



Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process

Following months of discussions, the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service have entered into four agreements that set forth the joint selection and adjustment of city delivery routes for 2010 through February 28, 2011. The four agreements, along with their respectively assigned NALC Material Reference System (MRS) numbers are:

M-01717—The Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP)—2010 National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

M-01718—An MOU on Alternative Route Adjustment Processes

M-01719—A National Memorandum of Agreement (NMOA) regarding delivery units not finalized under MIARAP—2009

M-01720—Guidelines to the national parties' understanding of issues related to the JARAP—2010 agreement

Negotiated with the Modified Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process (MIARAP)—2009 as the base concept, the new JARAP agreements continue the joint route analysis and adjustment process while addressing specific issues that arose during the application of MIARAP. These include, but are not limited to, the need to improve training and provide more in-depth information from the headquarters level through the various levels of the joint process, all the way down to the delivery unit; to provide improved communication between the local parties and the district evaluation and adjustment teams (DEATs); to increase emphasis on data integrity issues; and to allow the local parties to devise alternative route analysis and adjustment processes.

Prior to 2008, the route analysis and adjustment process was, for the most part, unilateral. The Postal Service would either perform a six-day count and inspection, or would perform a minor route adjustment analysis and then adjust routes in either case. This oftentimes resulted in contentious disputes between letter carriers and management over the route adjustments, numerous grievances, and an acrimonious relationship between letter carriers and management over the daily workload on the adjusted routes.

The route adjustment process was extremely costly to the Postal Service and, when one added to that the cost of processing the grievances that resulted, coupled with the remedies that the NALC attained, the financial impact to the Postal Service was quite negative. Couple this with the negative relationships between letter carriers and management on the workroom floor, as a result of the improper adjustment of routes and the resultant erroneous estimate of daily workload, and the traditional route adjustment process was a disaster.

At the 2004 NALC national convention in Honolulu, the NALC branch delegates overwhelmingly approved the concept of the NALC exploring a fairer route adjustment system with postal management. The parties then tested a variety of joint alternate route adjustment processes.

In 2008, mail volume plummeted, in part due to the effect of the national recession, but also due to the effect that the Internet had on communication and trade—normally handled by the mail system—which caused a drain on postal revenue. The Postal Service orchestrated a plan to slash letter carrier routes unilaterally and to massively replace traditional routes with router and streeter positions—i.e., letter carriers working full time either in the office or delivering mail on the street.

The result was some intense dialogue between the NALC and the Postal Service, bringing about the negotiation of some agreements in October 2008, one of which was the first of the joint route adjustment agreements, the Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process (IARAP). Approximately 90,000 routes were evaluated and adjusted as a result of this joint process, the goal of which was to fairly adjust routes in a joint manner proactively and to resolve matters in dispute prior to the adjustments taking place.

Subsequently, in April 2009, MIARAP was negotiated by the national parties. The majority of the 156,000 routes that existed nationwide at the beginning of MIARAP were adjusted twice more, up through the end of February 2010. During the course of the MIARAP implementation, two residual benefits occurred, beyond the adjustment of routes. Because of the emphasis on data integrity issues (primarily improper entries of Management Operating Data System (MODS) codes,

which provide a general definition of what work an individual on the clock is performing during a specific time and in what craft or employment group they are in at that time), and the altering of time clock rings in the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS), the NALC was able to uncover more of those improprieties than at any other time.

Secondly, the joint process enabled the NALC to attain a better understanding of the functioning of Carrier Optimal Routing (COR)—the software that was relied on by the Postal Service to facilitate the optimization and adjustment of routes. The process also helped to provide important insight to NALC members on the MIARAP teams into how to make COR work for them, not the other way around.

JARAP serves to employ the MIARAP concept with some noteworthy additions:

- **Training/information in JARAP:**
 - Provides responsibility for joint training on JARAP for the area/regional teams (ARTs), the DLTs and the DEATs.
 - A Joint Training and Resource Guide was authored by the national parties, including a COR PowerPoint presentation.
 - A list of local office contacts' (LOCs) responsibilities was created jointly at the national level and will be provided to the LOCs by the DEAT.
 - An informational stand-up session, jointly authored at the Headquarters level, will be provided each selected delivery unit that has routes selected for JARAP.
- **Selection of routes/zones for JARAP:**
 - Prioritization of routes that were evaluated under the last phase of MIARAP, where the initial carrier consultation was given and the DEAT determined that the route was out of adjustment. These routes will be evaluated, using both the MIARAP evaluation period and data from March 2010, and will be adjusted (if necessary) before other routes in JARAP are.
 - Each member of the DLT will individually select routes/zones to be analyzed and adjusted. Those routes/zones will be analyzed and adjusted and then reviewed during designated time frames set forth in the agreement. The adjustment process will conclude on February 28, 2011.

The NALC DLT members selection will be based on

input from the members through the NBA office.

- **Data integrity**

- Emphasis on ensuring that all reports necessary to check on and address data integrity problems are available for the DEATs to review.
- Access to Postal Service electronic data base to ensure that agreed-to adjustments are entered into the system as agreed.
- A jointly agreed-to formula at the headquarters level will be used to project estimated standard time for office evaluations.

- **Increased communication**

- Between the DEATs and the LOCs and also the DLTs and the DEATs.
- To and from the letter carrier on the evaluation, proposed adjustment and Form 3999.

- **Emphasis on immediate use of the Issue Resolution Process when a dispute arises.**

- **Local parties' ability to have an Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process approved by the national parties.**

- **Additional DLT responsibilities:**

- Select routes/zones.
- Determine which routes/zones selected will be adjusted using COR.
- Advising ART how many DEATs will be needed.
- Ensuring adjustments take place within the agreed-to time frame.

To a large extent, MIARAP reached the level of success that it did because of the tireless dedication and hard work of those unsung letter carrier brothers and sisters who worked on either a DEAT or a DLT through some difficulty and stress to ensure that the best possible route adjustments took place.

In JARAP, the NALC has tried to improve on MIARAP, but it can only be the success that its potential bodes if we all encourage and support the letter carriers on these teams and provide accurate communication on evaluations and adjustments within the process *prior to* the adjustments taking place. ☒