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**Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Administrator's Annual Report**  
**Idaho TRS Fund**  
**January 1 – December 31, 2023**

**Revenues**

Revenues collected in all of 2023 totaled **\$112,149** with **\$53,006.45** being received from local exchange services and **\$59,148.70** was received from MTS/WATS services. The starting balance was **\$97,999.23** as of 1/1/2023, and the final balance was **\$68,872.15** as of 12/31/2023. The current rate is \$.05 per local exchange line service and \$0.001 for Message Telecommunication Services (MTS) / Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS) services as of May 1, 2021.

**2023 ITRS Revenue**

Quarter	Local Exchange Services	%	MTS/WATS	%	Total
1	\$13,991.80	48	15,157.84	52	\$29,149.64
2	\$13,070.25	45.3	15,782.36	54.7	\$28,852.61
3	\$12,924.95	47.3	14,418.18	52.7	\$27,337.13
4	\$13,019.45	48.6	13,790.32	51.4	\$26,809.77
Total	53,006.45	47.3	59,148.70	52.7	\$112,149.15

**Call and Line Count**

In 2023, providers and carriers reported the following to Idaho TRS:

Q1 - 279,836 lines	15,157,841 MTS/WATS
Q2 - 261,405 lines	15,782,360 MTS/WATS
Q3 - 258,499 lines	14,412,080 MTS/WATS
Q4 - 260,389 lines	13,790,320 MTS/WATS

88,344 monthly average local exchange lines or 1,053,324 approximate total reported across the entire year.

59,148,700 approximate long distance minutes (3.0 % decrease) reported throughout 2023.

**Lines and Minutes Chart**

Year	Lines Reported	Change from previous year	Minutes	Change from previous year
<b>2023</b>	<b>88,344</b>	<b>1.0 % increase</b>	<b>59,148,700</b>	<b>3.0 % decrease</b>
<b>2022</b>	<b>87,700</b>	<b>1.6 % decrease</b>	<b>60,936,000</b>	<b>6.4 % decrease</b>
2021	89,110	30% decrease	65,058,266	21% decrease
2020	126,760	41% decrease	82,015,033	18% decrease
2019	215,423	15% decrease	100,128,800	20% decrease
2018	253,004	15% decrease	125,050,000	less than 1% increase
2017	297,462	24% decrease	124,961,000	21% decrease
2016	391,132	3% increase	158,535,000	23% decrease
2015	377,860	1% decrease	205,405,200	17% increase

**Attachment A – Zero Reporting**

**97** telecommunications companies filed **\$0/0 line** reports in 2023 on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis.

**Disbursements - Hamilton Relay**

Total disbursements to Hamilton Relay for the provision of all services for 2023 were **\$101,065.13**. Expenses for TRS, CTS, and Speech to Speech were \$36,065.09 and Digital Transition Outreach was \$65,000.04.

**Attachment B – Hamilton Relay Disbursements** by month, type and TRS/CTS minutes.

## Call Volume

Idaho Relay realized 1221 completed calls throughout 2023 which is an increase in the number of calls from 1102 completed calls placed in 2022. TRS minutes usage decreased 17.6 percent to 11,227.3 minutes. CTRS call volume decreased approximately 66% in 2023 from 2022. Advanced Speech to Speech was discontinued, however standard Speech to Speech Services generated 553 calls which was a decrease from 652 calls in 2022. There were also 533 Spanish calls through Idaho Relay for 2023 as opposed to 652 calls as well in 2022.

## Average Speed of Answer

Average Speed of Answer (ASA) is a key performance indicator for TRS and CapTel which is when a call reaches the relay switchboard and how long it takes to be answered by a Communication Assistant. The ASA for 2023 was calculated as an average of 0.225 for TRS and .475 for CTRS. 99.75% of CTRS calls were answered in 10 seconds or less while 99% of TRS calls were answered in 10 seconds or less.

## Administrative Fees and Expenses

Administrative Fees and Expenses totaled \$39,880 for 2023 for consulting by TRS Administrator Kathleen Toohil in addition to a \$200 reimbursement for payment of NASRA annual membership dues for 2023-2024 - resulting in \$40,080 for the overall total.

## Attachment C – Administrator Billing

### Fund Balance

Starting Balance January 1, 2023 - \$97,999.23

Q1 Balance (3/31)	Q2 Balance (6/30)	Q3 Balance (9/30)	Q4 Balance (12/31)
\$92,142.76	\$84,949.91	\$80,403.03	\$68,872.15

## Recommendations and Overview

Idaho TRS went through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process during 2022, and the agreed upon service is in year 2 of the 3 year contract that is mutually agreed upon between Hamilton Relay and the Advisory Committee of the Telephone Industry as statute requires. Idaho Relay continues to provide TRS, CapTel, Spanish Relay, and Speech to Speech Services as in the past. Nationally, all states are experiencing a drop in usage of traditional relay services and captioned telephone relay service because of migration to some relay services available

through the Internet and other wireless means. The focus by the Advisory Committee of the Telephone Industry for this contract period was to continue providing TRS, CTRS, and STS while also focusing on outreach of the analog to digital transition in coordination with Hamilton Relay as decided upon by the Advisory Committee of the Telephone Industry which met during the RFP process. This digital transition is troublesome to people dependent upon a text telephone or caption telephone (TTY's) because those devices do not work when changed to a wireless/digital line. Then add to that communication difficulties, and all of a sudden your text telephone no longer is operational because of an analog to digital change, then it is difficult for people to troubleshoot, communicate and figure out what is wrong with their equipment and phone line. These individuals can literally have their means of communication cut off. This resulted in the focus on Outreach for TRS by the Advisory Committee. Another goal is to continue to share information about the service of Speech to Speech relay services. An outreach toolkit has been developed and is being shared to explain the transition and/or assist customers in finding solutions that work to best fit their needs. The Relay Friendly Business Program is also still available for employers or businesses who have customers who are deaf and use relay services to contact them.

Employees from the Disabilities Rights Office and Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) held a meeting with the National Association of State Relay Administration members February 13, 2024. Questions and answers were discussed, but most importantly the FCC employees were receptive to issues brought up due to the changing landscape of analog TRS services along with affordability and access to Broadband. The Americans with Disabilities Act is 30+ years old, and a few states are working on other options of relay services incorporating Real Time Text, but there are no ready-replacements across the board for TRS services.

## **Attachment D - TRS Budget Worksheet**

### **LEC and MTS/WATS**

From Order # 34988 dated May 1, 2021, the rates of contribution to ITRS are currently assessed at **\$0.05 per line** and **\$0.001 per long distance minute**.

The following are options in 2024:

**Option 1** – Continue the present rates of contribution to ITRS at \$0.05 per line and \$0.001 per minute.

With the trend of recent years of diminishing inventory of landlines, 2024 Local Exchange Lines can potentially be estimated to be about 78,300-83,00 per month and long distance minutes reported as 53,000,000-56,000,000. These forecasted numbers could be dramatically different than estimated due to the digital transition. Revenue could be estimated with the current contributions and current rates for ITRS to be approximately \$100,000-107,000. With a 2024 budget estimate of \$141,232, then the 2024 year-end fund balance would potentially fall in the range of about \$21,000-28,000.

If the line assessment included wireless lines, then the income from the \$.05 cents per line (wireless and wireline) at about 278,000 monthly lines would more than cover the projected 2024 expenses with income at \$167,194, not including MTS/WATS assessment..

**Option 2** – Continue with the current long distance per minute rate of \$0.001 while raising the per line rate. Raising the LEC rate to \$0.07 would allow an end of year fund balance to come out to about \$45--50,000 due to incoming revenue of about \$120,022 with the budget at \$141,232.

Please see **Attachment E** for the various rates and fund balance projections.

(Note: Rate change would occur part way through the calendar year which affects projection due to delay in reporting and payments. There is a lag in reporting month by telecommunications companies monthly but especially when the companies report quarterly.)

**Option 3** – If both rates are raised, the percentage of contributions are less balanced, however the fund balance would increase. If further breakdown is desired, then this can be provided in more detail and can be seen through Attachment E.

For further breakdowns of local exchange lines/long distance minute splits, fund balance projections, and revenue breakdowns please see Attachment E.

#### **Attachment E - ITRS Projections.**

##### **Option 4 -**

An additional option for Idaho TRS would be to look at other creative means of funding beyond landlines and MTS/WATS. According to the most recent data gathered by the National Association of State Relay Administration (NASRA), 29 of 50 states have relay services that are funded by wireless/VoIP line surcharges in addition to landlines. While analyzing the data, nationally the average rate of surcharge is \$0.08 per line per month. These surcharges range from one state (Kentucky) that receives from \$0.01 on all lines - wireline and wireless - while at the higher end Alaska receives \$0.18 per wireless/wireline. In looking at regionally closer states, Montana and Oregon are funded by a monthly \$.10 wireless and landline surcharges while Wyoming is funded by a \$0.09 surcharge for all wireless and landlines.

In reviewing available relay services, 38 states offer Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) providing equal access to all with the option to speak or type to communicate with other attendees in a meeting of professional and larger group settings online which has been even more essential since spring 2020 and virtual meetings. RCC provides people who are deaf or hard of hearing the ability to read live captions (Communication Access Realtime Translation) via a web browser on a computer, laptop, tablet, or mobile device. This service is extremely helpful especially when a sign language interpreter may be unavailable and is accessible by signing up at least 48 hours in advance during specified times. RCC offers a communication method by which those with a hearing or speech disability can stay in the conversation and

allows for inclusive and accessible means for all to participate. One avenue might be to embark upon a pilot study of offering RCC to Idaho residents prior to committing to this service full-time.

Another service on the horizon is Real-Time Text (RTT) which is accessible primarily via mobile telephone to use RTT with the relay service. The States of Maryland, Washington, California, and Virginia are in the process of testing out such a pilot program (Universal Telecommunications Access Platform) utilizing Real-Time Text in accordance with the FCC. If a surcharge is assessed on wireless platforms, this could ensure sustainability of the fund as the FCC still requires TRS and STS services nationally while the digital transition proceeds. TRS services could be funded by a lower wireline and wireless surcharge.

#### **Attachment F - TRS State Data**

Administrator's recommendation is to follow Option 2 by raising the LEC line rate to \$0.07 per LEC line while keeping the MTS/WATS rate the same in order to preserve some of the fund balance until more is known from the future regarding the changing landscape of analog TRS.

The Administrator, on behalf of the State of Idaho, will continue to provide yearly MARS data reports (Multi-State Average Rate Structure) to the FCC via Rolka Loubé, maintain TRS Certification, submit annual Complaint Reports to the FCC, and submit quarterly and annual reports to the Public Utilities Commission while monitoring all areas of relay with respect to meeting standards for the FCC. I will continue to collaborate with the National Association of State Relay Administrators and Hamilton Relay.