

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
November 19, 2020
Via Zoom

Committee Members Present: Ron Bibler, chair; Drew Arnot, vice chair; Jim Streeter, Sherri Odlin, Barb Varnum, John Pavao, Lee Hazelbaker, Cam Tulloch, Tom Thompson, Tina Shorten

Committee Members Absent: Jay Preston, Lisa Cannon, Chanda Hermanson

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

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

Meeting called to order:

Ron Bibler called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Tom Thompson moved to approve the minutes and Cam Tulloch seconded. Tina Shorten abstained from voting, and the minutes were approved as written.

Public Comment:

No comments.

MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor opened with the news of Rex Wolferman resigning from his position, his last day was October 23, 2020. The position is posted, and she hopes to conduct interviews soon. Eleven applications for the position have been received.

Ms. Taylor reported that the only update regarding COVID-19 procedures is that MTAP staff are now permitted to do limited home visits without prior approval, as long as it is within the city limits of their home office, and the client and staff alike are comfortable with the interaction. However, both parties (staff and client) must follow the rules regarding social distancing and wearing a mask. Prior approval is still required for any out of town travel.

The number of applications has been steady but in recent months has gone down a little. Ms. Taylor mentioned that applications were high in June and July and she thought it was related to the statewide newspaper campaign that was carried out before the end of the fiscal year. She is considering doing another newspaper campaign again in the next month or two.

Outreach has been mostly virtual, but Ms. Taylor was able to meet in person with the Lion's Club in Helena and Mike Bouchard worked the MTAP booth at the Home Improvement Show in Billings and did a couple of Montana Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA) trainings as well. Ms. Taylor also contacted the Senior and Long Term Care Division of DPHHS, to touch base with the ombudsman on the services available through MTAP, to ensure that those who work with clients in long-term care facilities who may be isolated as a result of COVID, have information on accessing MTAP equipment and services. She also added that she had the opportunity to meet with a member of the tribal council that seemed interested in MTAP. Ms. Taylor spoke with the Department of Justice regarding police interactions with those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Mike Bouchard and Emilie Banasiak presented at the virtual Montana Youth Transitions Conference recently.

The Hamilton Relay contract is up for renewal at the end of February so Ms. Taylor will be working on the contract for the next couple months and she discussed with Asia Johnson of Hamilton Relay the possibility of remote conference captioning being integrated into the Zoom meetings rather than having a separate link. Hamilton Relay is currently working on that and Ms. Taylor also talked to other agencies about Zoom providing the captions as well. Discussion ensued about different options for the captioning such as Vitac and StreamText.

Ms. Taylor reported that the Facebook MTAP page has reached a thousand likes and followers as of October 2020. The contract for that was renewed in July 2020 for up to ten years (in one-year increments) which includes both management and advertising.

The purchase of two MTAP demo phones has been made; an iPhone 11 with several captioning apps, that Ron Bibler is currently testing out and a Google Pixel 4A that Mike Bouchard is testing out. The Google Pixel costs about half as much as purchasing an iPhone 11 and has a lot of nice accessibility features. Due to the cost savings and the added accessibility, MTAP would like to start distributing some to its clients.

Ms. Taylor mentioned the NASRA/TEDPA business meetings were held in September virtually and for 2021 the meetings will be held in October instead of September and will be in Indianapolis. Tina Shorten added that she added the last NASRA conference and learned a lot. She encouraged other committee members to consider attending the next NASRA conference.

In conclusion to her report, Ms. Taylor asked the committee whether they wanted to decide on an alternative location for the May meeting, as is tradition. The consensus for now is to wait on making that decision, considering the ongoing complications with holding an in-person meeting, due to COVID-19.

Budget Report: Shannon Mackey

Shannon Mackey opened with the state fiscal year 2021 budget totals for MTAP as of October 31,2020

Personal services	\$221,783
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Operations	\$657,726
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,654,509</u></u>

Actual expenses through October 31, 2020

HB2 budget appropriation (26.14% of the \$879,509)	\$229,917
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$21,944
Prior year expense	\$(7,304)
Fund transfer HB669	<u>\$2,000,000</u>
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$2,244,557</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures through October 31, 2020

Personal services (33.46% of \$221,783 budget)	\$74,212
Operational expenses (23.67% of \$657,726 not including indirect cost)	<u>\$155,705</u>
Total expenses (26.14% of \$879,509 total HB2 budget)	\$229,917

Revenue collected as of October 31, 2020 \$722,148

Operating Expenses – YTD \$155,705

- Hamilton Relay: \$59,267
(total relay budget \$278,310; remaining budget \$219,043)
- Outreach: \$32,796
(total outreach budget \$158,231; remaining budget \$125,435)
- Rent/Utilities: \$16,644
(total rent budget \$45,000; remaining budget \$28,356)
- Travel: \$316
(total travel budget \$10,685; remaining budget \$10,369)
- Supplies: \$520
(total supply budget \$12,500; remaining budget \$11,980)
- Distribution equipment (including Teltex): \$33,803
(total equipment budget \$90,000; remaining budget \$56,197)
- Other expenses and equipment: \$2,074
(total other expenses budget \$10,000; remaining budget \$7,926)
- Communications: \$1,252

(total communications budget \$10,000, remaining budget \$8,748)

- Repairs/Maintenance (vehicles) \$22
(total repairs/maintenance budget \$8,000; remaining budget \$7,978)
- Other services - \$9,011
(total other services budget \$35,000; remaining budget \$25,989)

Indirect Costs: Actual costs \$21,943 - Projected costs for SFY 2021 indirect costs are \$73,000

FCC mandate – no expenses projected at this time

DPHHS Report – Chanda Hermanson

Chanda Hermanson is absent from the meeting, but Ms. Taylor was informed that the main thing Ms. Hermanson is focusing on is the upcoming legislative session.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson

Asia Johnson opened with the earlier discussion that was started with Mary Taylor regarding the remote conference captioning and the ability to embed the captions into Zoom meetings, Adobe connect and YouTube Live. Instead of using multiple monitors or splitting the screen, this would be a benefit for Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) users to have captions on the same screen. Hamilton Relay is working with a subcontractor on this and they are close to finishing this project that would allow users to use embedded captions.

Hamilton Relay's pandemic infectious disease plan is still in effect in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and there is a combination of Communication Assistants (CAs) working from home and at the call centers. The FCC waiver of the daily 85 percent in ten – the answer performance requirement – has been extended to February 28, 2021. Training classes have been reinstated (refresher courses for CAs and training new hires).

All in-person outreach has been suspended until the end of December 2020 for Hamilton Relay but virtually, they have been able to do events such as the Montana Youth Transition conference which Mike Bouchard and Emilie Banasiak did recently. Ms. Banasiak mentioned that there was vendor break out rooms through Zoom for that event and she attended some and Mr. Bouchard and she did a presentation. Ms. Banasiak discovered that there are a few cities in Montana where deaf people can take the driver's test in ASL by attending a transportation coordinators breakout session but ironically Great Falls is not one of those cities even though they have the school for the deaf and blind there. Missoula and Kalispell are the two cities that offer this.

Ms. Banasiak is working on some future virtual presentations and announced that Hamilton Relay is accepting applications for their annual scholarship for high school seniors who are deaf,

hard of hearing, deafblind or can hear but have difficulty speaking. The deadline for the scholarship is in January 2021.

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard

Mike Bouchard shared that he has been able to see a few clients in person, those who did not have family or friends to assist them with setting up the phones locally. Mr. Bouchard added for outreach that he has been attending monthly meetings with a coalition of assisted living and senior care facilities. He is continuing to do the MLEA trainings; the last one was in October 2020 and those trainings are still in-person. Social distancing and masking are in place for those trainings.

Mr. Bouchard shared a few things about the Google Pixel 4A phone such as the Live Transcribe which is relatively accurate in transcribing the speaker, but the con is that the speaker is not identified. For that app, one needs a good cell connection as the cloud is used to do the transcribing. Another new feature is Live Captions which is any audio will be captioned using the speech engine. The only thing it does not do, is caption music. He suspects maybe it is a copyright issue. Mr. Bouchard also mentioned the live relay that is available on the Pixel phone which captions what the caller is saying. The Google Pixel also has a sound amplifier which can be used with headsets to boost the sound.

For real time texting, there has been no definitive date for sunseting TTYs from the FCC, but there is time for the cell phone companies to get set up to handle real time texting. Some of the bigger cell phone companies have it, such as Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile. For the Google Pixel, one would download it from the server, so it comes out as a TTY call. The Pixel has an emergency services app as well, but Mr. Bouchard feels it is like text to 911. Mr. Bouchard mentioned in the state of Montana, there are about seven counties that do not have text to 911 yet. Some of the counties that do have text to 911 do not have it on or there are equipment failures; so, it is not 100% certain that the counties that currently have it will use it.

Discussion ensued about the cost of the Pixel, the apps, and warranties.

Unfinished business

No unfinished business

New business

No new business

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.