



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC SEEKS COMMENT ON BROAD RANGE OF ISSUES CONCERNING TRS COMPENSATION

Washington, DC -- The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice) adopted by the Commission today, seeks comment on a broad range of issues concerning the compensation of providers of telecommunications relay services (TRS) from the Interstate TRS Fund (Fund) for their costs of providing TRS.

Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires common carriers offering “telephone voice transmission services” to also provide TRS so that persons with hearing and speech disabilities will have access to the telephone system. The ADA also mandates that eligible TRS providers will be compensated for certain costs associated with providing TRS.

TRS enables an individual with a hearing or speech disability to communicate by telephone with a person without such a disability. This is accomplished through TRS facilities that are staffed by specially trained communications assistants (CAs) using special technology. The CA relays conversations between persons using various types of assistive communication devices and persons who do not require such assistive devices. The CA, in turn, places an outbound voice call to the called party. The CA serves as the "link" in the conversation, converting the caller’s conversation into voice, and all voice from the called party into typed or signed messages for the relay user. The process is performed in reverse when a voice telephone user initiates a voice call to a relay user. TRS includes Internet Protocol (IP) relay, Speech-to-Speech (STS), Captioned Telephone, and Video Relay Services (VRS) in which a user communicates with a CA using American Sign Language over a broadband video link.

Specifically, today’s Notice seeks comment on the following:

- Alternative cost recovery methodologies for interstate traditional TRS, STS, and IP Relay, including a proposal by Hamilton Relay, Inc., called the “MARS” plan (“Multi-state Average Rate Structure”), and related issues including whether traditional TRS, STS, and IP Relay should be compensated at the same rate;

- The appropriate cost recovery methodology for VRS and the length of time the VRS rate should be in effect;
- Issues relating to the “reasonable” costs compensable under the present cost recovery methodology, including whether, and to what extent, marketing and outreach expenses, overhead costs, and executive compensation are compensable from the Fund; and
- Ways to improve the management and administration of the Fund, including adopting measures for assessing the performance and efficiency of the Fund and to deter waste, fraud, and abuse.

Comments will be due 45 days after publication in the Federal Register and replies 15 days thereafter.

Action by the Commission July 13 , 2006, by Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 06-106). Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell. Separate statements issued by Chairman Martin, Commissioners Copps, Adelstein, Tate, and McDowell.

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