

P-3008/CI-92-1261 ORDER CLOSING DOCKET, ACCEPTING REPORTS, AND
CONTINUING QUARTERLY REPORTING REQUIREMENT

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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

Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

In the Matter of Commission
Recommendations to the 1993 Legislature on
Future Provision and Maintenance of
Telecommunications Services to
Communications-Impaired Persons

ISSUE DATE: September 20, 1994

DOCKET NO. P-3008/CI-92-1261
DOCKET NO. P-3008/CI-94-403

In the Matter of the Fiscal Year 1995 Budget
Proposed by the TACIP Board

ORDER CLOSING DOCKET, ACCEPTING
REPORTS, AND CONTINUING
QUARTERLY REPORTING
REQUIREMENT

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

I. Factual Background

In 1987 the Minnesota Legislature established the TACIP (Telecommunications Access for Communication-Impaired Persons) Board to make Minnesota's telecommunications system fully accessible to persons with communications impairments. The Board distributes specialized telecommunications equipment to eligible persons with communications impairments and maintains a state-wide message relay service. Minn. Stat. §§ 237.50-237.56 (Supp. 1993). The TACIP program is funded through a surcharge on all telephone access lines.

The TACIP statutes require the Commission to set the amount of the surcharge annually and to receive an annual report from the TACIP Board on its operations, expenditures, and success in achieving statutory objectives. They also require the Commission to review the Board's budget for reasonableness and make any necessary modifications. Minn. Stat. §§ 237.52, subd. 2 and 237.55 (Supp. 1993).

On June 7, 1994 the Commission issued an Order in the second docket listed above, approving the Board's proposed budget for fiscal year 1995. That Order required quarterly reports on specific aspects of the Board's operations. On July 1, 1994 the Board filed its first quarterly report under the June 7 Order.

The July 1 report also provided information on an issue predating the FY '95 budget cycle, procedures for billing relay users for intrastate and incoming interstate toll calls. That information was required under Orders issued in the first docket listed above.

On July 22, 1994 the Board filed additional information requested by Commission staff. The report came before the Commission on August 30, 1994.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

II. Report Accepted; Further Reports Required

The report at issue meets the requirements of the Commission's Orders and will be accepted.

A. Automatic Number Identification Issues

One of the issues raised in the report was the Board's belief that the relay service may soon need

to acquire Automatic Number Identification (ANI) capability. ANI technology automatically records and transmits originating numbers of toll calls for billing purposes. Currently, the relay service secures billing information by having communications assistants request, record, and transmit calling parties' numbers.

ANI would save time, eliminate errors in recording and transmitting originating numbers, and reduce toll fraud. It might also make the relay service more "user friendly" to calling parties. It may eventually be required to comply with federal mandates such as functional equivalence between relay service and conventional service and pay phone accessibility to the relay service. However, the technology is so expensive the Commission would probably have to raise the monthly surcharge on all Minnesota telephone lines for the Board to acquire it.¹

The Commission respects and shares the Board's commitment to providing communication-impaired Minnesotans with the same high quality telephone service enjoyed by other Minnesotans. The Commission also has a statutory duty to promote universal telephone service and protect the ratepaying public by keeping telephone rates, including the TACIP surcharge, as low as possible.

The Commission will therefore require the Board to continue examining its billing procedures and to quantify, wherever possible, the time and expense required to request, record, and transmit the originating numbers of toll calls. The Board should also document the incidence and cost of recording errors and of calling parties giving incorrect numbers for billing purposes. Finally, the Board should note, document, and illustrate the nonquantifiable benefits and drawbacks of ANI. This information should be included in future quarterly reports as well as in any budget proposal for the purchase of ANI.

B. Reporting Requirements Continued

The Board will continue filing quarterly reports, which will include previously required data on communications assistant efficiency and the operation of the newly established toll billing system.

III. Docket Closed

For purposes of administrative efficiency the Commission will close the first docket listed above. The docket was originally opened to develop recommendations for the 1993 Legislature on how best to meet the telecommunications needs of persons with communications impairments. That purpose has been served, and it is time to close the docket. The billing system reports required under various Orders issued in the docket can and will be filed in the docket established to review the Board's fiscal year '95 budget and operations.

ORDER

1. The TACIP report filed on July 1, 1994 is accepted.
2. Future quarterly reports shall include the information on obtaining and recording originating numbers and Automatic Number Identification required above.
3. Future quarterly reports on the billing system for intrastate and incoming interstate toll calls shall be filed under the second docket number listed above.
4. Docket number P-3008/CI-92-1261 is closed.
5. This Order shall become effective immediately.

¹ The Board estimates initial costs at approximately \$650,000.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)