

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY BOARD FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY  
FIRST MEETING OF 2003  
CLARION HOTEL, HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND  
JUNE 7, 2003  
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

**GABTR Members:** Mitch Travers, Chair, James Stevenson, Annette Reichman, Brenda Battat, Susan Boswell, Joy Larson, and Rebecca Ladew.

**GABTR Members excused:** Isaac Agboola, Patsy Bowman, Susan Stevens-Miller, and Marie Campbell

**TAM Staff:** Brenda Kelly-Frey, Willis Mann, Pam Stewart, Nancy Seidman, and Patty Bird.

**AT&T Staff:** Missy Devlin, Patty Ferran, and Elke Pieters

**Interpreters:** Liz Mohr; Noreen Hagemeyer, and Tona Swaggart.

**CART Transcriber:** Tammy Jaffe

**Visitors:** Francis & Jenny Sue Bourne, Victor Galloway, Wayne & Ellen Albert, Harry Larson, Paul Campbell, Mr. & Mrs. Reid of Frederick

Mitch Travers welcomed the group to the first GABTR meeting of this year. The minutes from the meeting of November, 2002 were accepted as read.

**TAM Reports & Questions/Answers**

Brenda Kelly-Frey gave a one-year summary and list of accomplishments by the TAM Office. The accomplishments included;

- TAM has a new contractor, AT&T, who began relay services as of June 1, 2003.
- TAM now has a relay listserv as a way to provide up to date information to the community.
- AT&T has the first in the nation customer service office inside of the Maryland Relay Center. They have specialized trained operators, who now answers questions through their new job in customer service.
- TAM held discussion groups for TTY users, VCO users, IP Relay users, CAPTEL users, HCO and Speech-to-Speech users, and a special session at SSA for deaf consumers.
- TAM and AT&T held a successful Open House.
- AT&T have offered meeting rooms to the public, and they have been used by various organizations taking advantage of the free meeting room space.
- TAM is working with the state of Maryland and FCC on designating Maryland Relay as an Emergency Service to allow operators to be on the road during severe weather.
- TAM was re-certified by FCC for the provision of relay services for the next 5 years.

- TAM received an extension on the CAPTEL trial for another 3 years with an additional \$2.2. million to fund this from the Board of Public Works. TAM did a “sole source” contract with CAPTEL to extend this service.
- TAM now has a new commercial that TV stations are showing as a public service (TAM doesn't have funds to pay for TV advertising).
- TAM is constantly adding new equipment for the MAT distribution program to fit individuals' needs.
- TAM has a new slogan, “It's Possible”. TAM also has new colors, wine and navy.
- TAM has made the website more functional and easy to use and will be ADA Accessible.
- TAM is currently auditing the local exchange carriers to make sure they are submitting the correct amount of funds to support relay services to the Universal Service Trust Fund (USTF).
- Staff at the TAM Office received training on how to be relay operators, which gave them good insight on how difficult this is to do.
- All of TAM's brochures are being updated with the new look, slogan and colors.
- TAM is very visible with FCC as the staff meets with FCC staff at least monthly to discuss new regulations, new technologies and new issues.
- Brenda met with the Pennsylvania Board for Relay Services, and gave a presentation on CAPTEL and the new features from the current RFP.
- AT&T and TAM sponsored the Maryland Association of the Deaf's golf tournament.
- TAM has not increased the surcharge of 20 cents a month since 1997. Pam Stewart is closely monitoring the contract to make sure AT&T is providing all of the features they promised in the contract.

Nancy Seidman gave the next report for TAM. Highlights of her report is as follows:

- TAM produced two commercials to be aired on TV using PSA's.
- TAM is now producing a new videotape on how to use relay services.
- TAM is changing the brochures, displays, and videos to create a cohesive look.
- TAM has recently made a lot of contacts with the speech disabled community. Nancy was invited to attend a conference on INNOVATIVE THERAPY FOR SPEECH DISABLED FOR SPEECH THERAPISTS. There she made quite a few contacts. Nancy also presented at the United Cerebral Palsy Association and to the Kennedy Kreeger Institute.
- Nancy reported that the public relations firm has gotten some good press opportunities. Brenda and Nancy did an interview with the Frederick County Cable and Prince George County Cable programs. Other interviews occurred with COMCAST, Fox 45, WBAL and Hagerstown newspaper.
- The website has experienced a problem with spamming, including the GABTR listserv. Nancy spoke with G3 about possible options on how to take care of this.

The board then watched the commercial.

(COMMERCIAL). WITH MARYLAND RELAY IT'S POSSIBLE. IT'S POSSIBLE. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO TALK TO ME, FOR ME TO TALK TO YOU. IT IS POSSIBLE. LEARN MORE ABOUT MARYLAND RELAY. IT'S POSSIBLE. IT'S POSSIBLE. IT'S POSSIBLE FOR STANDARD TELEPHONE USERS LIKE YOU AND ME TO COMMUNICATE BY PHONE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING, DEAF BLIND OR SPEECH DISABLED. WITH MARYLAND RELAY, IT IS POSSIBLE. OF ALL THREE DIGIT PHONE NUMBERS, 7-1-1 IS THE ONE THAT MAKES POSSIBILITIES POSSIBLE. IT'S POSSIBLE. DIAL 7-1-1 TO USE MARYLAND RELAY.

Pam Stewart gave the next report

- Pam's main function is to work with AT&T to make sure that as many improvements to relay as possible are made. She is the contract administrator.
- Maryland is the first state to get the technology (through AT&T) to allow pass through of Caller ID from the caller to the end TTY user through the relay center. FCC is now requiring all vendors to provide this service, and to put in place the appropriate technology to make this happen. When a TTY user calls 9-1-1 through the relay center, the 9-1-1 center receives the originator's phone number and location.
- Customer service issues are being addressed. AT&T has demonstrated a lot of commitment on resolving customer's issues.
- FCC states that a new Report and Order will be published within the next week, and the community needs to respond by sending in comments. You can submit comments on the ECFS system, on the FCC web page (<http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/>)

Patty Bird gave the final TAM report.

- Everyone loves the MAT program because the equipment is free.
- The MAT program is doing outreach in different parts of Maryland, and this is paying off as more remote areas are now requesting applications for free equipment.
- There's been a big increase in applicants with mobility impairments needing special equipment. This is a good sign that the outreach is working. Assessments to determine what equipment is appropriate are offered at various sites throughout the state.

### **AT&T Reports & Questions/Answers**

Patty Ferran gave the first report as the account manager with AT&T.

- AT&T is processing more than 90% of all Maryland relay calls within the center at Baltimore. AT&T continues to hire more operators on a weekly basis, because the call volume continues to grow with the provision of IP relay services in addition to the TTY Maryland relay services. This allows for most efficient use of operators on the floor.
- AT&T has identified a few issues with IP Relay and we are following up on this. IP Relay apparently appears choppy during relay calls and we are not sure what is causing this. One reason may be the firewall, if the user is behind a firewall at the work place. Another reason may be an internet connection that has a lot of traffic which creates bottlenecks. The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason may be that the user is using an older PC with limited processing power.
- AT&T is now starting VRS services through a partnership with "Hands On" and AT&T would like feedback on this new service.

- AT&T now has an in-house customer service office at the Maryland Relay Center. The customer service representatives were promoted from the floor, and they still handle live relay calls on a limited basis every week to keep them aware and knowledgeable of issues that occur. Voice callers use 866-669-0853 and TTY callers use 866-669-0865 to reach the In-Center Customer Service. TAM Customer service remains at 800-552-7724.
- AT&T is building in higher panels between each operator station to reduce the noise level on the floor.
- AT&T has 2 conference rooms that are being used by the community. To reserve the room, just send an e-mail to: [donnasimpson@att.com](mailto:donnasimpson@att.com), in advance to reserve for a specific time, and the room is free.
- AT&T plans to sponsor an event during the Maryland Association of the Deaf conference scheduled for next August.

Elke Pieters, who is also an account manager for public relations, gave the next AT&T report.

- Elke has given a variety of presentations throughout Maryland to school age children all the way to senior citizens about the relay service. In Howard County, Elke was able to participate in the disability Awareness Project – dAP, as a presenter. Other presentations were given to a Loyola College graduate program in speech pathology and to senior citizens groups.
- AT&T requires the relay operators to attend one deaf event or disability related event as part of their job. They will be going to Six Flags and other events to give them exposure to their consumers.

### **GABTR Member Reports/Discussions**

Mitch Travers asked the GABTR members if any used the IP Relay. Joy Larson reported that she has tried all of the IP relay services to compare for usability by individuals who have Usher's Syndrome. Joy found that the split screen is problematic for individuals with tunnel vision, and that one screen is easier to read. Other GABTR members have used IP Relay and general found the experience very positive. Mitch Travers stated that he mostly used Sprint, and did like the split screen format. He is unable to use some of the IP relay services at work, because the firewall doesn't allow for default settings.

James Stevenson reported that he is trying to set up a presentation for a board in Allegheny County about relay services.

Brenda Battat reported that she is exclusively using the CapTel service. She stated the TDI and S-H-H-H are working with AT&T and Verizon to disseminate information to the public on how to use relay services from pay phones. Consumers calling relay services can use the pay phones to make local calls without any charges and to make long distance calls using calling cards.

Susan Boswell stated that she didn't have a report. She is, however, extremely pleased with the extension of CapTel in Maryland. Susan is using CapTel almost exclusively, both at home and at her office.

Joy Larson reported that she attended the Deaf Seniors Association Conference in Boston about 2 weeks ago. There she visited all of the relay service booths to learn more about IP relay and VRS services. The larger screens for VRI, makes it much easier for deaf seniors with limited vision (e.g. from macular degeneration) to use this service. Joy is working with Patty Ferran on setting up a focus group between AT&T and DeafBlind consumers, as there are a variety of needs in that community.

Brenda Battat commented that she was concerned about the Maryland House bill 469 that was recently passed to use some of the TAM funding to pay for a telephone reading service for newspapers for blind

individuals. She wondered if this would negatively impact the budget and services for telecommunication relay services.

Brenda Kelly-Frey explained that a request was made for \$50,000 to set up the telephone reading service for newspapers for blind individuals. This was passed in both the House and the Senate, and is part of the Governor's initiative to serve more individuals with disabilities. Brenda explained that currently the universal service trust fund always has some funds left over at the end of each year, thus she does not believe this will be an issue.

Becky Ladew's report was read to GABTR. Becky has met with Tom Chandler, Chief of the Disabilities Rights Office at FCC, with Larry Geller, Public Information Coordinator of Hawaii, Bob Segalman, Brenda Kelly-Frey and Nancy Seidman last January. This meeting was about speech-to-speech relay issues in Hawaii. The STS calls were being routed from Hawaii to Virginia Relay Center by Verizon. Users in Hawaii were frustrated by the STS operators in Virginia, because the operators did not understand the dialects and names used in Hawaii. Verizon denied knowledge of any complaints, but afterwards Verizon withdrew from their contract with Hawaii. Sprint quickly stepped in and now have an in-state STS relay center. Becky was recently invited to join the Consumer Advisory Committee at FCC as its representative for Speech-to-Speech relay users.

Mitch Travers commented that TAM & GABTR do not need to pay for anti-SPAM capabilities. The GABTR listserv could be changed so that only members can send and receive e-mails from each other. Any other e-mails from outside of the listserv would then be eliminated. The general public can send comments to TAM, who will then screen and forward to GABTR members.

Mitch Travers asked if the GABTR members wanted to make up the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting that we should have had. This year GABTR will have only two meetings. GABTR board members agreed that would be satisfactory.

Mitch then moved on to discuss "multi-vendoring." He reminded the group that there had been a meeting specifically on this topic about multiple relay providers in Maryland during one of the GABTR meetings in Baltimore. Both sides of the issue were debated, and GABTR agreed to monitor the situation to determine when to move ahead with the concept of consumer choice. Two years later, we are now currently in a multi-vendoring environment with all of the IP-relay providers and the VRS providers that are offering services on a national level. Not only do we have multi-vendoring and consumer choice with different providers, but also with the different technologies that can be used to receive the services. Can we now borrow the concepts from IP Relay and VRS and apply them to traditional TTY relay services. If we wish, GABTR can begin working with TAM on a RFP, which would take about 12 to 18 months to complete to be released in time for replacement of the current contract.

Annette Reichman questioned whether a national service delivery system in a multi-vendoring environment could be replicated with a state service delivery system.

Brenda Kelly-Frey reminded GABTR that the Governor DOES want an in-state relay center. This center processes about 165,000 calls per month, which would be difficult to divide by 3 potential relay vendors in in-state relay centers.

Mitch Travers countered that we would need to change the "rules of the game" in order to allow for more than one vendor. He conceded that by keeping the same rules of the game, having more than one vendor would be too difficult.

GABTR board members agreed to look further into this in the future.

Willis Mann as the program administrator reported that the next GABTR meeting is at Lexington Park in St. Mary's County on October 25, 2003. GABTR has 3 vacancies, one representing the deaf community, one representing the senior citizens, and one representing individuals with mobility impairments. Notification of reappointments won't occur until after June 20, 2003.

## **Public Input**

Francis Bourne stated that when she calls Maryland Relay, she gets an answering machine that says "This is Maryland Relay, Please leave your number, GA." She is confused because she has reached Maryland Relay, but is being asked to leave a number. Francis stated that she is also confused with her Caller ID, as she now sees the hearing person's phone number instead of the MD Relay phone number. When she answers, she expects a direct call and is confused when the relay operator comes on to relay the call from the hearing originator. The other problem she has encountered with AT&T, is that the relay operator will ask her each and every time she wants to make a long distance call, which carrier she wants to use. This is frustrating for her.

Patty Ferran responded that Francis needed to fill out a Relay Customer Profile identifying which long distance carrier she prefers for long distance calls. Once this profile is filled out, the operator will automatically see the preferred carrier on the screen and make the long distance call without having to ask which carrier to use. FCC now requires every provider to set up a profile for each consumer for his/her preferred long distance carrier. Patty also explained that FCC now requires that AT&T have the technology to pass on the originator's phone number to the Caller ID to the recipient of the relay call. Occasionally there are technical issues with telephone switching in more remote lines and the Caller ID information is not passed through the switches to the end user's Caller ID. Patty finally responded to the question about the "answering machine." This is an automated answer that is asking for the phone number that the user wants to make the call to, which is retrieved by the operator to be released for outdialing.

Mitch Travers closed the meeting at 12:45.