

Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP) explained

In the 2019-2023 National Agreement, the parties agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force that was established for the purpose of jointly seeking methods to improve the cultural and operational environment in city delivery offices. Through the City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force, one concept that NALC and USPS committed to jointly explore was route evaluation, specifically the use of technology, data, advanced analytics and machine learning to improve operations, route evaluation, adjustment and optimization.

In March 2021, a subcommittee of the task force, made up of NALC and USPS members, was formed to begin exploring and testing various technologies and processes that could potentially be used for city carrier route evaluation and adjustment. Over the course of 14 months, many concepts and processes were jointly discussed, examined and tested before the task force finally came to agreement to implement the use of Digital Street Review (DSR) technology in addition to USPS data from many other computer programs and applications in the evaluation and adjustment process.

On May 10, NALC and the Postal Service agreed to several MOUs to establish an alternate route evaluation and adjustment process for the remainder of 2022 and all of 2023. MOU Re: Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process 2022-2023 (TIAREAP) establishes a process that utilizes information made available using DSR technology as the primary means to evaluate and adjust city delivery routes. As in previous alternate route evaluation and adjust-

ment processes, TIAREAP will involve multiple teams established throughout the country, composed of one NALC representative and one USPS representative, who will jointly evaluate and adjust routes in select zones. This MOU (M-01982) can be found in NALC's Materials Reference System.

A jointly developed supplemental document (M-01983) provides the mutual understanding of the national parties on issues related to the MOU Re: Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process 2022-2023. It is intended for use by the parties at all levels in properly applying the terms of TIAREAP.

Also, as in the previous alternate route adjustment processes, an MOU was agreed on that allows local parties to jointly submit for consideration a locally developed alternate route evaluation and adjustment process to the NALC national president and the Postal Service vice president of Labor Relations. This MOU Re: Alternate Evaluation and Adjustment Processes (M-01984) requires a proposal for such alternate processes to be submitted by the NALC branch president and the Postal Service installation head and must provide a detailed explanation of the process. If the proposal is jointly agreed to by the national parties, the local parties will be notified regarding implementation.

TIAREAP structure

TIAREAP contains an overall structure similar to previous joint processes. The collaborative structure begins with the National Oversight Team, which consists of two people at the headquarters level, one each from USPS and NALC, who oversee the process, communicate with Area/Regional

Teams (ARTs), and resolve disputes at the highest level. The ARTs, consisting of one NALC regional designee and one USPS area designee, oversee District Lead Teams (DLTs) and resolve disputes within the process that have been elevated to them by the DLTs.

Under TIAREAP, each USPS district will have a minimum of five teams responsible for evaluating and adjusting city letter carrier routes, one DLT and four additional Route Evaluation and Adjustment Teams (REATs). DLTs will oversee the overall process and the REATs for their respective districts. The TIAREAP structure also includes local office contacts to assist the DLTs and REATs by providing relevant information and handling important parts of the process at the local level.

Zone selection periods

TIAREAP goes through the end of 2023. Zones may be opted in during three opt-in periods: July 2022, October 2022 and May 2023. While the first zone selections begin in July, all evaluations and adjustments will not necessarily begin at the same time. The District Lead Team will schedule evaluations to begin based on several factors, such as resources available (number of route evaluation and adjustment teams), availability of DSR data and/or current representative PS Form 3999s, status of data preparation of zones using Carrier Optimal Routing for adjustment purposes, and the requirement to have the adjustments for each zone implemented within 75 days of the start date of the analysis.

Data analysis review period

In previous joint processes, the REAT would use a randomly selected period of seven weeks plus a jointly

Opposite page: The first TIAREAP joint training session was held June 7-9 in Fort Lauderdale, FL. The training was conducted by the National Oversight Team, the Headquarters joint route adjustment subcommittee members, the USPS DSR technology team, and four Headquarters-appointed joint route evaluation and adjustment teams. For more on the training, see Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson's column on page 30.

TIAREAP explained (continued)

selected eighth week of data for evaluation purposes. In TIAREAP, the seven weeks of historical data will be compiled using data from a variety of USPS applications, including DSR. These seven weeks will then be combined with a jointly selected eighth Live Week of DSR data.

The reason for randomly selecting the seven weeks is to gather as much data as possible during the up-to-seven available months prior to the selected Live Week (excluding the months of June, July, August and December). For example, if the Live Week is scheduled in January 2023, one week each from February, March, April, May, September, October and November 2022 would be used. Using weeks from multiple months going back will account for a variety of factors, such as weather in different seasons and volume changes by season. If a full seven months is unavailable, multiple weeks will be selected from an individual month or months, beginning with the most-recent available month.

The team will jointly review all DSR data used in the evaluation and adjustment process to ensure that the time recorded for each carrier activity is accurate, and it will make necessary edits within DSR to ensure that the appropriate amount of daily street time is recorded for each route. It is the expectation of the parties that teams will use the data available in DSR to make as many corrections to data errors as possible, ensuring that the best possible route adjustments will result.

Office evaluation

As in previous joint processes, the REAT will select an evaluated office time using either the regular carrier's (or mutually agreed-upon replacement

carrier's) actual average total office time (including auxiliary assistance) for the data analysis review period, or the estimated standard for the route using the average cased volume on the route for the data analysis review period, whichever is lower. The *Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities* defines the estimated office standard as the sum of the following: the average cased letters divided by 18, plus the average cased flats divided by eight, plus the average cased letters and flats divided by 70, plus the fixed office time.

Digital Street Review and street evaluation

Over the years, city carriers often have expressed concerns about the possibility of inaccuracies in the route inspection and traditional PS Form 3999 processes. Reported events of data collection device failures, software data transfer issues and potential inspector bias prompted the parties to consider whether development of a virtual route evaluation and a virtual 3999 process could be possible, using the Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) GPS breadcrumb data in conjunction with the DSR program. DSR technology uses the MDD breadcrumb data to digitally record carrier route activities. This breadcrumb data is then used by the program to create, in essence, a daily virtual PS Form 3999, Inspection of Letter Carrier Route. This digital PS Form 3999, titled PS Form 3999-DSR, eliminates the need for an in-person inspector to conduct a traditional PS Form 3999.

In past joint processes, the team evaluating a route would consider the route's base street time, actual average street time based on clock rings, and

the regular carrier's input to determine a street evaluation. In TIAREAP, the team will consider the DSR average street time from the eight weeks (seven randomly selected weeks and one jointly selected Live Week), the DSR average street time from the jointly selected Live Week, and the regular letter carrier's input.

DSR technology provides the joint teams with more accurate information than previous processes. Each route's evaluation and adjustment are based on the regular (or jointly agreed-upon replacement) carrier's actual performance on the route. There are no projections involved and far fewer clock ring inaccuracies. Certain events in DSR are flagged for team members to review, allowing them to edit the data to correct for any errors that could affect the overall street time each day. The team, using all the information from the various USPS systems and the carrier's input, will jointly make all decisions about each route's evaluation.

Consultations

In a zone selected for evaluation using TIAREAP, most carriers can expect a minimum of three consultations conducted with each regular carrier (or mutually agreed-upon replacement carrier). These consultations are identified as a Live Week consultation(s), an evaluation consultation, and an adjustment consultation. In most offices, these consultations will be conducted virtually via video communication between the regular carrier and the REAT.

During the Live Week, the REAT will review the DSR data collected each day to verify recorded street times and activities, and to correct these entries as necessary using the carrier's input.



Carriers can expect to have at least one Live Week consultation with the REAT in which they may be asked to provide feedback regarding the previous day's (or days') data collected using DSR. In many instances, the REAT may perform multiple consultations with the carrier regarding this Live Week data to get the most accurate information possible.

After completion of the Live Week, the REAT will develop initial office and street evaluation times. An evaluation consultation will then be conducted with the regular (or mutually agreed-upon replacement carrier) to obtain input on these proposed evaluated times from the carrier. After considering all data and input from the carrier, the team will jointly select office and street times for each route using the MOU criteria. If the team determines that the route is out of adjustment, these times will be used to adjust the route to as close to eight hours as possible.

Adjustments

In past adjustments, managers would accompany carriers on the route to create a PS Form 3999 that was used to determine the value of territory transferred from one route to the other. In TIAREAP, the team will choose a representative day from the Live Week and generate a PS Form 3999-DSR to be used for territory adjustment. Using a PS Form 3999-DSR from the Live Week ensures that the carrier has had the opportunity to provide input to

the team regarding any specific issues related to their route.

If the team proposes adjusting a route by moving territory to or from that route, the third consultation—an adjustment consultation—will be conducted with the regular (or mutually agreed-upon replacement) carrier prior to any adjustments being implemented. This is the carrier's opportunity to provide information about the proposed territory adjustments and for the team to answer any questions the carrier may have. The MOU requires that any agreed-upon adjustments should be made within 75 days of the end of the Live Week of data collection.

Review process

Any route or zone adjusted using TIAREAP is subject to an automatic review by the DLT within 90 days of the implementation of the adjustments. If the DLT determines that a follow-up evaluation is needed, the DLT will either conduct the review or assign it to a REAT. Days 30-60 following the implementation of the route adjustment will be used for the follow-up evaluation, analysis and, if necessary, implementation of subsequent adjustments, unless the route evaluation and adjustment team mutually agrees to use a different period. During the review, all routes in a zone will be evaluated, but territory adjustments will be made only to those routes necessary to adjust all routes as near to eight hours as possible.

TIAREAP also contains other positive elements that have proved successful in the past. Two examples of this are the daily posting of the Workhour Workload Report (all routes) in each office and the PS Form 3999 process. Daily posting of the Workhour Workload Report gives every letter carrier the opportunity to review data recorded for his or her assignment daily. The PS Form 3999 process includes a requirement for a consultation to be conducted with the carrier. The 3999-consultation process offers carriers the opportunity to provide feedback when a PS Form 3999-DSR is created or when a manager accompanies a letter carrier on the street to perform a traditional PS Form 3999. The PS Form 3999 process and required posting of the Workhour Workload Report apply to all offices nationwide, regardless of whether they are or are not being evaluated and adjusted. Additionally, TIAREAP provides a defined Dispute Resolution Process with strict timelines for the parties to jointly address any issues that may arise regarding application of the TIAREAP MOUs.

The parties have committed to the provisions contained in the Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process until the end of 2023. However, both parties have expressed a desire for a continued partnership beyond 2023 to improve the evaluation and adjustment process for USPS and city letter carriers. **PR**