MAILERS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MTAC)

Workgroup 144
Modify Intelligent Mail Container Barcode Construct

Final Recommendations Report

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1 Executive Summary

As the US Postal Service strives to attain World Class Visibility to better meet the needs of the industry as well as improve operational efficiencies, unique identification of handling units and containers is a vital piece of the strategy. The IM Tray Label (IMtl) provides unique identification of trays and sacks, in addition to identifying the originator of the mail. These trays and sacks can be nested to mailer-generated IM Container Barcodes (IMcb) on placards. Such associations allow aggregated handling units to be tracked as they are unloaded from transportation. Unfortunately, at the present time USPS must re-label pallets identified with IMcb placards with MTEL placards at Surface Visibility facilities in order to assign the pallet or container to a new leg of transportation. In doing so, visibility of the IMcb is often lost. USPS was seeking to augment the data construct of the IMcb with destination information that could be used by Surface Visibility system. MTAC Workgroup (WG) 144 was thus set up to investigate the problem, assess the feasibility of various options, and make recommendations for revision to the IMcb data construct.

The workgroup's efforts included bi-weekly conference calls that spanned from September 14, 2011 to November 23, 2011. The workgroup was comprised of 35+ members from the mailing industry and the US Postal Service. The industry was represented by mail owners, mail service providers, publishers, printers, software providers, and consultants. The US Postal Service was represented primarily by the Mailing Information Systems (MIS), Network Operations, and Network Visibility Systems.

After reviewing the existing IMcb and MTEL barcode data constructs and placard layouts, the group discussed the merits of adding various data elements to IMcb data construct. Data elements discussed included:

- CIN
- Locale Key facility ID
- Line 1 "Destination Designation" from IMcb placards
- Destination ZIP Code the "Label To" ZIP
- NASS code facility ID

As part of these discussions, a number of issues came to light that added to the complexity of modifying the existing IMcb specification. These issues included:

- The fact that mailers use Labeling List information and Local Key today when creating their placards to DMM requirements.
- The fact that Surface Visibility IMDAS devices use NASS codes from internal MTEL placards for transportation assignment, but mailers don't readily have access to NASS codes. The challenge of building an electronic interface to this information and the cost to change mailer software made this an unpopular option.
- The fact that even though Line 1 "Destination Designation" currently printed in the human-readable information on the placard (derived from the labeling list) conveys the destination, it cannot be used by the Surface Visibility system and USPS Operations.
- Any solution would need to minimize impacts to mailers' software and require minimal change to Surface Visibility and/or IMDAS scanners software.

After much discussion and consultation with USPS operations, the workgroup concluded with the following recommendations:

- Do nothing at the present time and leave the IMcb specification unchanged.
- Continue using mailer-generated 99M placards, but USPS will begin associating them with the 99P MTEL placards in order to preserve container visibility within the network.
- USPS will continue to search for a long-term solution that is smoother for all parties. USPS's objective is to have all transportation legs identified on the placard.
- This workgroup will be sunset.

2 Issue Statement

The USPS would like to enhance the current IMcb to include destination processing facility information in the barcode. Currently, the IMcb is comprised of 4 data elements - Application Identifier, Type Indicator, will enhance visibility and handling of containers (pallets and rolling stock) to yield:

a) Enable commercial mailers visibility into USPS network

b) Improved reconciliation of mailings and revenue accuracy (Seamless Acceptance)

c) Enhanced commercial mail measurement

d) Improved forecasting and processing efficiencies

3 Impact on Other Issues/Procedures

4 Desired Results

- Consensus on modification of barcode specification and placards
- Agreement on the specific data element to identify destination processing facility
- Consensus on an implementation plan/schedule

6 Input Organization

7 Workgroup Output

7.1 Recommendations

The group concluded with the following recommendations:

- Do nothing now and leave the IMcb specification unchanged.
- Continue using mailer-generated 99M placards, but begin associating them with 99P MTEL placards to preserve container visibility within the network.
- Find a long-term solution that is smoother. Our objective is to have all transportation legs identified on the placard.
- This workgroup will be sunset.

Appendix 1: MTAC 144 Workgroup Roster

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