



Idaho Public Utilities Commission

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Case No. GNR-T-24-02
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NEWS RELEASE: Commission accepts annual report, budget for telecommunications service that provides speech to text, video and other services.

BOISE (May 21, 2024) – The Idaho Public Utilities Commission has accepted the 2023 annual report and 2024 budget for the Idaho Telecommunications Relay Service, which allows those with hearing or speech disabilities to place and receive telephone calls.

The Idaho Legislature established the Telecommunications Relay Service Act in 1992 in accordance with Title VI of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The service allows hearing or speech-impaired individuals to engage in telephone communications “in a manner functionally equivalent to that of individuals without hearing or speech impairments.” The service includes a relay center where verbal conversations are converted, or relayed, to text-type and vice versa. The center also provides speech-to-speech, Spanish-to-Spanish, video, and Internet relay services.

The service is funded by assessments on local telephone service (residential and business) access lines and on billed intrastate long-distance minutes. The service is operated by Hamilton Telecommunications, which is reimbursed for in-state relay traffic and captioned telephone services.

The administrator for the service, Kathleen Toohill, reported that the center handled 1,221 calls in 2023, an approximately 11 percent increase from 2022. The service’s expenses for 2023 totaled \$141,274. Disbursements to Hamilton were \$101,065. The administrative fees and expenses for 2023 were \$40,080 and the end-of-year fund balance was \$68,872.

Telephone companies reported a 3.0 percent decrease in total intrastate long-distance minutes, from about 60,936,000 minutes in 2022 to about 59,148,700 minutes in 2023. Average monthly telephone lines increased by approximately 1.0 percent, from 87,700 in 2022 to 88,344 in 2023.

The 2023 annual total contribution to the fund was \$112,149, a decrease of \$593 from 2022. In 2023, local exchange services contributed \$53,006. Message telecommunication services and wide area telephone service collectively contributed \$59,149.

Previous orders issued by the commission increased the per-line rate from \$0.03 to \$0.05 effective May 1, 2021, and kept the rate at \$0.05 per line and \$0.001 per long-distance minute.

The annual operating budget for 2024 is projected at \$141,232. This includes administrative fees and expenses, travel and conference costs, the payments to Hamilton and annual membership dues. Based on the proposed budget for 2024 and the 2023 end-of-year reserves, the administrator for the service is presenting four options:

1. Continue the present compensation rates to the TRS fund at \$0.05 per line and \$0.001 per long-distance line.
2. Continue with the current long distance per minute rate of \$0.001 while raising the per line rate to range somewhere around \$0.07 per line to try and level out contributions to the fund. This would allow the 2024 end-of-balance to come out to an estimated \$45,000-\$50,000.
3. The commission could raise both rates.
4. Staff noted the commission could “look at other creative means of funding beyond landlines and MTS/WATS.”

After reviewing the administrator’s report and staff’s recommendations, the commission found it just and reasonable to adopt the second option. This allows the per minute rate, which appears to be contributing to the fund in a sustainable manner, to remain unchanged while taking a measured step toward sustainability by increasing the per line rate to \$0.07.

Additional information is available at puc.idaho.gov/case/Details/7269 and at cdhh.idaho.gov/resource-directory/trs/.