

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
May 19, 2022
Havre, Montana

Committee Members Present: Barbara Varnum, chair; Tina Shorten, vice chair; Ron Bibler, Lisa Cannon, Lee Hazelbaker (via Zoom), Sheri Odlin (via Zoom), Michelle Owens (via Zoom), John Pavao (via Zoom), Jim Streeter, Bob Terwilliger (via Zoom), Tom Thompson (via Zoom), Cam Tulloch

Committee Members Absent: Chanda Hermanson

MTAP Staff Present: Mary Taylor (via Zoom), Mike Bouchard, Lisa Gault, Jeff Haley

Supporting and Contributing Persons Present: Shannon Mackey, budget analyst; Emilie Banasiak, Asia Johnson, Hamilton Relay; Stella Woodrum and Trisha Smith, sign language interpreters

Meeting called to order:

Barbara Varnum called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Cam Tulloch made a motion to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Lisa Cannon and the motion was approved.

Public Comment: No public comments

MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor mentioned that there are a few renewals for committee members coming up on July 1st for Tom Thompson, Ron Bibler, Lee Hazelbaker, John Pavao and Chanda Hermanson. She has been in contact with the Governor's office to confirm the process for renewal and encouraged all members to apply for reappointment.

Regarding applications, there has been an average of around 20 applications a month and has been steady. For outreach, MTAP has been promoting the Relay Friendly Business (RFB) training and in February around 30 people participated in the Relay Friendly Business training. Emilie Banasiak, with Hamilton Relay, will hold two more RFB training sessions this year and MTAP will continue to promote Relay Friendly Business all year long in hopes of getting more businesses certified. Certified businesses will be featured on the MTAP website.

Ms. Taylor discussed the Faith and Community Based Services summits that will be happening around the state and the MTAP staff will be attending. She also went into detail about what was involved in planning the MTAP outreach event at the senior center in Havre the day before the meeting. The equipment technicians indicated they received some applications filled out as well as gave out some. There were approximately 80 attendees.

The Facebook contract is currently being worked on by Ms. Taylor. This contract is \$34,872 annually.

Ms. Taylor referred to the Facebook Reports included in the packet and mentioned that comparison in activity from the last year to this year shows that activity on the MTAP Facebook page has slowed. The Facebook contractor said this was typical, but Ms. Taylor would like to increase the numbers for the coming year.

Activity on the MTAP website also shows a little bit of a decline. Information for the Affordable Connectivity Program has been added to the website.

The contract for Teltex will be renewed for one additional year, with the standard amount of \$100,000 budgeted.

For maintenance of the MTAP database, MTAP will renew its annual agreement with Sockeye; there is a built-in 2.5 percent increase each year and the total amount will be \$25,620 for the year.

Ms. Taylor has taken some trainings related to the new Administrative Rule system, which is part of the Governor's "Red Tape Initiative" to try to improve the process of updating the Administrative Rules, so that it is not so long and cumbersome. She also took a Collaborative Safety training which teaches how to rethink how decisions are made. A training on using an electrolarynx will be done with the MTAP staff in June with Atos Medical, who makes the electrolarynxes that are purchased from Teltex. The staff from Atos offered to do a statewide training for the SLPs in Montana, in the fall. Lisa Cannon suggested incorporating the training as part of the Montana Speech Language Hearing Association (MSHA) Conference in October. Mary will reach out to both parties to relay the suggestion.

There will be a Deaf World training during the next MTAP committee meeting in August. Cheri Reed-Anderson from Miles City, who works with Vocational Rehabilitation, will be the trainer. Some discussion ensued on whether to keep the Deaf World training in August or move it to November. UPDATE: It was later determined to keep this training in August. The training is scheduled to occur at the beginning of the meeting.

Budget Report: Shannon Mackey

Shannon Mackey opened with the state fiscal year 2022 budget totals for MTAP as of April 30, 2022. 83% or 10 months of SFY2022 has been completed.

Personal services	\$252,154
Operations	\$627,677
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,654,831</u></u>

Actual expenses through April 30, 2022

MTAP program expenditures

HB2 budget appropriation (68.77% of the \$879,831)	\$605,062
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$50,170
Prior year expense	\$210
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$655,422</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures

Personal services (73.27% of \$279,800 PS projected budget)	\$204,996
Operational expenses (66.67% of \$600,031 OE projected budget)	<u>\$400,066</u>
Total expenses (68.77% of \$879,831 total HB2 budget)	\$605,062

Operating Expenses – SFY 2022 \$400,066

Hamilton Relay Services – total actual expenditures \$156,613
total relay budget \$230,000, remaining \$73,387

Outreach – total actual expenditures \$106,801
total outreach budget \$155,511, remaining \$48,710

Rent/Utilities – total actual expenditures \$33,806
total rent budget \$42,500, remaining \$8,694

Travel – total actual expenditures \$5,227
total travel budget \$14,000, remaining \$8,773

Supplies – total actual expenditures \$2,399
total supply budget \$6,520, remaining \$4,121

Distribution equipment (including Teltex) – total actual expenditures \$54,049
total equipment budget \$80,000, remaining \$25,951

Other expenses/equipment – total actual expenditures \$7,130
total other expenses budget \$23,000, remaining \$15,870

Communications – total actual expenditures \$3,123
total communications budget \$6,500, remaining \$3,287

Repairs/Maintenance (vehicles) total actual expenditures \$6,205
total repairs/maintenance budget \$10,000, remaining \$3,795

Other services – total actual expenditures \$24,624
total other services budget \$32,000, remaining \$7,376

Indirect Costs and Prior Year Expenses

- Actual costs for SFY 2022 indirect costs are \$50,170
- projected costs for SFY 2022 indirect costs are \$73,000

FCC mandate – no expenses projected at this time

Revenue collected as of April 30, 2022 - \$1,517,260

Discussion ensued over whether to lower the ten-cent fee or have a certain threshold within the year then suspend it or spend more. One suggestion was also to have a strategic planning session possibly during a future MTAP meeting.

DPHHS Report – Mary Taylor (for Chanda Hermanson)

Ms. Taylor did not have an update from Chanda Hermanson to report but mentioned that Ms. Hermanson has been involved in a lot of the same meetings as she has such as the collaborative safety trainings and the full vocational rehabilitation staff meeting which occurred on the same week as the current MTAP meeting and MTAP's Spring Wellness Resource Fair at the Havre senior center.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson

Asia Johnson informed the committee that she will be joining the August meeting virtually and Emilie Banasiak will be unable to join due to Hamilton Relay's annual summit in August. Hamilton Relay was recently approved by the FCC to provide automatic speech recognition captioning for IP captioned telephone service which is different than the captioned telephone service that MTAP provides. The consumer will be able to choose to use a communications assistant operator or try using the automated speech recognition for captioning their calls. Ms. Johnson said that this will not affect the state much but wanted the committee to be aware of what is happening within the industry. It is being offered to provide additional consumer choice.

The FCC also has continued to extend the waiver for answer performance that was issued back in March of 2020. The extension will expire on June 30th, 2022. For the TRS (traditional relay), the FCC's requirement is 85 percent calls answered in ten seconds or less. For the TRS answer performance, it has remained consistent between 95 to 100 percent. For the CapTel answer performance, it has stayed consistent between 95 to 100 percent.

For the TRS session and conversation minutes, it has varied from 1,000 to over 2,500. For the CapTel session and conversation minutes, there continues to be a decline in minutes. Ms. Johnson said that many consumers have transitioned to IP captioned telephone because the old-fashioned copper lines are not supporting services and consumers are transitioning to digital lines.

For quality scores with TRS, it's averaging 95 percent company-wide and the CAs (communication assistants) are typing an average of 79.3 words per minutes with a typing accuracy of 98 percent. For customer care from January to March, not many contacts have been made. For CapTel, everything is going well.

The remote conference captioning (RCC) minutes has varied in usage.

Emilie Banasiak reported on outreach that has been done such as the Kyiyo Pow Wow with Jeff Haley in Missoula and the Montana State Human Resource Management Conference with Lisa Gault in Anaconda. Discussion ensued about the Relay Friendly Business training as the committee had questions for Ms. Banasiak. Ideas were suggested such as ways to interest businesses in participating in the Relay Friendly Business training. Ms. Banasiak emphasized that it is a win for the business as they attract and keep relay using customers; it is a win for the relay community as they will know which businesses are aware of the relay and will not hang up on them.

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard and Jeff Haley

Jeff Haley opened with the outreach events he has participated in, such as the Kyiyo Pow Wow with Emilie Banasiak and the Home and Garden show in Missoula. Mention was made of another event to check into, the Women's Health Fair in Pablo that usually has a big turnout, but it has not been held in recent years because of COVID. Mr. Haley also mentioned that he will be attending a few of the Faith and Community Based sessions. In follow up to questions from the Committee, Jeff explained that from what he understands, it is supposed to be community-based, pulling together resources to better serve families. Mr. Haley listed some upcoming outreach activities he will be involved with, such as the veterans' event in Lincoln and the Family Learning Weekend at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind as well as attending the TEDPA (Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association) conference in July.

Mike Bouchard added that he will be going to one of the Faith and Community-Based initiative meetings in Great Falls and he manned a booth at the Home Show event in Billings, similar to the event Jeff Haley worked in Missoula. He also went to the Montana Geriatric Society yearly meeting, which was a hybrid meeting, online and in person. He was able to attend some sessions and learn more about dementia, Alzheimer's, trip/fall types that relate to an older clientele.

Mr. Bouchard also met with the ENT department at the Billings Clinic as he has noticed an uptick in giving out electrolarynxes. He found out, in the past at the Billings Clinic, when a patient has the surgery to remove the larynx, the patient would get a little care package from the clinic which did not include the electrolarynx. In the future, the clinic will add that to their package so we will see how that impacts MTAP's distribution of electrolarynxes. Mr. Bouchard also shared with the central appointments department about the Relay Friendly Business training that is offered through MTAP.

Mr. Bouchard is still participating in the Senior Coalition Zoom meetings which involves a lot of assisted living and senior homes in Billings where the managers and directors get together to discuss the services they provide. While on his client visitations, Mr. Bouchard sometimes stops by the senior centers and he went to one he had not gone to before, near Baker. He distributes the applications and brochures as needed at those stops.

Discussion ensued about adding another staff member and what was done in the past prior to the current director. This will be added to the topics of discussion for the strategic planning meeting.

Unfinished business

Barbara Varnum mentioned she is planning to attend the NASRA (National Association of State Relay Administrators) Conference in July. Cam Tulloch will be going to the TEDPA (Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association) Conference, as will the equipment technicians, Jeff Haley, and Mike Bouchard.

New business

There will be a strategic planning meeting scheduled for February. Some issues to discuss would be equipment supply issues, the 10-cent fee collected to fund MTAP, and adding MTAP staff to help cover the state.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.