

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
May 20, 2021
Helena, Montana

Committee Members Present: Ron Bibler, chair; Drew Arnot, vice chair (via Zoom); Sherri Odlin (via Zoom), Cam Tulloch, , Tina Shorten, Lisa Cannon (via Zoom), Lee Hazelbaker, Tom Thompson (via Zoom), John Pavao

Committee Members Absent: Jim Streeter, Barb Varnum, Chanda Hermanson, Jay Preston

MTAP Staff Present: Mary Taylor, Lisa Gault, Mike Bouchard, Ricky Ballou

Supporting and Contributing Persons Present: Shannon Mackey, budget analyst; Emilie Banasiak, Asia Johnson, Hamilton Relay (via Zoom); Shawn Tulloch, deaf services manager (via Zoom), Stella Woodrum and Trisha Smith, sign language interpreters

Meeting called to order:

Ron Bibler called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Tina Shorten made the motion to approve the February 2021 minutes and Cam Tulloch seconded it. The motion passed.

Public Comment:

No comments.

MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor opened with mentioning that this meeting is Drew Arnot's last meeting and the position he is vacating is in the process of being filled. The person has submitted her application to the Governor's office so it's just a matter of time before she will be appointed to replace Drew Arnot. There are a couple of positions whose terms will expire in July (Tina Shorten, Sheri Odlin, Jim Streeter, and Jay Preston). Both Ms. Shorten and Ms. Odlin confirmed that they will re-apply for their positions on the committee and Ms. Taylor will follow up with Mr. Streeter and Mr. Preston. Ms. Taylor also mentioned that there will be an election later during the meeting to pick a new chair and vice-chair.

Ricky Ballou has resigned from his position as the equipment technician for the Missoula office as he will be moving to Oregon as his wife has accepted a job there. Ms. Taylor is in the process of filling that position and will be interviewing soon.

Regarding COVID-19, the staff now are not required to wear masks, but the offices are still closed to the public. Home visits are allowed if the clients are comfortable with the visit and travel approvals are still needed if the

staff need to travel beyond their main hub. . Phones are still being mailed out to the clients and assistance is provided over the phone as needed. The staff has done a few trainings such as with Rapid SOS which Mike Bouchard and Ricky Ballou will discuss later during the meeting.

The number of applications coming in remain steady at around 17 per month, and another three-month newspaper advertising campaign was launched in January and will continue through March. Outreach opportunities consisted of test calls with 911 in Helena and Missoula, using different methods such as the TTY, text to 911, RTT, and videophone. NASRA has been doing some webinars on various topics and the staff has participated in those, including real-time texting and remote conference captioning.

Ms. Taylor explained that during NASRA's recent Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) webinar , other states who offer RCC services expressed some concern with misuse of the service. As a result, many have implemented more stringent policies, and in some states, they approve every RCC request. Ms. Taylor mentioned that during contract renewal with Hamilton Relay back in February, she requested some additional verbiage be added to MTAP's RCC Scheduling Request Form, to ensure requesters are aware of the requirements for using the service. Hamilton Relay notified MTAP in April that they are offering enhancements to RCC services and were requesting feedback. Ms. Taylor requested additional reports to monitor use of RCC in Montana.

The MTAP website report indicates that the bounce rate (percentage of visitors who navigate away after visiting only one page) is at 78.78%, which is down by over 4.5% in comparison to last quarter. This is the largest decrease we have seen to date, meaning more visitors to the page are clicking further in before navigating away, which is a good sign, and most likely the result of our updated website.

For Facebook advertising, the numbers are remaining steady, and Ms. Taylor is in the process of updating the contract with Devaney & Associates for Facebook, as well as renewing contracts with Teltex and Sockeye which are expiring on June 30th, 2021. The director of DPHHS wants to see more objectives and goals written into the scope of work for the Facebook contract. Currently the contract covers a certain number of advertisements posted per month and producing a certain number of reports showing data such as impressions, likes and reactions. Ms. Taylor asked the committee for input on the main objective for the MTAP Facebook page. Discussion ensued on this topic on what the objective for the Facebook page should be.

Ms. Taylor mentioned that for the Sockeye database software agreement, the only change that is being made is including a 2.5% increase in cost of living starting in July 2022. The Teltex equipment contract has no significant changes being made for the renewal.

During the 2021 legislative session, the MTAP transfer fund authority line item that was put in place during the 2019 legislative session was removed and stricken from the budget, removing the \$2 million in fund transfer authority for each year of the upcoming biennium. This action recognized that the new transfer fund that was created during the prior session no longer has any funding and therefore removed the appropriation authority. Ms. Mackey added that when the legislature built the budget base for the recent session, it is normal for them to use the last biennium budget as a starting point. By default, that line item was carried forward then during the sessions they voted to remove that item completely.

Budget Report: Shannon Mackey

Shannon Mackey opened with the state fiscal year 2021 budget totals for MTAP as of April 30, 2021, seven months or 83.33% has been completed and two months remain in SFY2021.

Personal services	\$221,783
Operations	\$634,961
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,631,744</u></u>

Actual expenses through April 30, 2021

HB2 budget appropriation (73.32% of the \$856,744)	\$628,205
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$58,048
Prior year expense	\$(6,604)
Fund transfer HB669	<u>\$2,000,000</u>
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$2,679,649</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures through April 30, 2021

Personal services (89.38% of \$221,783 budget)	\$198,234
Operational expenses (67.72% of \$634,961 not including indirect cost)	<u>\$429,971</u>
Total expenses (73.32% of \$856,744 total HB2 budget)	\$628,205

Revenue collected as of April 30, 2021 \$1,467,570

Operating Expenses – YTD \$429,971

- Hamilton Relay: \$174,438
(total relay budget \$260,841; remaining budget \$86,403)
- Outreach: \$109,087
(total outreach budget \$138,834; remaining budget \$29,747)
- Rent/Utilities: \$35,182
(total rent budget \$42,500; remaining budget \$7,318)
- Travel: \$930
(total travel budget \$5,185; remaining budget \$4,255)
- Supplies: \$1,399
(total supply budget \$4,000; remaining budget \$2,601)
- Distribution equipment (including Teltex): \$76,338
(total equipment budget \$100,000; remaining budget \$23,662)

- Other expenses and equipment: \$4,802
- (total other expenses budget \$5,000; remaining budget \$198)
- Communications: \$4,319
(total communications budget \$6,000, remaining budget \$1,681)
- Repairs/Maintenance (vehicles) \$70
(total repairs/maintenance budget \$3,000; remaining budget \$2,930)
- Other services - \$23,406
(total other services budget \$31,000; remaining budget \$7,594)

Indirect Costs: Actual costs \$58,047

- Projected costs for SFY 2021 indirect costs are \$73,000

FCC mandate – no expenses projected at this time

DPHHS Report – Chanda Hermanson

Ms. Taylor said that Chanda Hermanson was unable to attend the meeting, but she did give Ms. Taylor a few items to share relating to the legislative session. The NFB Newsline is tentatively being funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and funding has not been finalized yet but it’s expected to be finalized in June and will be operated through the State Library. The Disability Employment and Transitions Division came out well during this last session. Other divisions had cuts and a lot of questions. The mandatory vacancy savings will go into effect across the board starting July 1, 2021.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson

Asia Johnson reported that the requirement to meet 85 percent of all calls answered in ten seconds for traditional relay has been consistently met within the last two years. For the CapTel service, there was a decline in answering within ten seconds or less during March and April of 2020 then climbed back up and the last few months, the requirement to answer within 10 seconds or less has been met.

The traditional relay session and conversation minutes relates to call volume and it’s ranged from 1,000 to 2,500 over the last two years. For the CapTel session and conversation minutes there has been a decrease in the call volume overall for the last two years except for a spike during March through May of 2020. The quality scores for traditional relay for the most recent month is 95% with the typing words per minute average at 78.5 and typing accuracy at 99%. For customer care contacts from January to March for traditional relay, three contacts were for equipment, one to set up a customer profile, ten for wrong number/hang ups. There were no customer care contacts for CapTel customers.

The remote conference captioning (RCC) minutes have increased during the pandemic with the increase in virtual meetings. There’s been discussion among states that have RCC about what is considered appropriate or authorized use of this service. Hamilton Relay is working to develop an approval process for requests in using the RCC service. There are factors, such as residency, reason for using the service such as disability, and whether out-of-state people are using it to enable a Montana resident to join. For the residency, an example

could be a person may have an out of state phone number but is a resident of Montana so verification might be needed. Questions like these need to be discussed in setting up an approval process.

The FCC issued and maintained a waiver since the start of the pandemic and will continue until August 31, 2021. Ms. Johnson is unsure whether this will be extended after August 31st. Hamilton Relay has started to approve in-person outreach on a case-by-case basis. On August 4, 2020, the FCC released a Report and Order repealing the equal access and billing option requirement. This order was slated to go into effect 30 days after being posted in the Federal Registry. The order was posted on the Federal Registry on February 23, 2021. The order officially went into effect on March 25, 2021.

Hamilton Relay is transitioning their TRS network from using SS7 protocols over analog lines to using SIP protocols over a digital carrier network. The SS7 is the signaling system and the SIP is the session-initiated protocol. The migration will not affect service to the relay users. The migration will be gradual and installation and testing each component will happen and test calls will be made.

Emilie Banasiak discussed outreach events that Hamilton Relay has done such as the statewide webinar and 911 dispatch training presentations in February 2021 and upcoming events such as the Family Learning Weekend with the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, a Deaf culture collaboration with Lisa Gault of MTAP, relay-friendly business and 911 dispatch training webinars, the Montana Association of the Deaf state conference, and the annual Governor's Conference on Aging.

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard and Ricky Ballou

Ricky Ballou opened with the type of outreach he has been doing lately, more provider specific, informational sessions. He did an event with the Montana Independent Living Project at their monthly meeting that involves different providers. He felt this approach is effective because the providers know what the strengths and needs are of the people they work with and they can connect with what services MTAP provides. Mr. Ballou has also had contact with a few occupational and speech therapists around the state.

The MTAP staff participated in a RapidSOS training. RapidSOS is an organization that connects companies and apps that people use and connect that information with the PSAP providers around the state. Some examples are companies like Google, Apple, or Sirius XM, companies that have data on people who use their services such as Google Maps. RapidSOS takes that data and makes it available when a person calls 911. This gives the PSAP providers a better idea of where you are at. There are different ways that the PSAP providers can access this information, via a portal on a web browser. On the consumer side, they can fill out a profile that provides extra information to the dispatchers about medications, health conditions/allergies that's vital for the dispatchers and first responders to know. This is a free service, does not cost the PSAPs anything.

Mike Bouchard discussed what has been done for outreach such as a booth at the home show in Billings in March and doing a Zoom call with the realtor association in Great Falls explaining about how relay works, remote conference captioning and options for interacting with some of their clients.

Unfinished business

No unfinished business.

New business –

Election of Committee Chair/Vice Chair – Ron Bibler nominated Barb Varnum as chair. Tina Shorten seconded the nomination. All were in favor for Ms. Varnum. Lisa Cannon nominated Tina Shorten for vice-chair, Lee Hazelbaker seconded. All were in favor for Ms. Shorten.

Sockeye Agreement – Tina Shorten made a motion to continue with the existing contract, Lisa Cannon seconded. Motion passed.

Teltex Contract – Tina Shorten made a motion that the contract be renewed for another year. Ron Bibler seconded. Motion passed.

Facebook Contract - Tina Shorten made a motion to approve the Facebook contract for another year. Lisa Cannon seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.