post Office Operations
Vice President, Atlantic Area Retail and Delivery Operations
Director, Retail and Post Office Operations Maintenance
Corporate Audit and Response Management

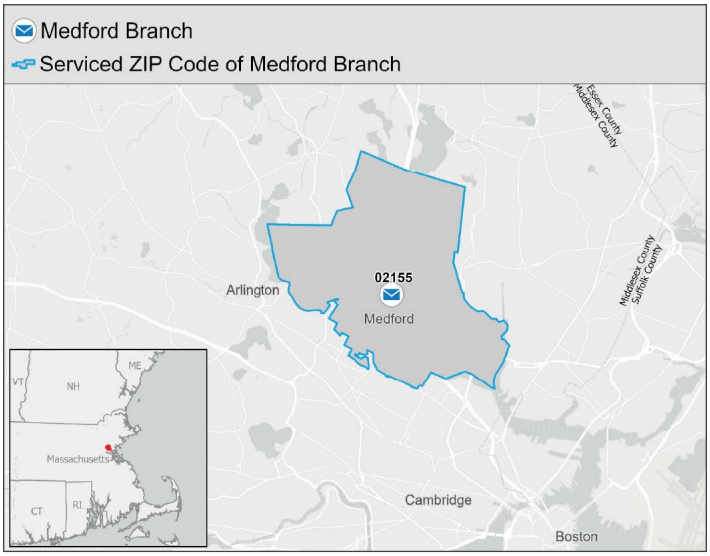
Results

Background

The U.S. Postal Service's mission is to bind the nation together by providing prompt, reliable, efficient, and universal mail and package delivery to more than 167 million residential and business addresses across the country six days a week. To achieve this mission, the Postal Service developed the *Delivering for America* plan,[1] which outlines how it will transform from a financially strained, operationally outdated institution to a more modern, efficient, and sustainable national service provider. The plan addresses organizational inefficiencies, advances cost-reduction and revenue-growth initiatives, and innovates retail centers and services. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviews delivery operations at facilities across the country and provides management with timely feedback in furtherance of this mission.

This interim report presents the results of our audit of delivery operations and property conditions at the Medford Branch in Medford, MA (Project Number 26-120-5). We selected the Boston area based on a March 25, 2026, congressional request from U.S. senators and representatives from Massachusetts to audit statewide postal operations and address mail delivery delays in the greater Boston area.[2] The Medford Branch is in the Massachusetts-Rhode Island (MA-RI) District of the Atlantic Area and serves about 61,485 people in ZIP Code 02155,[3] which is considered an urban community (see Figure 1).[4]

Figure 1. ZIP Codes Serviced by the Medford Branch



Source: OIG analysis of ZIP Code data.

We assessed all units in the MA-RI District based on the number of Customer 360 (C360)[5] delivery-related inquiries,[6] stop-the-clock (STC)[7] scans performed away from the delivery point and at the unit, undelivered route information, and Leg 1 and Leg 3 failures[8] between April 1 and July 16, 2026.

We judgmentally selected the Medford Branch primarily based on the number of C360 inquiries related to delivery, STC scans performed at the delivery unit, and Leg 3 failures. See Table 1 for a comparison of some of these metrics between the unit and the rest of the district.

1 *Delivering for America: Our Vision and Ten-Year Plan to Achieve Financial Sustainability and Service Excellence*, issued on March 23, 2021, and *Delivering for America 2.0: Fulfilling the Promise*, issued on September 30, 2024.
2 March 25, 2026, letter to Inspector General Tammy Hull from Senators Edward Markey and Elizabeth Warren and Representatives James McGovern, Stephen Lynch, Katherine Clark, Ayanna Pressley, and Jake Auchincloss expressing concerns with mail delays and post office closures in the greater Boston area. The letter noted the OIG's 2024 audits in the Massachusetts-Rhode Island district and requested another OIG review of statewide postal operations, including staffing in the greater Boston area.
3 The unit also services ZIP Code 02153, which is assigned to a business customer.
4 We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from 2020 Census Bureau information.
5 Customer 360 is a cloud-based application that enables Postal Service employees to diagnose, resolve, and track customer inquiries.
6 Delivery-related inquiries include a compilation of package inquiry, package pickup, daily mail service, and hold mail inquiries.
7 An STC scan is a scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mailpiece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pickup," and "No Access."
8 Leg 1 failures occur when there is a delay from the time a mailpiece was collected to the initial processing. Leg 3 failures occur after the mailpiece has been processed at the final processing facility on a final processing operation and is not delivered to the customer on the day it was intended.

Table 1. Delivery Metric Comparison From April 1 Through July 16, 2026

Delivery Metric	Unit	District
C360 Delivery Inquiries (average per route)	3.8	3.3
STC Scans at the Unit (average per route)	25.1	8.4
Leg 3 Failures (percent of sampled pieces)	3.7	1.2

Source: OIG analysis of Postal Service's C360, Informed Visibility, and Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data extracted July 22, 2026. Informed Visibility provides service performance measurement and diagnostics of market-dominant products, mail inventory, and predictive workloads of all mail. PTR is the system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.

The Medford Branch is one of six delivery units[9] the OIG reviewed during the week of August 31, 2026. This delivery unit has 42 city routes. From July 11 through August 7, 2026, the delivery unit had three supervisors assigned.[10] The Medford Branch falls under the Boston Post Office for employee availability[11] measurement. As of August 2026, the year-to-date employee availability rate for the Boston Post Office was 92.81 percent, which is less than the Postal Service's retail and delivery operations employee availability goal of 93.95 percent for fiscal year 2026.

For the month prior to our fieldwork visit, the Medford Branch was operating two city carriers over its complement.[12] During the same period, the unit had a carrier overtime usage of 25.9 percent, which was above the 14.9 percent of planned overtime for carriers at the unit.[13] During the week of our site visit, the unit's carrier overtime usage was 24.3 percent, which was 62.3 percent over the planned overtime ratio.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery operations and property conditions at the Medford Branch in Medford, MA.

To accomplish our objective, we combined preliminary data analyses with an on-site inspection performed September 1-3, 2026. Prior to the visit, we analyzed staffing levels, mail arrival times, package scanning performance, reported mail delays, arrow key[14] inventories, Voyager card[15] exceptions, and property safety and security issues. While on-site, we reviewed operational compliance focusing on mail conditions, package scanning procedures, arrow key accountability, carrier separation and transfer documentation, Voyager card exception justification, property safety and security conditions, and package separation procedures. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on October 22, 2026, and included its comments, where appropriate.

We are issuing this interim report to provide the Postal Service with timely information regarding conditions we identified at the Medford Branch. We will issue a separate capping report[16] that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all six delivery units, as well as the district. The capping report will include actions taken by management to address the issues identified in this interim report. It will also respond to the broader postal operations and mail delivery concerns in the greater Boston area raised by the congressional members in their letter to the OIG. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

9 The other five units were the Brockton Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC), Brockton, MA (Project Number 26-120-1); the Brookline Branch, Brookline, MA (Project No: 26-120-2); the Grove Hall Station, Dorchester, MA (Project Number 26-120-3); the Lawrence Post Office, Lawrence, MA (Project Number 26-120-4); and the Roxbury Station, Roxbury, MA (Project Number 26-120-6). The scope of these audits does not include the processing plants that service the six units.
10 Assignments based on the Postal Service's Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS). TACS is the system used by the Postal Service to automate the collection of employee time and attendance information.
11 The Postal Service calculates employee availability by dividing straight time hours worked by potential straight time hours. Potential straight time hours generally include actual straight time hours worked, sick leave taken, and leave without pay.
12 Carrier complement obtained from the City Delivery Variance (CDV) system. From July 18 through August 14, 2026, the unit had an earned carrier complement of 67 and an actual carrier complement of 69.
13 Carrier overtime data for the period of July 18 through August 14, 2026, was obtained from the eFlash system, a system used by the Postal Service to track employee workhours.
14 Arrow keys are distinctively shaped keys that carriers use to open mail-receiving receptacles, such as street collection boxes and panels of apartment house mailboxes equipped with an arrow lock. Arrow keys are accountable property and are subject to strict controls.
15 The U.S. Postal Service uses credit cards, called Voyager cards, to pay for commercially purchased fuel, oil, and routine maintenance for its vehicles.
16 The capping report project number is 26-120.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting delivery operations and property conditions at the Medford Branch. Specifically, we found issues with four of the areas we reviewed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Deficiencies Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Arrow Keys	X	
Carrier Separations and Transfers		X
Voyager Card Transactions		X
Property Conditions	X	
Package Separations		X

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of August 31, 2026.

For the audit areas where issues were not identified, we performed the following:

- Arrow Keys – We observed the procedures for safeguarding arrow keys and did not identify any issues but did identify issues with the management of arrow keys (see Finding #3).
- Package Scanning – We analyzed package scanning between May 1 and July 31, 2026, and did not find any issues with package scans more than 1,000 feet away, but we did identify issues with scans at the unit (see Finding #2).
- Carrier Separations and Transfers – We analyzed employee data from June 27 through August 7, 2026. All carriers assigned to the unit either reported to work or were accounted for by management during this time, indicating no issues with employee separations and transfers.
- Voyager Card Transactions – We analyzed Voyager card premium fuel transactions from February 17 through August 14, 2026, and identified six premium fuel purchases. We did not identify any recurring systemic issues.
- Package Separations – We observed package separation procedures on September 2, 2026, and determined the unit was properly separating Priority Mail[17] from non-Priority Mail packages.

17 Priority Mail is an expedited service that may contain any mailable matter weighing no more than 70 pounds.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

On the morning of September 1, 2026, we identified 842 delayed mailpieces at 14 of 42 carrier cases. Specifically, we identified 283 letters and 559 flats. See Figure 2 for an example of delayed mail found at carrier cases. In addition, management did not report this mail as undelivered in the Delivery Condition Visualization (DCV)[18] system. Further, the carriers did not complete Postal Service (PS) Forms 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report,*[19] to document undelivered mailpieces.

Figure 2. Example of Delayed Mail at Carrier Case



Source: OIG photo taken before carriers arrived on the morning of September 1, 2026.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight to verify that all mail was cleared from the unit and established procedures were followed. For example, the majority of the delayed flat mail was at one carrier case for several weeks because the regular carrier was on extended leave and the carriers assigned to cover the route did not take this mail out for delivery. Additionally, the PM supervisor did not enforce the redline process,[20] which required supervisors to interact with carriers returning from their routes with undelivered mail and verify that PS Forms 1571 were completed. As a result, supervisors were unaware of undelivered mail that needed to be reported in the DCV system. Further, carriers stated that they were unfamiliar with the requirement to complete PS Form 1571.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have conducted an adequate walkthrough of the workroom to verify that all mail was delivered and the reason for undelivered mail brought back from the street was properly documented. Postal Service policy[21] states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. In addition, managers are required[22] to report all mail in the delivery unit after the carriers have left for their street duties as either delayed or curtailed in DCV. Further, management must update DCV if volumes have changed prior to the end of the business day. In addition, policy[23] states that delivery units must follow the redline process, which includes carriers completing a PS Form 1571 for any undelivered mail brought back to the delivery unit.

18 DCV is a tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of daily mail conditions at the point in time when carriers have departed for the street.
19 PS Form 1571, *Undelivered Mail Report,* lists all mail distributed to the carrier for delivery that was left in the office or returned undelivered.
20 The redline process is a standardized framework encompassing manager and carrier responsibilities after carriers return to the delivery unit upon completion of delivery assignments, ensuring that any mail returned from the street is identified with a signed completed PS Form 1571 and that no mail is taken back to the carrier case.
21 *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail stand-up talk*, February 2019.
22 *DCV User Guide*, October 2025.
23 *Redline Policy Standard Operating Procedures.*

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in the DCV system provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees scanned packages improperly at the delivery unit.

We reviewed package scanning data for scans that occurred at the unit and removed any potentially accurate scans performed.[24] In total, employees improperly scanned 270 packages at the delivery unit between May 1 and July 31, 2026 (see Table 3). Further analysis of the STC scan data for these packages showed that 99.6 percent were scanned "Delivered."

Table 3. STC Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	Count	Percent
Delivered	269	99.6
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location	1	0.4
Total	**270**	**100**

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System data.

Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because unit management instructed carriers to scan these packages at the unit for a specific customer. Management at the Medford Branch stated that these instructions were implemented because the customer, a local university mailroom, was not following the established process for the pickup and delivery of packages using Caller Service.[25] As a result, unit management implemented a temporary process for handling the customer's packages by scanning them as "Delivered" at the unit and then dropping them off to the university. Additionally, unit management stated that it was transitioning to the use of firm sheets[26] for future package deliveries to this customer.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have instructed carriers to scan packages at the delivery point and enforced compliance. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[27] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[28] In addition, firm sheets should be scanned "Delivered" at the delivery point.[29]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning operations, management can improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and the Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

24 This data does not include scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold." Additionally, PO Box scans at the unit were counted only when the delivery point was an address away from the unit. This category does not include mail addressed for a PO Box.
25 Caller Service is a premium service available for a fee to customers who receive more mail than can be delivered to the largest Post Office Box offered by the postal facility where the caller's (customer) mail is addressed.
26 When delivering 25 or more trackable items to a single address, Postal Service personnel create a firm sheet. Firm sheets expedite the delivery process by eliminating the need to scan each item at the time of delivery.
27 *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
28 *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.
29 *Firm Sheet Scanning with SV Scanner*, February 3, 2025.

Finding #3: Arrow Keys

What We Found

Unit management did not properly update the arrow key inventory. On the morning of September 2, 2026, we reviewed the unit's arrow key certification list in the Retail and Delivery Applications and Reports (RADAR)[30] system and conducted a physical inventory of keys at the unit. Unit management reported 117 keys in RADAR as "In-Use" or "In-Vault." Based on our physical review of the arrow keys at the unit, we found two keys at the unit that were not recorded in RADAR. In addition, we found a broken key in the vault, which unit management recorded as "In-Use," not as "Damaged" in RADAR. Also, unit management did not return the damaged key to the U.S. National Materials Customer Service.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight to properly account for arrow keys at the unit. Specifically, unit management was not aware of the extra keys and the damaged key because it relied on supervisors to certify the arrow key list in RADAR without verifying that the inventory was reconciled with the physical keys on hand. In addition, unit management was not aware of the process for replacing damaged keys.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have verified that arrow key procedures were properly followed. According to Postal Service policy,[31] management must keep an accurate inventory of all arrow keys. Further, broken keys must be updated on the RADAR inventory log and returned to the U.S. National Materials Customer Service.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When there is insufficient oversight and supervision of arrow keys, there is increased risk of the keys being inappropriately used to commit mail theft. These thefts damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. Additionally, because arrow keys open mail receptacles, lost or damaged keys can result in undelivered mail.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

30 The arrow key certification in RADAR provides a national platform for all facilities to verify current inventory and account for all arrow keys.
31 *Standard Work Instruction: U.S. Postal Service Arrow Key Guidebook*, dated March 2025.

Finding #4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety issues related to property conditions at the Medford Branch.

- A broken exterior mechanical door in the dock area prevented full operation of the lift. Unit management said the door had broken multiple times since 2025, causing safety concerns because it had fallen without any warning (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Broken Exterior Mechanical Door



Source: OIG photo taken September 2, 2026.

- Two fire extinguishers were missing the monthly August 2026 inspection.
- One fire extinguisher, located close to the customer service area, was blocked.
- An electrical panel on the workroom floor was blocked by mail hampers.
- A Postal Inspection Service gallery door was blocked by the marketing mail staging area.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not provide sufficient oversight or take the necessary actions to verify that issues with the fire extinguishers, electrical panel, and gallery door were corrected. Unit management was unaware that two fire extinguishers had not received the required August 2026 inspections and that one of the fire extinguishers was blocked. The custodian had been absent for several weeks, and the branch manager acknowledged that he had not provided oversight to identify and address property condition issues, including the blocked electrical panel and Postal Inspection Service door.

The unit manager was aware of the broken mechanical door and stated that an active work order was in place to fix the door in June 2026. According to unit management, the door has broken multiple times since 2025, preventing the use of the lift gate and resulting in an excessive amount of undeliverable bulk business mail at the unit.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of personnel responsible for maintaining facilities, reported safety issues as they arose, and followed up for completion. The Postal Service requires management to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers.[32]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to safety deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers; reduce related costs, such as workers' compensation claims, lawsuits, and penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Postal Service Response

The Postal Service agreed with this finding.

32 Postal Service Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook,* July 2020.

Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from August through November 2026 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the Medford Branch delivery operations internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following three components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies related to Control Activities, Information and Communication, and Monitoring that were significant within the context of our objectives. We will issue a separate report that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for Brockton S&DC, Brookline Branch, Grove Hall Station, Lawrence Post Office, and Roxbury Station, as well as the district.

We assessed the reliability of PTR and DCV data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Appendix B: Management's Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

October 27, 2026

LAURA LOZON
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: Medford Branch, Medford, MA: Delivery Operations
(Report Number 26-120-5-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, *Medford Branch, Medford, MA: Delivery Operations*.

Management generally agrees with the four findings related to delayed mail, package scanning, arrow keys, and property conditions.

Management has begun taking steps to address the four findings.

Delayed Mail: Management will conduct a service talk on proper handling and recording of delayed mail in DCV. Management will also reiterate the requirement to use PS Form 1571 *Undelivered Mail Report* and follow the *Redline process*. Reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Package Scanning: Management will provide a service talk on proper scanning procedures and conduct reviews to monitor compliance.

Arrow Keys: Management will update the inventory log to reflect all arrow keys on hand and return damaged keys to the National Materials Customer Service. Management will also conduct training on proper management and security of arrow keys. Additionally, reviews will be conducted to monitor for compliance.

Property Conditions: Management has abated three of the safety issues found during the audit and is working to abate the other safety issues found during the audit, which requires the submission of workorders for assistance from other resources.

E-SIGNED by Carissa.A Shea
on 2026-10-27 12:23:08 EDT

Carissa A. Shea
District Manager, MA-RI District

cc: *Vice President, Area Retail & Delivery Operations (Atlantic)*
Corporate Audit Response Management



Contact us via our Hotline and FOIA forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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