

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
August 16, 2023
Helena, Montana

Committee Members Present: Lisa Cannon, chair; Tina Shorten, vice chair; Barbara Varnum, Cam Tulloch, Ron Bibler, Tom Thompson (via Zoom), John Pavao (via zoom), Michelle Owens

Committee Members Absent: Lee Hazelbaker, Sherri Odlin, Bob Terwilliger

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

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

Meeting called to order:

Lisa Cannon called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Barbara Varnum made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes and Cam Tulloch seconded. All in favor and motion passed.

Public Comment: No public comment.

MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor opened with an update from the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), noting that they updated their logo so the new logo will be added to the television commercials and the newspaper advertisements for MTAP. She also has not heard back yet from the Governor's office on the pending committee member paperwork and reappointments. The terms up for renewal for July 1, 2022, are Tom Thompson, Ron Bibler, Lee Hazelbaker and John Pavao and the terms up for renewal for July 1, 2023, are Lisa Cannon, Cam Tulloch, and Barb Varnum. There are two vacant seats, which are a representative of the DPHHS (Chanda Hermanson vacated this seat) and a member of the disabilities community (Deaf or Hard of Hearing) (Jim Streeter vacated this seat).

For new applications for the last fiscal year from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, there were 150 new applications which averages out to 13 applications a month for the year. There were 13 new applications for the month of July 2023. New applications have decreased by 27% over the last year, compared to FY2022 and FY2021.

The summer advertising campaign was focused on the Relay Friendly Business training for the month of June which took place on June 20th and seven businesses participated in that training. Hamilton Relay will follow up with these businesses with a test relay call to ensure they understand how to take the call. Once that's complete, a certificate is given to these businesses. For the fall advertising, there will be some television advertising during the Bobcat (Montana State University) and Grizzly (University of Montana) football games and there

will be a statewide newspaper campaign conducted which involves about 60+ newspapers – a lot of these newspapers are in smaller towns. Another Relay Friendly Business campaign will concur as well.

Outreach has been extensive the last quarter such as the annual Family Learning Weekend at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB), a training with all the Disability Employment and Transitions division about MTAP and what services we provide. For outreach that's planned for the fall, Mike Bouchard will be having a table at the Billings Mustang baseball game, the Montana Speech and Hearing Conference and the Governor's Conference on Aging. There will be another Relay Friendly Business Training on October 25, 2023, with the staff of MTAP and Hamilton Relay. Mike Bouchard and Jeff Haley continue to visit the senior centers on their travels as well.

One of the main goals that Ms. Taylor wants to accomplish is to continue to educate businesses across the state about relay calls and since MTAP and Hamilton Relay implemented this training in February 2022, there have been four trainings and to date, and nine organizations have been certified as a Relay Friendly Business in Montana.

For the MTAP Facebook page, the top performing post was the Relay Friendly Business ad and that correlates to the increase in traffic that was noticed on the MTAP website as people must go there to register for the training. There were a lot more impressions, which is the number of times an ad is viewed. The bounce rate is the rate the shows how many people come into your website and leave immediately. That bounce rate went down which is positive as that means people went further into the website and looked at various items.

The Teltex contract for equipment, the Facebook contract with Devaney & Associates and the Sockeye contract for the MTAP equipment and client tracking database have been extended through June 30, 2024. The contract with Hamilton Relay has been renewed for three additional years through February 2026. There is a slight rate increase for each of the next three years. Ater the Hamilton Relay contract expires in 2026, a request for proposal (RFP) will need to be done.

Ms. Taylor has submitted the annual FCC complaint report. There was one traditional relay complaint and no CapTel complaints. She also had to recertify MTAP, which is required every five years, she submitted the paperwork in October 2022 and recently was notified on July 25, 2023, that MTAP is recertified, and that certification runs through July 25, 2028. Ms. Taylor thanked Hamilton Relay for their part in helping with the report.

Hamilton Relay has redistributed their contract management workload leading to a newly assigned account manager for our state, Lori Sporrer, who will be replacing Asia Johnson. This change went in effect August 1, 2023. The MTAP staff is familiar with Lori Sporrer as she has helped with the Relay Friendly Business trainings.

NASRA and TEDPA will not have their annual conference this year due to location and cost challenges. The annual business meetings will be conducted remotely.

Budget Report: Hannah Stokes

Hannah Stokes opened with the state fiscal year 2023 budget totals for MTAP as of June 30, 2023.

Personal services	\$254,621
Operations	\$627,867

FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,657,488</u></u>

Actual expenses through June 30, 2023

MTAP program expenditures

HB2 budget appropriation (91.86% of the \$882,488)	\$810,662
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$83,212
Prior year expense	(\$2,072)
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$891,802</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures through June 30, 2023

Personal services (111.43% of \$264,000 PS projected budget)	\$283,719
Operational expenses (85.20% of \$618,488 OE projected budget)	<u>\$526,943</u>
Total expenses (91.86% of \$882,488 total HB2 budget)	\$810,662

Revenue collected as of June 30, 2023 - \$1,563,015

SFY 2023 actual expenses through June 30, 2023

Operating Expenses through June 30, 2023 - SFY 2023 \$526,943

- Hamilton Relay Services – total expenditures \$176,253 (total relay budget \$228,398, remaining \$52,145)
- Outreach – total expenditures \$173,345 (total outreach budget \$180,000, remaining \$6,655)
- Rent/Utilities – total expenditures \$42,326 (total rent budget \$42,500, remaining \$174)
- Travel – total expenditures \$14,977 (total travel budget \$30,000, remaining \$15,023)
- Supplies – total expenditures \$5,048 (total supply budget \$6,367, remaining \$1,319)
- Distribution Equipment – total expenditures \$51,574 (total equipment budget \$70,223, remaining \$18,649)
- Other Expenses/Equipment – total expenditures \$8,660 (total equipment budget \$10,000, remaining \$1,340)
- Communications – total expenditures \$6,060 (total communication budget, \$6,000, remaining \$-60.00)
- Repairs/maintenance (vehicles) – total expenditures \$10,693 (total repairs/maintenance budget \$10,000, remaining \$-693)
- Other services – total expenditures \$38,008 (total other services budget \$35,000, remaining \$-3,008)

Indirect Costs and Prior Year Expenses

- Actual costs for SFY 2023 indirect costs are \$83,212
- Projected costs for SYF 2023 indirect costs are \$85,000

FCC mandate – no expenses projected at this time.

The proposed FY2024 budget is as follows:

The awarded appropriations are \$932,443 which is about a \$50,000 increase from the prior year.

Personal services- \$334,628

Operational expenses, the breakdown is as follows:

Hamilton Relay Services

- traditional relay services, \$155,000
- CapTel, \$52,000

Outreach budget, \$180,000

Rent/Utilities, \$43,000

Travel, \$16,000

Supplies, \$5815

Distribution equipment, \$80,000

Other expenses/equipment \$9,000

Communication, \$6000

Repairs/Maintenance (vehicles) \$11,000

Other services \$40,000

Most of the appropriations will go to the relay services and outreach.

Ron Bibler moved to approve the proposed FY2024 budget and Tina Shorten seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

Hamilton Relay Report: Asia Johnson, Emilie Banasiak and Lori Sporrer

Asia Johnson started with the quarterly update on answer performance – the FCC’s requirement is 85 percent of all calls be answered within ten seconds or less. For traditional relay (TRS), that requirement has been met and for CapTel calls. Session minutes are the time that the relay user tends to spend with the operator before, during and after connecting the call. Conversation minutes are the time spent on the actual call. There has been a decline in usage over the last two years in call volume for Montana. There will be an upgrade in technology for the CapTel phones, which will improve accuracy, reduce delay in captions and be able to provide more detail such as background information which can be helpful for someone who struggles to get the speech.

The quality scores for TRS for the most recent month is 98 percent and the communication assistants (CAs) are typing an average of 71.3 words per minute with a typing accuracy of 97 percent. The quality scores for CapTel are a typing average of 149.9 words per minute with a typing accuracy of 99.68 percent.

For TRS customer care contacts, there were a few: calls for general information, equipment, outreach, and wrong number/hangup. For CapTel customer care contacts, there were none.

Remote conference captioning over the last two years varies, but there tends to be higher usage during months that the MTAP committee meetings occur, and Ms. Johnson has not seen any evidence of misuse of this service.

Emilie Banasiak reported on outreach that she has done for Hamilton Relay such as the MSDB Family Learning Weekend and the Relay Friendly Business webinar. She has not had the opportunity to follow up on the certification for the businesses that participated in the June relay friendly business training but hopes to do that soon. She will be attending the Montana Speech and Hearing Association conference and participating in the

next Relay Friendly Business training in October. She also will attend the Montana Youth Transition Conference in November.

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard and Jeff Haley

Jeff Haley shared some experiences with clients that were referred to MTAP from the Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) such as being creative in finding solutions for clients with vision problems such as macular degeneration. He has been receiving more clients with cochlear implants and more clients who are not using landlines. He has installed phones that can connect via Bluetooth with the cell phone they are using with the XLink. The drawback on this is that it has no dial tone. That can be confusing for the seniors that Mr. Haley has met with. He has found this helpful for clients with no landline phone and hearing aids that can be connected to the Bluetooth which is a positive also. The variables are that the senior clients can be in a range from no technology knowledge to being proficient with it and their hearing aids can vary, depending on where they purchased the hearing aids from as well as what kind of cell phone they are using. He has been staying busy with outreach events and home visits.

Mike Bouchard mentioned the Senior Coalition he had been attending on a monthly basis both via Zoom and in-person and the attendees consisted of assisted living people, senior homes, and medical field people who would meet to share information. Mike noted the senior coalition has ended; the last meeting occurred in June. He recently visited senior centers in Lame Deer and Wolf Point to give presentations about MTAP. He also went to the Montana Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA) to train new dispatchers who are coming into the 911 centers across the state. He mainly covers relay and text to 911. Mr. Bouchard also did a presentation for the National Association of Disability Examiners earlier this week. This event was one of the biggest groups of people he has presented to. In October he will be busy with several outreach events such as the White Cane event which is in connection with the BLVS program in Billings as one of MTAP's goals is to bring more awareness of what BLVS can do to assist people with visual issues. He has been learning about how phones can be accessible for clients who have low vision. Mr. Bouchard added that he and Jeff Haley have distributed certificates to some of the businesses that completed the Relay Friendly Business training, while on their travels.

Mr. Bouchard demonstrated for the committee a RAZ memory cell phone which is a phone designed for people who may have dementia, Alzheimer's, or some cognitive challenges.

Unfinished business

No unfinished business to discuss.

New business

- Approve FY2024 budget – done earlier in the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m. with a Deaf World training after lunch break.