

MINUTES OF NEBRASKA TRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: January 30th, 2026 1pm CST

Location: Nebraska Public Service Commission

300 The Atrium, 1200 N St. (Commission Hearing Room), Lincoln NE

- 1) **Roll Call/Introductions.** The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay Advisory Committee met on January 30th, 2026 at 1pm at the Public Service Commission in the Commission Hearing Room.

The meeting was called to order at 1pm by Tami Richardson-Nelson. The following committee members were present: Tami Richardson-Nelson (Chair), Norm Weverka (Vice-Chair), Robert Feit, John Wyvill, and Commissioner Tim Schram.

Present from the Commission, Cullen Robbins, Director of Communications, Jonathan Smith, Attorney representing TRS for the Commission, Brett Bode, TRS/NSTEP Program Manager, Justin Williamson, Policy Analyst and Technical Assistant, and Jason McFarley, Communications and Media Manager for the Commission; Representing NCDHH, Kimberly Davis, NCDHH Interim Director, Representing Hamilton Relay, Allison LaBrie, Account Manager, and Beth Slough, Director of Account Management and Compliance Manager. Karen Weverka member of the Public; Sharon Sinkler and Nicole Christy interpreted the meeting. Attending remotely Brian Delimont.

- 2) **Election of New Officers.** Current Officers are Tami Richardson-Nelson (Chair) and Norm Weverka (Vice Chair).

Motion by Robert Feit, second by Tim Schram, to nominate Tami Richardson-Nelson as Chair. Clarification question by John Wyvill, asked about definition of the term for committee membership and roles. Motion approved by all members present.

Motion by Robert Feit to nominate Norm Weverka as Vice Chair, seconded by Tim Schram. Motion approved by all members present.

Question from Kim Davis about if NCDHH has voting rights as a member of the TRS Advisory Committee. Discussed and found that Bylaw clarification shows that

Voting is for appointed Advisory Committee members only. Copies of Bylaws and Committee member list with term and representation details will be provided with meeting materials moving forward.

- 3) **Approval of the Agenda.** Added two items to the agenda. Norm Weverka motioned to approve agenda, seconded by John Wyvill. Motion approved by all members present.
- 4) **Approval of the Meeting Minutes for Jan. 24th, 2025.** Robert Feit requested modification of minutes to adjust misspelling of Norm Weverka's last name on page 7 (7.f.3rd paragraph). Robert Feit motioned to approve the minutes as modified. John Wyvill Seconded the motion. Minutes approved by all members present.
- 5) **Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson Comments.**
Tami Richardson-Nelson (Chair) indicated that it was Norm's birthday, so we wished Norm a Happy Birthday. Tami expressed hope that group discusses openly with nice discourse while going through the details of the agenda.

Norman Weverka (Vice Chair) – Indicated he was enjoying his birthday. Added that there are some things to discuss today, and that he hopes everybody can be accommodating and work as a team to address the questions at hand.

6) TRS Contractor – Hamilton Relay Comments.

Allison LaBrie provided a brief greeting and introduction of herself and Beth Slough.

Allison then stepped through presentation on 2025 activities, relay center traffic and outreach activities.

Discussion during and after Presentation.

Robert asked what is included as part of TRS as compared to CapTel. On slide of TRS Session and Conversation Minutes there were questions about what causes the gap between Session and Conversation Minutes for TRS when CapTel shows Session/Conversation minutes being almost the same. Allison explained that a Session minute captures the time from when the Call Assistant is first contacted until the end of the call. A Conversation minute captures only the duration of the actual call between the end users. Additional discussion occurred between Committee members and Beth, who went into further details in the difference on

how calls work and what causes the difference between Session and the Conversation minutes.

Some discussion occurred regarding Quality scores and how word error rate is captured as reported. Allison explained the sampling process of live calls. Concern about CapTel errors but Hamilton wants to hear about issues so they can look through details appropriately.

Additional discussion on how most of the CapTel equipment will allow for switching between automatic error correction vs individual error correction.

Analog vs AI and how it ties to TRS and CapTel support. Hamilton representatives explained their services are Analog based, but that they are working with analog both to try and get software that delivers both. Beth mentioned SmartCaptions and explained how it will work once launched.

Tim Schram spoke regarding the ITRS committee at the federal level on the topic of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR)

Bob asked if any of these changes would trigger a need for new equipment.

Reviewed the Monthly Customer Care Contact figures.

Norm asked about only 1 CapTel phone set up showing on one of the slides during the presentation. He outlined how often CapTel users may need help with equipment, and yet details show very little help with setup. He provided an example of a neighbor struggling a bit with CapTel questions. Beth provided some details on Analog vs Digital CapTel. Hamilton provides support for the state Analog CapTel, but many of the Digital CapTel services are available from other providers and are not captured in the reporting Hamilton has.

Kim Davis shared that NCDHH liaisons are also finding many of the folks who need CapTel lean towards the Digital CapTel that works over the internet and provides many other options from multiple providers who provide CapTel equipment.

Concern is expressed for confusion folks have about how to get equipment set up for CapTel users who may not know who to reach out for assistance.

There is concern around CapTel, but it seems the majority of new CapTel users are IP or Digital CapTel and not analog CapTel.

Norm asked questions about outreach and asks if we participate in booths currently. Some suggestions of increased responsibility of outreach falling to NCDHH due to TRS contract not supporting full outreach. We touch on the contract

currently supporting the Tier 1 level of support. PSC was asked, as a follow-up action item, to provide further details that led to choice of Tier 1 Outreach support after some further review.

Beth went back through Marketing slide and outlined some of the details of the marketing that is occurring online and via Print.

- 7) **NCDHH Comments.** Kim mentioned that she is acting as Interim Executive Director. They are developing a new strategic plan for 2025 with a focus on 3 E's: Educate, Engage, Equity. Also mentioned was a focus on outreach both in booths and by being out in the community as much as possible to interact with the different communities. Work is underway to get a new Executive Director hired, but in the meantime the group is continuing to operate as normal.

8) Public Service Commission Comments:

- a. Review : NE Broadband Bridge/Capital Project Funds/Legislative Updates

Cullen provided a summary of the broadband programs and a legislative update.

- b. Update on Text to 911 Implementation

Brett provided a brief update on the completion of the statewide implementation of Text to 911.

Tim Schram expressed thanks for having statewide Text to 911 functional in NE. As a member of federal boards addressing communications during natural disasters, Tim thanked Hamilton for being a leader of RTT and he appreciates their role in RTT promotion. Beth responded with further comments on RTT and consideration of launching that nationwide. This would be a good future alternative or supplement to the current Text to 911 technology

- c. Updated Statistics – TRS & NSTEP

Brett Bode provided a walkthrough of the TRS and NSTEP statistic summaries of the current fiscal year along with forecasts for the next fiscal year.

John Wyvill asked a question regarding the requirements changing in the NSTEP program, from a 5-year reapplication frequency to a 3-year application frequency, and about the increase in eligible applicants per

household changing from 1 to a maximum of 2. John was curious if data on volume of applications before and after those requirements changed had any impact on the program.

Tami expressed surprise that Verizon makes up the majority of wireless vouchers. Kim Davis provided some details on how Verizon tends to be the main wireless provider requested but that T-Mobile has some more targeted monthly plans to align with the needs of the deaf or hard of hearing community.

Tim Schram also said that the T-Mobile/US Cellular merger may result in some growth in applications in the future for T-Mobile.

Norm asked a question about video phones being available via NSTEP. Brett outlined that it has been an available type of equipment within the program. The voucher allows an applicant to work with existing vendors to order equipment, but it was unclear what video phone options are currently available.

Brett discussed monthly NSTEP payments to Verizon and other Equipment providers. Kim pointed out that Brett is tracking payments on a calendar year basis instead of a fiscal year basis.

d. Determination of Surcharge for July 2026

Brett discussed his forecast summaries showing the projected impacts if the TRS surcharge is set at either \$0.04 or \$0.03.

Bob raised a question about how many landlines we have contributing to the fund. Brett pointed out that TRS rate is applied to landline, wireless, and VoIP lines.

Tim mentioned the state financial budget shortfall. He clarified that the TRS fund is not currently targeted by the Legislature but expressed concern that as balances get high in cash funds, they can be a target for the sweeping of funds by the Legislature.

Tami discussed that NCDHH assists people with completing applications for vouchers, talks with clients directly, including coordination of phone

explanation. She mentioned a concern that there has not been compensation for NCDHH's efforts in supporting NSTEP. Kim outlined that NCDHH is providing less support and referring customers elsewhere for more information. She mentioned that historically a deaf person could come into NCDHH and get help filling out the application and identification of their needs. There is a lot of time involved, and PSC is not supporting it directly. There were some questions expressed around the different responsibilities of the PSC and NCDHH as both relate to NSTEP support going forward.

Bob made a motion to set TRS rate for the upcoming fiscal year at \$0.03. Tim seconded the motion. All present parties approved the motion.

9) **Old Business.** No Old Business

10) New Business

a. Bylaw Adjustment

Bylaws provided at the meeting were outdated. Cullen provided a summary of the 2023 adjustments to Bylaws. No further adjustments needed and current version of Bylaws will be posted to the website and made available with meeting materials for reference.

b. Hamilton – Marketing Opportunity

Beth presented some marketing opportunities that are present with the Lincoln Radio station "The Ticket". They want to engage with Lincoln community and think there is an opportunity to increase awareness of underserved communities like those tied to NSTEP and NCDHH. Members planned to have some additional discussions to flesh out details of possible ways to leverage this marketing opportunity. It was expressed that May is "Better Hearing and Speech Month" so there could be some good opportunities to market to the local community. Some Committee members said that this would be a good way to increase exposure.

Tim followed up comment on outreach. Commission has had booths at Husker Harvest Days, but costs of booths is expensive. When working at a booth the PSC provides info on all the PSC departments but focuses primarily on grain issues. Some general discussion followed regarding booth costs at festivals.

A question was raised regarding TRS Advisory Committee membership and open positions. The current committee would like to try and fill the open positions on the TRS Advisory Committee. Open positions exist for Telecommunications Industry and Speech-Disabled representative.

Kim outlined that the next NCDHH meeting is scheduled for March and if there are recommendations for nominees let her know.

Norman made a motion to close New Business. John Wyvill seconded the motion. All parties present approved.

11) Public Comments. No Public Comments

12) Next Meeting : Next Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled at a later date. Meeting was adjourned at 3:17 pm by Tami Richardson-Nelson.

Respectfully submitted,

Brett Bode

February 6, 2026.