

**MTAC Workgroup 123**  
**Service Information Needs, Reporting, and Communication Channels**

**November 18, 2008 Meeting Notes**

**Opening Remarks**

Becky Dobbins, USPS co-chair, opened the meeting, noting that in putting together the slides for the workgroup progress report for the general MTAC session, she reflected on the status of the workgroup. As a former District Manager and postal representative for the past four decades, she noted, she is familiar with the challenges the group is facing. For years, the USPS has managed First-Class and Standard Mail through an inventory management approach, constantly looking at on-hand inventory at the line level to see what mail is on the floor and what mail had to move to comply with the color code policy. There was no individual piece measurement, and often common sense dictated the approach. Facilities also tried to adhere to the mailer requested in-home delivery dates if possible.

The USPS had its daily mail condition reports, but used inventory management primarily to process mail. We are now moving into a world where the USPS will hold itself accountable for piece performance, with data on billions of pieces and their performance, Ms. Dobbins noted, which marks a sea change for the Postal Service. Putting that into context, we are also moving into Intelligent Mail barcodes to allow us to make the transition effectively and fairly quickly. It's an arduous task, however, and will not happen overnight, she noted.

Ms. Dobbins noted that MTAC Workgroup 114 provided the road map for service performance measurement, but the USPS does not yet have the system built to make that happen. The IMb system is not built yet, she said, but will be in place in May 2009 for Phase 1. The Phase 2 release will include the service performance measurement piece, she said. At that time, based on the information the USPS already has, along with what comes from this workgroup, plus previous workgroup recommendations and what the USPS has committed to the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), the USPS will be able to build the requirements for what the reports and data elements should be.

John Sexton, industry co-chair, said that experience working with USPS field managers tells us they would appreciate having access to the granular, actionable data necessary to work on customer-specific service problems. The new technologies and work will allow us access to shared data. The workgroup wants to piggyback on the work the USPS will do to build its own diagnostic system, he noted.

Ms. Dobbins noted that the requirements under the law for service performance reporting are one thing, but requirements for what customers need may be different. There is some overlap, she said, but not much. And the data the USPS' needs has some overlap with the legal requirements for the PRC, and much overlap with customer requirements, but still there are differences. The legal requirements for annual compliance reports, for instance, are nothing in comparison to what customers need, she said. The USPS acknowledges that up front, Ms. Dobbins noted, saying that there seems to be some confusion about that.

**Parcel Report**

Wendy Smith updated the workgroup on the status of the parcel task group (a copy of the presentation was distributed to all workgroup members). The parcel group recommends that both aggregate and mailer-specific data be available. Aggregate data is necessary for benchmarking capabilities, and so that mailers not using

Delivery Confirmation also have access to performance data. Mailer-specific data access should be limited to the mailer or their authorized representative.

Ms. Smith noted that there are reports that exist today for competitive parcel products, but the Business Service Network (BSN) has to run them for customers. In the future, customers should have the ability to run the reports or access the data themselves. The data reported today is primarily from Parcel Select, she noted, and the group is looking at trying to replicate that data for market-dominant products. The group is reviewing the existing Parcel Select reports and data to see which best meets parcel users' needs without re-inventing the wheel and requiring significant IT resources and costs. If there are good reporting formats out there today for Parcel Select, they could be adopted for market dominant products.

Ms. Smith noted that there is a need for "canned" reports for the PRC, but since First-Class Mail parcels are included with First-Class Mail letters and flats, and Standard Mail parcels are included with Standard Mail letters and flats, there is no visibility for these product groups. The group recommends replicating or adapting the EDW report format used today for Parcel Select to report performance for Standard Mail parcels. The EDW report could be run by parcel category (e.g., First-Class Mail or Standard Mail with no sub-categories at this point); run by date range, customer ID or entry point; and include percent on time, percent by day through 8 days (cumulative days to deliver format).

There is no start-the-clock information available today, Ms. Smith noted, and the USPS is focused on implementing IMb for letters and flats, so changes to support new start-the-clock business rules for parcels will not be addressed until some time after May. At that point, EDW data will be available for commercial FCM parcels, Standard parcels, Bound Printed Matter parcels, Media Mail parcels, and commercial parcel post. Sub-categories such as machinable parcels, NFMs, irregulars, etc. would not be available. With the new parcel IM barcode, there is no service code available to provide tracking to that level, Ms. Smith noted.

Juliaan Hess, USPS, suggested that there is a processing category in the EDS file type that could be used as the data point for some of the shape-based reporting. The group said it would need to evaluate any costs associated with using that and determine if the USPS and industry were willing to bear those costs. Mr. Sexton asked if the data will be available to customers in May, or just to the USPS. Ms. Hess noted that the data will not be available until some time after May. There is no implementation date yet for receiving the start-the-clock from the system, she said, but once that is available then reports can be generated. It likely will be some time after IMb Full Service implementation.

Kathy Siviter asked if that means that there will be no performance data from Standard Mail parcels included in the USPS' measurement in FY 2009 because none of the pilot IMb participants are sending Standard Mail parcels. The USPS agreed that is correct.

Ms. Smith explained the parcel group's discussions relative to start-the-clock events. Currently, for eVS drop ship parcels, the USPS uses the package scans at the entry facility. Previously, the form 8125 barcode scan had been used. For parcels entered at the origin DMU or BMEU, the USPS uses the Form 3152 barcode scan. Under the new rules, for parcels entered at the DDU, the USPS would use arrival scans at that unit. For parcels entered at the BMC or SCF, the FAST appointment time from the eVS file will be used. A national Critical Entry Time (CET) would apply to Standard Mail parcels, as with Standard Mail letters and flats. For First-Class Mail retail and Parcel Post or Package Services retail, the CET is 1700 hours (5:00 pm). For parcels entered at origin DMU or BMEU, the start-the-clock would be the pick up or drop off time (when acceptance begins).

The group recommends a parcel summary report for diagnostic purposes, replicating the existing report used for Parcel Select. That report uses data from the PTS (Product Tracking System), with drill down capability by national, Area, District and 5-digit ZIP Code. The report shows measures of percent parcels scanned and percent on time. Data currently is not available, however, for reporting service outliers. Data would be updated generally on a nightly basis, Ms. Hess noted.

Ms. Smith discussed a potential report format for National and Area reporting, which she said needs more discussion at the parcel group level. In response to question, she noted that the columns showing pieces excluded from measurement needs more discussion because there are different rules for competitive products than for market-dominant products. Ms. Hess noted that there are a few situations where it does not make sense to include data, such as when scan events are out of chronological order, or mail is dropped at a different facility than the record says it should have been dropped, etc.

Bob Fisher, USPS, noted that shipments being incomplete is the biggest problem. Ms. Smith noted that shipment incompletes will be included in measurement in the future to change the business rules. Ms. Hess said that with eVS, shipment incompletes should go down because the default changes with the use of handheld scanners.

Ms. Smith noted one format change needed in the report, which would be to eliminate the comparison between the number of pieces on the 8125 and actual pieces scanned because with eVS the start-the-clock is not based on the 8125.

The group was shown samples of report formats for a District/5-Digit report and a Pieces Excluded report. Ms. Siviter asked if the reports would break out the "Percent Pieces On-Time" to show how late the pieces were that were not delivered on time. Ms. Hess said the data to provide that information is there, so it could be done. Ms. Smith said that there are data and reports available today to use as examples and build requirements on, but the USPS' IT resources are limited so the group is working on recommendations with that in mind.

Mr. Fisher noted that for the Pieces Excluded report, the shipment incomplete percentage has dropped significantly since going to the eVS scan.

Ms. Smith lastly reviewed the next steps for the parcel group, which include a review of the business rules for data exclusion in EDW and PTS, which the group feels should be consistent with the goals of the PAEA. The group also will review error codes to determine causes for pieces reported in PTS but not included in EDW, as well as a review of what data PTS filters/excludes. She noted that the group has done some comparison of real data between PTS and EDW but wants to review the different error codes to determine the causes and how to minimize the errors so that the reporting can be as inclusive as possible.

The group recommended that the service standards matrix be posted on the USPS' web site, as well as increasing communication about the 3-digit pair service standards resource. The question of whether the USPS will continue to provide the data by subscription on CD was again raised. The group also is interested in advance notice of equipment or facility changes that affect delivery. Ms. Smith noted that there have been situations because of tour consolidations where no USPS personnel have been available to offload trucks. Customers need these communications in advance so they can prepare.

Ms. Smith said the parcel group is pleased with its progress to date. Ms. Dobbins and Mr. Sexton observed there may be many elements of the parcel group's work that can be used for letters and flats.

### Communications Team Update

Angie Burns, USPS BSN, reported that the communications team has met twice and has discussed current criteria for USPS posting of service updates, looked at information sources and made recommendations for enhancements.

Ms. Burns reviewed the criteria currently used by the USPS to evaluate whether something is posted as a service update on its web site. Debbie Bell is the USPS person responsible for updating the site, she noted. When a request is received, the USPS goes through many different sources to determine the information. Criteria evaluated include whether a facility is closed more than 24 hours or is impacted for more than 24 hours (e.g., power outages, natural disasters, impacts to customer drop off or dock access, etc.); if collections cannot be made; road/bridge closures that may impact service, etc.

The service update area of the USPS' web site currently includes links to the FAST holiday contingency report, and communicates upcoming operational changes. Possible enhancements include link to the service standards page, link to the FSS page, and link to information on the national route adjustments. Ms. Burns noted that the USPS will be making major changes in terms of route adjustments over the next 60-90 days, and the BSN is working with the delivery group to be able to provide updates on the web site and communicate out to customers through the BSN. Ms. Smith recommended that the service updates data be linked to or contained in the FAST appointment system because that is what consolidators use to schedule entry.

Ms. Burns noted that USPS operations recently gave a brief internal update on the status of CETs and possible tour consolidations. The CETs are being reviewed and should be shared with customers soon, she noted. The tour consolidations (each facility is being evaluated on a case by case basis) may include compression of operating hours mostly on Tour 2 (day shift), which does not necessarily have an impact on a customer's ability to drop mail. The mail may not begin processing on that tour, but employees generally are available to receive the mail. Ms. Smith said that parcel users are reporting that facilities experiencing tour consolidation may not have people available that can unload, or may not have fork lift equipment/operators available, so service is being impacted. Ms. Burns said these issues should be reported through the BSN so that they can be researched and resolved.

Mr. Sexton asked how long service update data remains on the web site, and Ms. Burns said if the impact will be a short time, they check back with the facility for an update in a 24-hour period. Otherwise, the updates are reviewed in total every other week to see which should be taken off. The group recommended that there be an archive section available so that if a customer complaint or issue is being researched, the past data is still there.

Ms. Burns noted the variety of sources from which the BSN currently obtains the data for the service updates, including the national communications team, Area/District BSN and Public Affairs Committee, USPS network operations, daily Google alerts from the National Weather Service, nightly review of the weather channel, and customer feedback. She noted that customers should send her or Debbie Bell an e-mail about potential impacts to be added to the site. Mr. Sexton asked if the BSN has a standardized request form of how customers should report potential issues and Ms. Burns said currently one does not exist, but it could be created. The site in the future will include data reported through the Inspection Service's national updates, which are near real-time. Mr. Sexton suggested a form could be posted on RIBBS for customers to complete.

Ms. Smith suggested that it would be of value to know re-directs, such as when parcels are being moved between BMCs and plants or vice versa, so that mailers could bring the mail to the appropriate place.

Mr. Fisher presented a draft of a template that could be used to help the workgroup identify the types of information needed. The template breaks out the type of customer need (e.g., long term planning purposes, present early warning system, and past mailing performance data). Within each category the group has begun fleshing out the types of information needed and where that information resides.

### **Key Issues Update and Next Steps**

Mr. Fisher walked the group through a presentation re-capping the key issues identified by the workgroup and next steps. He noted that most of the presentation is the same as the workgroup saw three weeks ago (which was included in the October 30 meeting notes). He noted he recently reviewed the recommendations report from MTAC Workgroup 114 and the PRC's Order 83 in the context of this workgroup's mission and found much of value. Based on the group's discussions since the October 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mr. Fisher updated the key issues as follows.

**Key Issue # 1:** The exchange of actionable, granular, and timely data is fundamental to:

- Performance measurement processes
- Manage business process (mail owner, MSP, USPS)
- Add value to the mail

The needs for actionable data varies by the point in the mailing cycle:

- Mailing planning and production
- Mailing entry and processing through delivery
- Performance results/continuous improvement process

Sharon Harrison asked where Customer/Supplier Agreements (CSAs) fit in as part of the communication of mailer expectations. Mr. Fisher suggested they are part of mail production and planning, but that the service performance data elements are based on the arrival and start-the-clock. The group noted that CSAs do impact service measurement because they can allow a different CET, which impacts the start-the-clock for measurement. Ms. Dobbins said the USPS will get some clarity around the issue and report back to the workgroup.

Mr. Fisher proposed using the above structure to look at what data we need and where it fits in the cycle. For each need, what is the data and how do USPS and customers use that data.

**Key Issue # 2:** The requirements of performance measurement and improvement has both common elements and product specific components. Actionable data use, needs, and expected results will vary based on mail class – FCM, Periodicals, Standard, and Parcels.

Broad categories

- Delivery Confirmation (PTS)
- IMb (Confirm)

**Key Issue # 3:** Mailer-provided reports need standardized format, business rules, terminology and/or clear documentation that explain reports/assumptions.

- USPS IMb performance measurement reports in Phase 2
- Align with current / future business rules
- Align with current / future report data elements

Mr. Fisher noted the vision is that mailers would not have to provide reports in the future because the USPS and industry would have common shared data/reports. But since we now know the systems will not be able to support that functionality until later in the IMb implementation, the group should discuss mailer-provided reports aligned with current/future business rules and data elements.

**Key Issue # 4:** Service performance interaction process (mailer-BSN-operations) needs to improve the use of standardized actionable data, including an escalation process.

- Service measurement training
  - Concept
  - Specific reports & processes

**Key Issue #5:** The process for major mail delivery disruptions (i.e., hurricanes) through RIBBS is working well. Workgroup discussion points to the need to expand this type of reporting process to reflect smaller scale disruptions and localized performance problems (i.e., mail backlogs, facility issues). The concept of an “early warning system” has been proposed in various concepts.

- BSN Sub-group assignment
- Need to define criteria for reporting
- Need to identify current versus future processes

Mr. Fisher noted that this key issue is being worked by the communications team led by Ms. Burns. The group needs to continue to define the criteria for reporting service updates, as well as identifying current vs. future processes.

**Issue # 6:** The Postal Service has not defined for the mailing industry what it is building for itself in terms of an internal service performance diagnostic system. This internal system, expected by the industry, would provide aggregated performance metrics (i.e. actionable data).

- Internal USPS Reports are in development
- Will not be in IMb Phase 1

Mr. Fisher said that the USPS is in development phase for its diagnostic system functionality and is not yet at the point to lay out those plans in detail. As noted earlier, the functionality will not be included in Release 1 of IMb implementation. Ms. Dobbins said it will be included in Release 2, which is currently scheduled for September 2009. The USPS will be reporting in more detail about the IMb implementation plan at the MTAC General Session.

Mr. Sexton urged the USPS not to develop its diagnostic system in a void, but to work with industry toward a shared system that will help both identify and resolve service issues. Linda Kingsley, USPS, said right now the USPS is working on getting the PRC reporting set up for Quarter 1. The external contractor has much to do and that is the priority, she noted. That is not for the USPS' internal needs, it is what the USPS has agreed to provide the PRC. Mr. Sexton said that when the diagnostic system is developed, industry wants to be involved.

Mr. Fisher said the USPS is talking about the deliverables from this workgroup. The USPS does not intend to develop the system strictly internally, it is still working on the requirements for Release 2 of IMb implementation.

**Issue # 7:** Validation process is desirable for MSP or mailer generated service performance reports with appropriate ongoing quality metrics.

- Ensure appropriate business rules used
- Ensure mail entered at Start-the-Clock location and date with high accuracy
- Report structure consistent with standards

Mr. Fisher noted that this issue has been clarified since the last presentation. The issue deals with how the USPS can have confidence in mailer-provided reports.

**Additional Issues:** Mr. Fisher then presented what the USPS sees as key issues in service performance improvement.

Published documents should form a common basis for next steps, he noted, including the recommendations from MTAC Workgroup 114 and PRC Order 83. He suggested the workgroup re-familiarize itself with some of the recommendations from workgroup 114 (sections noted on presentation) as well as the business rules included in PRC Order 83. If there are questions or situations where customers continue to generate reports in the short or long-term, common definitions of start-the-clock are needed, he noted. The business rules need to be documented and published so when performance reports come out the issues already have been worked through in terms of the business rules.

The workgroup 114 report and PRC Order 83 will be sent to the workgroup members, Mr. Fisher noted, who should review the pertinent sections. The information is very relevant, he said, and he will use some of it verbatim to begin working documents. This workgroup does not need to re-create work that has already been done, he said.

The second issue is that the USPS has been focused on meeting the service performance measurement requirements of the law, which includes high level reporting clearly defined in PRC Order 83. Data needed by customers for the management of their business processes and adding value to the mail will require much more granular and timely data. As noted earlier, there are different requirements for the PRC reporting, joint USPS/mail service provider/mail owner reporting, and individual company reporting. The differences need further refinement in the requirements development, he suggested. What things are needed for joint USPS/customer interaction, and what is needed by the USPS internally to improve its processes versus things mailers need to improve their processes.

In response to the question as to whether the USPS has done any comparisons between its own reports and those submitted by J. C. Penney, Mr. Fisher said that 3-4 years ago the USPS used Confirm reports and compared them to the JCP reports. The differences were insignificant, he noted, with the JCP reports actually

in the USPS' favor because the USPS used tighter rules. The USPS never completed the transition to using its internal reports, he noted, because they were not as useful as the JCP reports.

Ty Taylor, J. C. Penney, said it took some time to get the USPS to have confidence in the reports because the USPS wanted to exclude data with no start-the-clock. In the end the USPS validated the data and agreed it was good. Mr. Fisher said USPS operations knew the report had been validated by its headquarters, and field managers were held accountable by the Area Vice Presidents because of the high confidence level the USPS had in the reports. The USPS and JCP worked on the report formats, common data elements and definitions. Mr. Taylor said JCP formatted the reports to be user-friendly for the USPS, not for its own use.

Third, Mr. Fisher reminded the workgroup of part of its mission statement, which is to review existing channels and resources to see if any can be eliminated (e.g., ePUBWATCH, eMIR, ADVANCE, etc.). Ms. Siviter suggested that until replacements or alternatives are developed, the group could not say which of these existing resources should be eliminated.

### **Workgroup Deliverables**

Mr. Fisher presented the USPS' thoughts on the workgroup's short-term and long-term deliverables. Included in the short-term deliverables are finalizing the key issues document, identifying "early warning" segment opportunities through the communications team, recommendations on parcel reporting and process, and developing mailer-provided report guidelines. A draft document outlining mailer-provided report guidelines was distributed to the workgroup for review.

Mr. Sexton raised the issue of what the workgroup should look to accomplish in the short term. Should we develop some concise business rules and formats to use over the next year so customers can have dialogue with the USPS on service issues? Then build on that for the long term. Ms. Siviter objected to spending time on mailer-provided report guidelines because at least two other MTAC workgroups already had attempted to do that and failed. Much time has already been spent on the effort with no resolution, she noted, so why waste time again when within a year we could be looking at shared outputs from the Intelligent Mail system.

Ms. Kingsley said that the USPS needs to use standardized report formats from customers because otherwise it could sit down with 150 customers with 150 different report formats. Ms. Siviter said the previous workgroups that had tackled this same task had concluded that there are only two types of performance data available – USPS data (e.g., Confirm, DelCon) and industry data (e.g., seed data). For USPS data, the groups had concluded that the USPS had access to the data already, so why spend time, resources and costs to customers to provide the USPS with reports on its own data. For seed data, the USPS questioned the accuracy of the data provided by industry seeds, and no resolution on how to validate the data could be achieved. Ms. Siviter offered to provide notes from the previous two MTAC workgroups tasked with the issue, to provide the current workgroup with a better understanding of the past discussions.

Mr. Fisher presented long-term deliverables for the workgroup, including identifying shared report requirements, performance quality metrics requirements, and additional deliverables to be defined. Ms. Smith clarified that customers don't necessarily want canned reports from the USPS, they want access to data so they can slice and dice the data as needed.

Mr. Taylor noted that the workgroup may be getting into topics that will be difficult to tackle, and this is peak mailing season. If we have a January deadline, it may be hard to get the work done. He also noted that so far the workgroup, while being very organized and informative, has not really addressed the major concerns for his company. After a brief discussion, he said he would articulate those concerns in writing to the co-chairs.

**Action Items**

The following list represents new action items added from today’s telecon, as well as those still pending from the prior meeting.

<b>New or Pending</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Assigned To</b>
Pending	Shared/exchanged data formats (short term). List of requested information/formats (long term)	Bob Fisher
Pending	Subgroup to put together list of criteria for USPS reporting data on potential delivery delays at a more granular level than disaster reporting provided today via RIBBS	Subgroup
Pending	Workgroup participants that use service performance data systems today should advise the USPS of what issues they face in terms of data management and storage.	Industry Participants
Pending	The USPS will check on the status of plans to continue distribution of the service standards disk tool.	USPS
Pending	The USPS will review and respond to the list provided by PCH showing the types of discrepancies over a one month period between the USPS’ EDW data and DelCon data from PCH’s consolidator.	USPS
Pending	The USPS will update and re-distribute the comparison grid showing what workgroup members are doing in terms of measurement data.	Becky Dobbins
Pending	Provide the USPS with additional agenda items for upcoming meetings	All participants
<b>Last Call – need ASAP</b>	Workgroup participants will submit to the co-chairs a one-page, easy to read, simple outline of their recommendations in terms of what they want from service performance measurement that they do not get today.	All industry participants

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 2, by telecon beginning at 12:00 noon EST. Future meetings are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, December 9, 2008 Webinar/telecon 12:00 Noon EST

Tuesday, December 16, 2008 Webinar/telecon 12:00 noon EST

Proposed January dates (please give feedback using email):

Tuesday, January 6

Monday, January 12

Thursday January 22 (week of two holidays)