

BEFORE THE IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF REVIEWING THE)	
ADMINISTRATOR’S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT)	CASE NO. GNR-T-25-03
AND ESTABLISHING THE FUNDING)	
LEVELS TO SUPPORT THE)	
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE)	ORDER NO. 36590
(TRS) PROGRAM)	
)	

On February 19, 2025, the Administrator of the Idaho Telecommunication Relay Service (“TRS” or “Relay”) filed the 2024 Annual Report and 2025 TRS Budget recommendations with the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”). Each year, the Commission reviews the Administrator’s Annual Report and determines the funding needed to meet the TRS program’s future expenses.

BACKGROUND

In 1992, the Idaho Legislature established the Telecommunications Relay Service Act (“Idaho TRS Act”) in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act. Staff Memo at 1. TRS enables citizens with hearing or speech impairments to engage in telephone communications “in a manner functionally equivalent to that of individuals without hearing loss or speech impairments.” *Idaho Code* § 61-1301. The TRS service provider is Hamilton Telecommunications (“Hamilton”). Order No. 35378. Hamilton operates the relay center where oral conversations are converted or “relayed” to text-type and vice versa. *Id.* The relay center also provides Advance and Standard speech-to-speech (“STS”), Spanish-to-Spanish, video, and Internet relay services. *Id.*

Under the Idaho TRS Act, all telephone corporations providing local or long-distance service (not including wireless or VoIP services) must provide TRS as stated in the program and pay into the TRS Fund. Staff Memo at 1. Pursuant to TRS Rule 204, the Commission sets the TRS funding levels each year based upon the Annual Report. IDAPA 31.46.02.204.

THE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The Administrator reported that there was a decrease in the amount of calls from 2023 to 2024. 2024 Annual Report at 2. The relay center handled 976 calls in 2024, compared to the 1,221 calls handled in 2023. *Id.* at 3. TRS session minutes usage decreased by 7% to 10,419.83 minutes

compared to 11,227.3 session minutes in 2023. *Id.* Caption Telephone Relay Service (“CTRS”)¹ call volume decreased by approximately 72% in 2024 from the 2023 level. *Id.* Advanced STS was discontinued, but the service was reinstated in late 2024/early 2025. *Id.* Standard STS Services generated 352 calls in 2024, down from 553 calls in 2023. *Id.* There were also 349 Spanish calls processed by the Idaho Relay Center in 2024, down from 533 calls in 2023. *Id.*

The average time it took for a call to reach the relay switchboard and be answered by a communication assistant in 2024 was 0.663 seconds for TRS calls and .47 seconds for CTRS calls. *Id.*

1. 2024 Expenses. The TRS expenses for the year totaled \$140,300. Staff Decision Memo at 3. The total included \$100,004 disbursed to Hamilton and \$40,296 in administrative fees and expenses. 2024 Annual Report at 2. The end-of-year TRS fund balance was reported to be approximately \$48,345.49. *Id.* at 4.

2. 2024 Revenues and Allocations. The total number of intrastate long-distance minutes reported by telephone companies in 2024 increased 1% to approximately 59,772,789. *Id.* at 1-2. The average monthly local exchange number of telephone lines reported decreased by 7% to 82,136 in 2024. *Id.* at 2.

The 2024 annual total contribution to the TRS fund was \$119,753.38, an increase of approximately \$7,604.38 from 2023. *Id.* at 1. In 2024, Local Exchange Services contributed \$59,211.65 (49%) and Message Telecommunication Services (“MTS”) and Wide Area Telephone Service (“WATS”) collectively contributed \$60,541.73 (51%). *Id.* In Commission Order No. 36179, the per-line and per-long-distance minute assessments for 2024 were set to \$0.07 and 0.001 respectively.

3. Proposed 2025 Budget. The Administrator projects an annual operating budget of \$125,432² in 2025. *Id.* at 5. The budget includes administrative fees and expenses, bank service fees, the Hamilton payments, and National Association of State Relay Administration (“NASRA”) annual membership dues. *Id.*

¹ CTRS allows hard-of-hearing users to hear the conversation as well as read the words on the phone’s built-in screen. A trained operator “re-voices” the conversation from a caller into the voice recognition technology that converts the words into a text message and provides the captioned telephone user with a more natural conversation.

² The total proposed annual operating budget provided by the Administrator was \$124,432. In Staff’s review of the proposed TRS budget, Staff found the Administrator’s value contained a typographical error and calculated the total value of the proposed expense costs to be \$125,432.

4. Proposed 2025 TRS Funding Levels. Based on the proposed budget for 2025 and the 2024 end-of-year balance, the Administrator provided the following four options:

Option 1: Continue the present rates of contribution to TRS at \$0.07 per line and \$0.001 per minute. *Id.* Because of the trend in recent years of a shrinking inventory of landlines, the 2025 Local Exchange Lines can be estimated to be about 78,000 - 82,000 per month and long-distance minutes around 50,000,000-54,000,000 per month. *Id.* The forecasted numbers could dramatically change from the estimates due to the digital transition. *Id.* The annual revenue of the TRS for 2025 is estimated at approximately \$107,000, with a projected 2025 budget of \$125,432. *Id.* The 2025 year-end fund balance could potentially fall between \$28,000 and \$30,000. *Id.*

Option 2: Continue with the current long-distance per-minute rate of \$0.001 while raising the per-line rate to \$0.10. *Id.* By raising this rate, it would provide a revenue of about \$120,022 and an end-of-year fund balance between \$45,000 and \$50,000. *Id.*

Option 3: In this option the TRS would look for other creative means of funding outside of landlines and MTS/WATS. *Id.* Based on data gathered by the NASRA, 29 of 50 states have relay services that are funded by wireless/VoIP line surcharges in addition to landlines. *Id.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Commission Staff (“Staff”) agreed with the Administrator and recommended the Commission adopt Option 1 to maintain the line rate at \$0.07 per line and the MTS/WATS rate at \$0.001 per long-distance minute. Staff Decision Memo at 6. Staff believed this option would help to preserve a portion of the fund’s balance until more is known about the changing landscape of analog TRS. *Id.*

Staff agreed that the 2025 budget projection of \$125,432 was acceptable based on the anticipated 2025 TRS expenses. *Id.* Staff reasoned that the projected revenue generated from the current rates, together with the 2024 carry-over balance, should be sufficient to meet 2025 expenses and unforeseen events. *Id.* Staff agreed to continue working with the Administrator during the year to monitor the fund level. *Id.* Staff believed that Idaho citizens continued to be well served by the Administrator and the relay services provided by Hamilton. *Id.*

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In this Order, the Commission formally adopts the Administrator’s Report. We find the reported expenses for 2024 reasonable. Idaho citizens continue to be well served by the Administrator and the relay services provided by Hamilton. The Commission also finds that the

2025 budget projection of \$125,432 is reasonable based upon the anticipated TRS expenses this year.

Based upon our review of the Report and Staff's recommendations, we find it is just and reasonable to adopt the Administrator's Option 1 for 2025 as discussed in Staff's comments. Based on the information available, the Commission finds that Option 1 presents the best option because it maintains the current per line and per minute rates, while still contributing to the fund sustainably. These steps maintain a viable TRS budget to provide reliable services to Idaho customers.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Commission accepts the Administrator's Annual Report and adopts the Administrator's budget for 2025.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the present rates of contribution to TRS at \$0.07 per access line per month and the current long-distance rate at \$0.001 per intrastate MTS/WATS minute remain unchanged.


IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the TRS Administrator shall continue to monitor expenditures, revenues, and Federal Communications Commission actions. If it appears that revenues will not cover expenditures, the TRS Administrator shall immediately notify the Commission so it may evaluate whether TRS funding levels should change.

THIS IS A FINAL ORDER. Any person interested in this Order may petition for reconsideration within twenty-one (21) days of the service date of this Order about any matter decided in this Order. Within seven (7) days after any person has petitioned for reconsideration, any other person may cross-petition for reconsideration. *Idaho Code* §§ 61-626 and 62-619.

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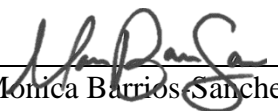
DONE by Order of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission at Boise, Idaho this 2nd day of May 2025.


EDWARD LODGE, PRESIDENT


JOHN R. HAMMOND JR., COMMISSIONER


DAYN HARDIE, COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:


Monica Barrios Sanchez
Commission Secretary

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