Spring City Delivery updates

Christopher Jackson

Along with April showers and May flowers, this spring brings updates from the Postal Service on a few initiatives that concluded or paused over the winter. Recently, USPS informed me that it has resumed testing of two previous programs. In this month's article, I'll be discussing these programs along with some Mobile Delivery Device (MDD/MDD-TR) software updates.

eBike testing

In my September article for *The Postal Record*, I described a new USPS project involving the testing of electric bicycles (eBikes) on existing city bicycle routes. In partnership with Coaster Cycles, USPS began testing two different models (four total eBikes) in August of 2021 in two locations in Florida. Testing of three eBikes in St. Petersburg ended in November, and testing on the one remaining eBike in Miami Beach ended in December.

In March, USPS notified me of its intention to resume eBike testing and data collection in the Miami Beach Station. This site will be testing four 480-Freighter model eBikes. The test resumed the week of April 1 and is expected to continue for approximately six months.

MDD timekeeping test

In my May 2021 column for *The Postal Record*, I reported that USPS was in the planning stages of an enhancement to the MDD, which might replace the traditional method of timekeeping using the electronic badge reader (EBR). This enhancement came in response to a report from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) dated December 2020. According to the OIG, the company that built the EBR used by Postal Service employees to input time clock entries went out of business in August of 2018. The OIG found that while the Postal Service continued to update the Time and Attendance Collection System (TACS), it was not pursuing initiatives to update the physical time-collection devices.

Over the past year, I have provided information related to tests being conducted by the Postal Service on the MDD with the goal of replacing the EBR. Testing of the MDD timekeeping application began Aug. 30, 2021, in two delivery units in Memphis, TN. After some initial challenges, carriers were able to navigate the menus and respond to the prompts without much difficulty. This initial test concluded in November.

In March of this year, the Postal Service notified me that testing of the MDD timekeeping application would resume on March 26. USPS updated the list of pilot test locations and provided tentative national implementation dates for the program. USPS anticipated that the revised pilot testing would continue for two pay periods, after which time the office would revert to EBR timekeeping until the district/area is scheduled for actual implementation based on the national schedule. USPS explained that the national implementation, or "rollout," will take place in nine phases and is expected to conclude in May of 2023.

MDD Software Version 7.53

In a separate March notification, USPS detailed a recent software update to the MDD Version 7.53 that contains an enhancement to the timekeeping feature being tested above. This enhancement created a drop-down list for route selection that will now be available during the log-in process and when a carrier changes routes after login. As the carrier begins to type the route number, the routes matching the entry display to narrow down the selection list. The more characters entered, the smaller the list of routes being displayed, which will make selection easier. USPS hopes that the update will assist carriers to enter correct route information when they do not have assigned routes.

Version 7.53 also includes a new option called "Business/Residential Address Validation." USPS explained that some addresses in its Address Management System (AMS) are flagged as businesses when they are really a multi-unit facility, like colleges dorms, nursing homes, etc. Because of how multiunit residences are flagged in AMS, residents of multiunit facilities have been prevented from being eligible to order COVID-19 test kits. Version 7.53 adds a new workflow to the MDD that allows carriers to provide feedback as to whether an address is for a business or a residence. When the carrier approaches the mailbox of the business/residential address and breaks the geofence, the MDD prompts a question and reminds the carrier to provide address validation. Carriers are able to cancel the request and respond later if they are not ready. USPS hopes that the update will resolve the issue for those customers wishing to order COVID-19 tests in multiunit facilities.

There is much to consider and evaluate with these initiatives. I will be sure to update the membership on any effects these initiatives may have on city carriers, and to provide more information as it becomes available. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for all of the latest updates.