

P-3008/CI-92-1261; P-3008/CI-93-549 ORDER ACCEPTING REPORT,
RELEASING FUNDS, AND GRANTING TIME EXTENSIONS

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Don Storm	Chair
Tom Burton	Commissioner
Marshall Johnson	Commissioner
Cynthia A. Kitlinski	Commissioner
Dee Knaak	Commissioner

In the Matter of the
Commission's Recommendations to
the 1993 Legislature Regarding
Future Provision and Maintenance
of the Service of the TACIP
Board

ISSUE DATE: February 15, 1994

DOCKET NO. P-3008/CI-92-1261

In the Matter of the Budget
Proposed by the Board for the
TACIP Program and the Board's
Request for an Increase in the
Surcharge

DOCKET NO. P-3008/CI-93-549

ORDER ACCEPTING REPORT,
RELEASING FUNDS, AND GRANTING
TIME EXTENSIONS

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On February 26, 1993, the Commission issued its ORDER RETAINING CURRENT SURCHARGE LEVEL, ACCEPTING SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT, AND REQUIRING FURTHER FILINGS in the 92-1261 Docket. In that Order the Commission required the TACIP¹ Board to implement a billing and collection system for intrastate long distance calls placed through the telecommunications relay service. The Commission set a deadline of January 31, 1994, for installation of the billing system and required the Board to file quarterly reports on its progress.

On July 14, 1993, the Commission issued its ORDER APPROVING BUDGET AND AUTHORIZING INCREASE IN SURCHARGE in the 93-549 Docket. In that Order the Commission accepted TACIP's 1994 budget, including a line item of \$131,500 for installation of the billing system.

¹ Telecommunications Access for Communication-Impaired Persons

On September 21, 1993, the Commission issued its ORDER ACCEPTING REPORTS, REQUIRING FURTHER FILINGS, AND PROHIBITING EXPENDITURE OF SPECIFIED SUMS in the 92-1261 Docket. In that Order the Commission placed the \$131,500 in reserve, pending further Commission action.

On December 29, 1993, the Board filed its fourth quarter report. The Board requested a time extension until March 31, 1994, in which to implement the billing and collection system. The Board explained that it had selected Minnesota Equal Access Network Services (MEANS) as the management information services company to provide the billing service. MEANS and the Board had conducted serious negotiations but had not yet reached a contract. The Board also requested that the Commission release the reserved \$131,500 so that the Board could acquire necessary billing and collection equipment and hire staff.

On January 5, 1994, the Board filed a request for a time extension until April 1, 1994, in which to file its fiscal year (FY) 1995 budget.

On January 28, 1994, the Board filed a request for a time extension until April 30, 1994, in which to implement its billing and collection system. The Board explained that MEANS would not begin billing until April, 1994, and the time extension was thus necessary to complete a one-month billing cycle.

The Board's filings came before the Commission for consideration on February 1, 1994.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Commission is pleased that the lengthy process of implementing a telecommunications relay billing system seems to be coming to a satisfactory close. The Commission appreciates the efforts exerted by all parties in this sometimes difficult and frustrating process.

Following are the Commission's findings on the major parts of the Board's filings.

I. The Fourth Quarter Report

The Board reported that it had issued two rounds of Requests for Proposals to implement the billing system. In addition, the Board explored the possibilities of developing its own system or of using the State of Minnesota's system. As a result of its

research, the Board determined that the use of MEANS as a billing and collection service was the most satisfactory choice.

In its report, the Board also provided data on the calls placed through the message relay service in September, October, and November, 1993. The report broke the information into call types, total minutes, revenue, and total calls.

The Commission finds that the TACIP Board's fourth quarter report complies with previous Commission directives. The Commission will accept the report.

II. Release of Budgeted Funds

The Board requested the Commission to release the \$131,500 placed in reserve as a result of the Commission's September 21, 1993 Order. The Board explained that the funds were necessary to improve efficiency of call handling at the message relay service through the purchase of a Local Area Network file server. The funds would also be used to hire one accounts receivable clerk and one customer relations representative. The Board would also need to purchase additional software to bring the billing and collection system online.

The Commission finds that the Board has fully and reasonably accounted for its proposed use of the reserved funds. The Commission will release the reserved funds so that the Board can implement the system as proposed.

III. Time Extensions

The Board has requested two time extensions: a 90-day extension from January 31, 1994, to April 30, 1994, to begin long distance billing; and a 60-day extension from January 31, 1994, to April 1, 1994, to file its FY 1995 budget.

The Commission finds that both requests for time extensions are reasonable and should be granted. The time extension for implementation of the system is necessary to complete negotiations with MEANS and enter into a contract, to install the necessary software and hire staff, and to complete one billing cycle. These are all reasonable steps towards bringing the billing system to reality.

The delay in submitting the FY 1995 budget is also reasonable. The Board explained that its relay service provider will submit its proposed budget to the Board by March 15, 1994. Because the relay service comprises approximately 75% of the Board's budget, it is reasonable to allow the Board time to use these figures in its budget presented to the Commission.

The Commission will grant the Board's two requests for time extensions.

ORDER

1. The Commission accepts the TACIP Board's fourth quarter report.
2. The Commission approves the release of the \$131,500 budgeted for a billing system, to be used by the Board in implementing the system.
3. The Commission grants the Board two time extensions as explained in the body of this Order.
4. The Board shall continue to file quarterly progress reports on the implementation of a billing system, data regarding the costs of producing bills, revenue billed, and amounts collected. The reports shall be filed on March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31, 1994.
5. On or before April 1, 1994, the Board shall submit its proposed FY 1995 budget in Docket No. 93-549.
6. On or before April 30, 1994, the Board shall complete and mail to relay service users bills for intrastate long distance calls placed during March, 1994.
7. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)