UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT

**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

Held via

Zoom

January 15, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

**January 15, 2021**

**GABTR BOARD MEMBERS:**

Alfred Sonnenstrahl, Acting Chair

Jason Corning

Allysa Dittmar

Betty Dodds

Ben Jackson

Lori Markland

Shannon Minnick

Ken Putkovich

Alex Simmons

Darrin Smith

**HAMILTON STAFF:**

Rebecca Miller

Jenny Pearson

Tarita Turner

**TAM STAFF:**

David Bahar, Director

Donna Broadway-Callaman

Travis Dougherty

Latricia Lee

Kevin Steffy

**HEARING INTERPRETERS:**

Anne Leahy

Anna Rose

David Sabala

**DEAF INTERPRETERS:**

Bradley Christlieb

Stephan Kennedy

**CART CAPTIONER:**

Natalie Ennis

**GABTR Meeting**

**January 15, 2021**

**9:00 a.m.**

TRAVIS: We ask that everyone rename their Zoom box with your first and last name at this time, please. Some of these folks in the participants list I can't identify. I'm not sure who they are.

At this time, if you would be so kind as to rename your Zoom self so we can identify who is who.

We were trying to figure out who is auntq.

KEN: It's Betty and Ken.

How do we get the captioning on? I got it. Right, right.

TRAVIS: Outstanding.

Should we get underway?

Before we begin, some ground rules. If you are not actively speaking or signing, we ask that you please turn your camera off. We will toggle back and forth between our CDIs and spotlight them and request that everyone switch your Zoom screen to be gallery view to ensure optimal communication for all of the participants.

At this time I will turn it over to Al Sonnenstrahl to kick us off.

AL: A very good morning. Can everyone hear and see, etc.? Is everyone set? Are we good?

KEN: The captioning is kind of small.

NATALIE: Ken, you can adjust the size in the caption settings.

KEN: I'm trying to get the captioning larger.

TRAVIS: If you look at the live transcript insignia at the bottom, if you click on that, it should produce a pop-up menu with "subtitle settings." You can adjust the font size there.

KEN: I have done that. Thank you, Travis.

TRAVIS: We'll ask the active voice interpreter to go off screen for the present.

Take it away, Al.

AL: Al speaking. Is everyone good in terms of their accessibility? If there are any problems, we ask you to please raise your hand via the tool in the participants list. There's a little hand that will come up and we will see that and we will give you the floor.

Travis, this is Al speaking. I don't have a view on the hand raising.

TRAVIS: I'll have to ask David to add that for us next time. In which case, if you have something, please place it in the chat window, and I will monitor that and go accordingly. Thank you.

AL: We would like to convene the meeting at 9:06 Eastern Time, 15th of January.

Five days left of Trump! I can't wait to get rid of him. I think that everyone in this meeting might agree with that.

We're going to have a roll call at this time. As I give your name, I ask that you put your camera up and indicate your presence. First, if we could have Betty Dodds.

KEN: Betty is here. She'll be here in a minute. She'll be on camera shortly.

AL: So Ken is here as well.

KEN: Yes.

AL: Allysa Dittmar.

ALLYSA: A very good morning, Al.

AL: Alex Simmons.

Thank you. Good morning.

Ken, if you would be so kind as to turn off the video for you and Betty.

KEN: Okay.

AL: Darrin Smith, please.

DARRIN: Hey, Al.

AL: Lori Markland.

INTERPRETER: You're muted, Lori, but I think you said good morning. The interpreter read your lips.

AL: Jason Corning, good morning.

JASON: Good morning, everyone.

AL: Shannon Minnick. Shannon Minnick please.

SHANNON: Here. Good morning.

AL: Deirdre Lynch, please. I'll use this name sign for the gallows for you, Deirdre.

TRAVIS: Hi there. She was actually with us. She was with us earlier. I was told that she has now a funeral to attend, so she's come off of the Zoom call. But after the presentation, I will deliver her report.

Thank you, Al.

AL: William Childs.

Ben Jackson.

BEN: Hi, good morning.

AL: Hi there.

All right.

KEN: I told them you were here.

BETTY: Good.

INTERPRETER: One moment. One moment. Someone is not muted.

AL: All right. There are two lingering vacancies. One is for a hearing impaired individual and one is for a senior citizen individual. We certainly will talk through how to fill those positions once we get to new business on the agenda.

At this time, we have some reports. Before we get underway with the reports, we will approve the minutes of our previous GABTR meeting. Held on October 16th.

DARRIN: I move to approve those minutes from October.

AL: We have a motion to approve the minutes. Do we have any objections to that motion?

Seeing none, going once, going twice, three times. We have them approved.

Let's move on to the report section. The Honorable David Bahar has joined us. We will invite him on screen at this time.

DAVID: Hello. Good morning. This is David.

Travis will be pulling up the PowerPoint? Or is that separate? Are we doing PowerPoint within the presentation today, Travis?

Travis, are you there?

We'll give him one sec.

DARRIN: David, I read Travis' email and it said we weren't going to be using the slides during the presentation, so I guess you can feel free to proceed.

DAVID: Okay. Thank you for that prompt there, Darrin.

Moving right along, I'll get started with my report. Since we won't be showing the slides, I'll make sure to try to extrapolate on what I see on my PowerPoint so everybody has the update.

Again, to reintroduce myself, I'm David Bahar, the director of TAM. I want to open up the meeting by saying that 2020 was a challenging year, to say the least. How it impacted our team, really how it impacted the entire state operations, it made a huge ripple effect in a very big way.

Now we're in January 2021, and we know that we have a vaccine coming. Things are starting to look up. And there is that light at the end of the tunnel, where we can anticipate again being able to go back out, operate, have business as usual. And we're looking forward to TAM operations going back to normal, as much as possible.

We feel things will always be a little bit different than they were pre-2020, but operations and getting back to the status quo and having our evaluators and installers, our MAT team and our outreach coordinators and our outreach staff being able to go out and interact with the community and with the constituents who utilize Maryland Relay and who benefit from the MAT program on a daily basis, we're very much looking forward to those things taking place.

Now, absolutely, 2020 was a challenging time for us. We recognize that. But it also gave us a lot of opportunity for things like, for example, we were able to do a deep dive regarding our internal processes and identify areas where we can improve and different ways that we can serve the constituents of Maryland.

We were also able to look at how to improve our relationships with our vendors and with our contractors and how to streamline that.

And also we were able to take the time to really fill in a lot of the vacancies and open positions that we had within our program. Travis of course joined us in April of last year, right after the pandemic began. And we were teleworking.

Donna also came on board in May, one month later.

Latricia, who is the newest member of our staff, she actually came over from the Maryland Department on Disabilities. They had the PROMISE grant there. She worked on that program. And when that grant expired, she transferred over to work with us and she's working with us as a contractor since October. And that contract continues until May. She essentially is tasked with helping Kevin with the MAT program, and she herself has a lot of project management experience, so we've been heavily relying on her to help us through several of our RFP processes and other internal processes and improvements.

So those are our three new staff members that we've gotten since COVID began.

If you all remember, pre-COVID, we only had two staff at that time, myself and Kevin. So we've really grown since then and I feel we've come a long way. It's true that COVID has really created a lot of challenges and a lot of problems, but it's also created opportunities for us, and we're looking forward to leveraging those opportunities moving forward and getting back to life with a new sense of energy in 2021.

So let me get started with my first slide now, and I'll move right through.

So, staffing update. I just shared how we added three new staff during COVID. We are currently recruiting for another staff member, the TAM financial director. The purpose of that position is to help streamline our budgeting, our budget analysis, and our financial area of our department. They're going to be responsible for paying invoices, so forth and so on. We do a lot of purchases on a yearly basis, as I'm sure you can imagine. The MAT program alone is responsible for over 1,000 on a yearly basis, so that's a huge part of what we do in our day-to-day operations.

We're expecting to have interviews done and have a candidate picked by the first half of 2021. We hope it have an update for you at the next GABTR meeting and possibly an introduction of that staff member at that time.

All right. Next is our financial update. I'm just going to summarize. For FY20, I'll just go over our actuals. We started the year at $13,883,429.

Bear with me a moment.

And ended the year at $14,202,218. Everybody got that? Hold on. Our CDI needs to catch up. $14,202,218. My apologies for throwing that out a little quickly.

For 2021, we're currently still working on obtaining an updated number set. Please remember that TAM recently transferred from the Department of Information Technology to the Department of Disabilities, and that included not only the front-end transfer but the back end transfer of our accounting departments, our accounts, our objects, our USTF, universal services, everything transferred over. And that process has been staggered. It was actually just a few weeks ago, up until a few weeks ago, that we didn't have access to all of that information yet. As soon as we're able to access it, we'll be able to reconcile everything, summarize it, and I will send out that update attached to my report.

Moving right along. The senior call check program. That's of course been an area of discussion because of the costs associated with it, which is something drawn from the USTF. The cost for that has risen very quickly, which is not what we expected. We've sat down and had conversations with Secretary Kramer from the Maryland Department of Aging to share some of our concerns about the cost increase and how rapidly it is going up.

Now, you have to understand, previously they would give us a yearly invoice for the senior call check program. And we negotiated and changed that process going forward. They will be giving us a quarterly invoice at this point, because that allows us to be more predictive and look a little bit more frequently at how much they're spending, it allows us to track spending patterns, so forth and so on.

We have also set a meeting now, the meeting is actually supposed to be last week but it wasn't able to come to fruition because the new administrator for the senior call check program apparently his role and responsibilities are not the equivalent to what Arnold Eppel's were. When it comes to operations and management, the person now will be responsible for the live call experience, accessibility issues and things like that, and apparently he's not the right person, so they kind of split off. Everything was under Arnold before and now the responsibilities have been divvied out so we need to talk to the right person about how to improve the accessibility experience for our Deaf and hard of hearing constituents and things of that nature.

Right now that program is going to remain as it has for the last 3 years. Unfortunately it's inaccessible for individuals with hearing differences. We're hoping to change that in 2021.

That concludes my report. I will now turn things over to Travis Dougherty for the Maryland Relay manager's report.

TRAVIS: Good morning, everybody. I want to make sure that everything is clear in the chat. Hang on.

Okay. I apologize for that pause.

First I want to make sure everyone is in gallery view because I don't want to repeat myself too much. But make sure you're in gallery view.

We can't add the PowerPoints during the presentation because it is incompatible with the program right now. So we're trying to streamline as much as possible. Hopefully we can improve those kinds of things later, but this is where we are for right now.

So on to my report.

We have some exciting progress. Maryland Relay has developed the RCC and the RTT. I will explain them. For RCC, for the past several months, we've been working with Hamilton and trying to improve our services. Al had asked know spell out what RCC is. It's remote conference captioning. Again, remote conference captioning, RCC. Thank you for typing that in, David.

So at the beginning, I had experienced RCC with other kinds of services, and I knew we had the ability to improve it. So we just needed to get to that point. So we've been working with Hamilton on making some of those enhancements. And one of those enhancements is to embed the RCC within the software. For example, Zoom and YouTube Live and various other platforms. We are finally able to do that so you do not have to have a split screen for the RCC. You can have it embedded right in Zoom, for example. So we're quite excited about that.

We're also able to now download transcripts. So you click a button, and you should be able to get the full transcript, which means at the end of your meeting or presentation, if everybody is done talking, you can actually click on it and get a transcript sent to you, which is quite beneficial.

Before I go to RTT, are there any questions regarding relay conference captioning?

AL: This is Al. I know this is quite an important issue. I'm wondering if we have any kind of announcements, instructions on how to do that, on how to embed things, on how to do the transcripts. Can we improve our PR on that?

TRAVIS: This is Travis. Yes, we are developing instructions currently. This function is very, very new, and so after a long negotiation and discussion with Hamilton, we finally are able to do it. Since it just happened very recently, we will be getting instructions out. Melissa posted a link also with instructions. So if you have something planned, we have those instructions via the link in the chat. We're also working in different areas to get the word out. We want people to know we have this new technology available.

Is that it for questions?

AL: It is, thank you.

TRAVIS: And the last thing related to RCC is that we are currently working on focus groups. We had focus groups before, but then we put it on hold because we were making changes to the service, so now we are back again trying to do focus groups and interviews.

Several interns have joined us, and they will be working with me on this project to host focus groups. During these focus groups we'll try to figure out next steps for us as Maryland Relay on how we can improve on the rules, on if we should let people in, or do we have restrictions, what kind of restrictions technically do we have for RCC, and are we able to meet the resident’s needs and expectations on how to use relay conference captioning on a state level. So we are excited about that, and I know that some of you are already interested in being on these focus groups. So we'll reach out shortly. And thank you for your patience on that.

Any additional questions on RCC before we go to real-time text?

All right. As we have mentioned previously, there were some technological barriers that we faced with the carriers being able to pass through RTT messages on their platform. The compatibility for this technology had been a major issue, and I'm trying to think of the right words to explain this, but we have three major carriers, correct? We have Verizon, T-Mobile, which is now Sprint, and AT&T. Those are the three largest carriers in the U.S. We were trying to have talks with them to offer compatibility so we can pass through RTT messages that are not through the TTY gateway, because through the TTY gateway caused some issues. There were some lost translations and some garbled messages, so we're trying to improve that service.

We're still talking with those carriers. Verizon has made the most progress recently, and we're trying to figure out some big solutions, although it's very challenging. But hopefully we'll be able to work on that pretty soon on finding a solution. We don't have a complete solution yet, so we're still working on it, but we're excited about what's coming.

As for AT&T, they're quite resistant because they've had budget cuts and there's a lot going on over there with that company as well as T-Mobile.

I have reached out but haven't heard much from these other carriers. So that gives me a little bit of a concern because we've passed the deadline, we've asked for several extensions, and it's already been well over 3 years since we've tried to make progress on this. We've had other carriers keep asking for extensions, and we are wanting to do something about it. So that leads us to where we are now which is this next part.

We are working with Devaney, our PR firm, and they're wanting to expand the real-time text revolution campaign. And there are several parts in this campaign. But the biggest one is presentations, and those will happen more likely at the end of February. We'll give presentations about what RTT is exactly.

And let me back up a moment. Attending will be members of the NASRA, National Association of State Relay Administrators, group, and there's about 38 states that are included, I believe. David can correct me if I'm wrong, but there are about 38 states included in that association. So there's NASRA that will attend. David can recognize the right word, yeah.

We have agreed to give a webinar to all of NASRA members as well as TEDPA members. Did I get that right? Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association. And of course all the associations around the states supporting these programs, all of these leaders around the United States, invited to this webinar.

And we're hoping to get them to understand how RTT works and why it's so important right now for us to make this work and make it compatible. And hopefully they'll realize the consequences if we don't do anything about this technology. So that is what we have planned for those presentations going forward.

We're also trying to focus on press releases. We're trying to make some noise. We've seen a lot of people give resistance on this technology, so we're trying to break through that. We want to get more recognition nationwide, and we're trying to really push. Again, we're really past the deadline already, so we want to make progress. Which leads me to the next thing on my next slide.

My next slide is concerns. First of all, the TRS minutes are the lowest they've ever been. The last two months seem to be the lowest, but then it keeps getting lower. I'm really nervous for the next month and going forward. It was expected that these numbers would decline, but due to many reasons, we've had severe drop offs. TTYs have ceased being manufactured, so we don't get the equipment anymore. Many people have transferred to different kinds of communication services, apps, VRS, text, and video. So the evolution of technology has caused this drop off. People prefer other services like CapTel because they feel like it's a better fit for them, which is understandable, because back then TTY was the only technology we had. But now with all these other services, we see people switching over, which leads to the decline in numbers. And this is why we really need to work on RTT, because we need to replace those minutes that we are losing. RTT would include mobile device use. TTY had some limited use there. But RTT would be able to be on everybody's cell phone and mobile, so that is a great opportunity to expand our customer base and to increase our minutes of use. So we're really trying to capitalize on that.

The minutes for CTS are declining but not quite at the rate as TRS. But that is a second concern, because looking out into the future, we need to be able to look at this problem. There's only 98 CapTel phones, caption phones, out of something like 1,000 or almost 1,200 that have been -- let me see, what's the word, that have been used at least once or they have made one call. 98 of those phones only made at least one call. And that was the past month had been the same number and the month previously. So a very small number of those kinds of phones in Maryland have been used, which gives us serious concern.

So we're having meetings with TAM and trying to look at our MAT program, having those conversations, and we're identifying some of these issues and how we can address them. But I'll let Kevin explain a little bit more about that.

If there are any other questions for CapTel, we'll wait until the end of Kevin's presentation, but that's it for me.

AL: This is Sonny speaking. Yes. I do have a question for you, Travis. And of course one for David, who asks for questions before moving on to you. I think we just need to make it a habit after each presentation to invite questions:

I do have a question for you. You mentioned that T-Mobile was not responsive. Have you been in touch with the folks at Sprint, who is of course after the merger part of the same organization? So can you talk about whether or not you've had contact with Sprint folks or by way of Spring and T-Mobile folks?

TRAVIS: David is actually in contact with all those people, so David can respond to that question, Al.

DAVID: Sure thing. I can speak to that. We are trying to be in communication directly with the lead regulatory people individuals for T-Mobile. Of considers they now fall under a new company. They're maintaining their name, T-Mobile, at least for the immediate future.

So where we are currently is that Sprint basically admitted that they do not at this point support RTT everywhere throughout the United States. They support RTT in certain areas but not all. Our knowledge of that merger between T-Mobile and Sprint, what we know is their lack of RTT access, now that T-Mobile falls under their technology umbrella, we don't think that will change at the moment.

All three of our major carriers have the same issue when it comes to RTT technology, and essentially that issue is none of those carriers have ever had individuals who are using that type of technology for either calling 911 or accessing relay or whatever the case may be. The FCC order that requires carriers to essentially support RTT, if they don't want to support TTY any longer, dictates that they must support RTT for all devices. So for phones, for example, but their networks and their infrastructure, so it might be on the phone, but the networks and infrastructure isn't on par to be able to support it across all channels.

So Verizon is the quickest to recognize there is an issue and try to take steps and action to resolve it. The other two are certainly lagging behind when you compare them to Verizon. So that's where we stand at the moment.

I hope that answers your question. Thank you for the question, Al.

AL: In terms of the senior call check program or SCC, I have shared that it is not accessible. I think it is high time that we address more openly than we have done in the past behind the scenes this lack of accessibility. I think we need to put on the record that the Governor should know about this issue that it is a lingering concern and they should know how we feel about it.

DAVID: I would like to look at this before taking any action. The individuals replacing Arnold Eppel, John Brennan, who is my supervisor, we have both planned to sit down with the new administrator to speak very frankly with them, not necessarily about the budget concerns that we have but to speak about the issue of individuals that they serve, the senior citizen community and making sure that everybody has equal access to the senior call check services. Those daily call check ins regardless of what kind of communication you use. 50% of seniors who are 65 and above have some type of hearing difference or hearing problem. The other 50% have a physical limitation that impacts their mobility, making it difficult for them to reach the phone in time to answer the senior call check calls. So we want to give the senior call check manager full information and make sure they're fully aware of what's happening so they can make their program usable by individuals who don't use a traditional standard telephone or who struggle to do so. If we feel that those avenues and those channels aren't working and their unwilling to cooperate, then yes, we're certainly going to come back to you and let you know that we need to take alternate steps in order to address this and address the accessibility issue.

AL: You're going to allow them to develop the alternate methods or some kind of work around of the normal process of the service? Some of them are transferring to VRS and different services. Can we use VRS as a required communication mode for reaching out to people? You know, even though TAM isn't responsible for VRS. Is that a jurisdictional issue?

DAVID: I don't necessarily think it relates to jurisdiction per se. Really how to provide accessibility I think essentially you start with ensuring that the individuals can utilize your service and that they can utilize it through more than one modality. If they're only given the option of one modality, which is the traditional speaking on the telephone, that means that is no longer accessible to anybody who can't access a telephone in that way. So first they have to start by putting down on the application and saying, oh, I use relay. That was step one. And then of course they could maybe do a call through VRS or your preferred relay provider.

And of course a lot of individuals are in a hurry when they're filling out applications and may not check that box, and a machine of course is not going to recognize a difference when they do these robo calls. And of course the individuals in the program don't necessarily double check and follow up.

So I think you need to start with modality, making sure there's multiple options, be it text, be it ASL provided directly, be it a traditional phone, making sure it's compatible with the needs of all the different individual styles of communication.

The needs of the senior call check users vary, and they should be making sure that it's compatible and the program and services is compatible with all of those individual needs.

INTERPRETER: One moment as the interpreters switch.

DARRIN: I have a question for David as well.

AL: Go ahead.

DARRIN: This is Darrin speaking. I'm looking toward the budget, and it seems as though we are due to get an increase over last year's 14 million. So for FY2021, there's no indication. Do you predict or have any concerns about any emerging needs in that fiscal year for '21 into '22?

DAVID: In terms of the budget, Darrin?

DARRIN: Correct.

DAVID: Okay. Let me respond to Darrin's question in terms of what we're envisioning the future 2-year budget to look like and what our projections are.

The balance of the USTF is going to decline a little bit, and the reason for that decline is the increased spending for not only relay services but also the increased spending for the senior call check program. Those are our two largest draws from the USTF.

In addition, we're looking at establishing the deafblind facilitator program, either this or next fiscal year, and we expect that's also going to have a cost associated with it, between 2 and $300,000. That's also going to impact our budget. And it's going to lead to a more rapid decline.

At the same time, we do notice that our revenues are up, USTF revenues are up slightly. Reason being is because more people are utilizing these communication services and products and VoIP, COVID we can thank for that. So you will see some gains in revenue due to that.

I would say by the end of 2022, if I remember correctly, we should be looking at a balance of approximately 11 million or 12 million at that point, so that's where we stand. And again, that's just a projection.

I hope that answers your question, Darrin.

DARRIN: It does. Thank you.

DAVID: Thank you, Darrin.

Now, I believe we were still on Travis' report, so I will turn things back over to Travis so he can continue.

TRAVIS: Are there any other questions? Can we continue on with reports? Any questions for me before we go to Kevin's report?

Alex. Go ahead.

ALEX: Hi there. Alex Simmons speaking. Really quick question, if I may. You mentioned that there were three major carriers who provide real-time text or RTT.

TRAVIS: Three major carriers that are in the U.S. that are typically recognized. They're what are called tier one.

ALEX: Okay. So how would we classify a smaller one like a Cricket or a Boost or something like that? Those you would consider tier two?

TRAVIS: Yes.

ALEX: Okay. And they would be somewhat later in the time line?

TRAVIS: Yes. They would be later. So we're just trying to focus on tier one, and then those others will follow.

ALEX: Gotcha. Thank you, Travis.

TRAVIS: Any additional questions?

Okay. We'll go ahead and pass it off to Kevin for his report.

KEVIN: Hello, everyone. A very good morning to everyone. I'm Kevin Steffy, and I am the MAT program manager.

This is just by way of some general updates for my report today. In our second quarter, October to December 2020, MAT received 35 new applications to distribute equipment. And as you can see on the slides, there are some errors there. We distributed in the first quarter of those 22 applications, 122 pieces of equipment. So that was a huge increase and we were happy to see that.

And our evaluators are still underway doing their evaluations, installations, troubleshooting, and of course all of this was done remotely given the current condition.

As a last resort, they would go on site, but they would keep social distancing protocols in terms of 6 feet of distance, sanitizing, personal protective equipment, and all the rest, because of course their safety and health are paramount to us.

Those who are in nursing homes or care centers are still not allowed to receive visitors, so unfortunately that is still in place. After we get widespread large-scale vaccinations, I think that we will resume to a level of normalcy.

I'll go to the next slide for the equipment update. In second quarter, October to December 2020, these are the numbers. And in the next slide where you see the numbers for each county in the state of Maryland, that again is only for quarter two, October to December 2020.

Next slide is July to December, first and second quarters. These are the numbers of pieces of equipment that we've distributed.

On the next slide, you see for the same period those numbers for each respective county in the state of Maryland.

Now, in the next slide we're going to change gears and talk about focus groups. We were supposed to have hosted several in-person events last June, but naturally those were canceled due to the pandemic. And we intended to hold them in September. We still had the pandemic and then we had the holidays. Among the evaluators, we decided that given this pandemic is going to be much more protracted than had previously been assumed, we were going to shift and focus to a webinar format. So we worked hard to develop that format, and we did host one on the 18th of December. Our very first webinar was focused on hard of hearing folks. Jane Hager and myself copresented that webinar. There were 10 people who participated that indicated interest, and 7 people who actually came. We're not sure why we didn't see those other 3. But at that webinar, we demonstrated four pieces of equipment: The Pixel 4, the XLC8-GLT, and that's for Google Live Transcribe, also the Quattro Pro 4.0, and that is something that one wears like a lanyard around your neck to amplify any ambient sounds; the fourth piece of equipment was a mobile alert. That is something that you can place on top of your cell phone for any alerts that your phone might receive when it is lying down flat, what will happen is it will trigger a strobe light. So we're very, very thankful to Devaney, to Travis, to Latricia Lee who helped us make that webinar as smooth as possible in terms of the surveys, the PowerPoints, and all the things that we had to do.

Our next of three webinars will firstly be for blind and low vision. That will be on the 29th, Friday the 29th. Then we will also move to our cognitive impairments on the 5th of February. And we'll also have another one on the 26th of February. But I will certainly give reports on those when we get to that stage at our next meeting.

Our next slide will introduce the MAT application form. Donna, myself, and Devaney have been working on revising that form, and Donna submitted it to the Attorney General, Mr. Hisham Amin, for his review, in terms of legality, terminology, and hopefully that will be approved and ready and printed for distribution. We hope to see that sooner rather than later.

That concludes my report. I will invite any questions at this time.

Seeing no questions, I'll turn the floor over to Donna. Thank you.

DONNA: Good morning, and Happy New Year. I'm giving the outreach report. So my name is Donna Broadway-Callaman. What is new, Rebecca Miller has been successfully trained and is hitting the ground running with the upcoming RTT webinars, working with Travis, and she has attended PSAP and Maryland 911 meetings and virtual events. So before it was four interns. Now it is six interns who will work with other managers for TAM with each of our programs. And we have finished the majority of our rebranding efforts and we are now focused on updating our website which is currently under DoIT, but we will transition to DoD soon.

We were able to make edits to our DoIT website, but we will do a full revamp once it is transferred over to DoD.

And picking back up off of what Kevin said, the MAT application is approved and we are going to print 1,000 applications and send them out as soon as possible. There is a MAT evaluation package which is undergoing final review, and that approval will be given by close of business today.

We are staying connected through COVID-19 through advertising, webinars, mailings, virtual events, networking, making new contacts. And we are unsure when in-person events and large events will resume, but our outreach coordinators will continue to work very hard sourcing outreach opportunities.

And we are working on our winter 2021 newsletter. It does not have a definite release date, but here is some of the content that we are working on. A hall day recap from TAM, including photos of staff and a holiday message including current status of office hours. Right now we are working from home and we are unsure when we will be going back into the office. So evaluations, outreach, things to look forward to in the new year; an update on real-time text, including when the upcoming NASRA presentation will be; the outreach webinars promoting their availability, topics, and dates; RCC, how to use it, success stories, update on embedded captioning on Zoom; the MAT program, giving an information or summary on the focus groups; and information on past sponsorships and community involvement.

So during this quarter, we will be promoting our webinars, virtual presentations, virtual events, sponsorships and networking, as well as MAT programs, various MAT outreach promotion, RCC, RTT promotion, as well as completing our rebranding efforts with videos, more promotional items. And as I said before, we are unsure when we will resume in-person outreach, but we will wait for all restrictions to be lifted by Governor Hogan.

In the second quarter this year, like I said, we will be making several videos for CapTel, a general TAM information video, an outreach video, and we are also looking to hold a virtual guide to celebrate TAM's 30th anniversary in July. Although the official date is December 1st. We will either hold an in-person luncheon or an evening event in 2022, depending on COVID and any other restrictions.

That is my report. Are there any questions?

TRAVIS: Any questions for Donna or any of the staff? Kevin, me, David, Donna? If not, we will go ahead and go to a break.

DONNA: Thank you.

STEVE: I have one question. For the advisory board, I notice there's one open position for speech impaired. I've tried to apply, but is there a way or someone I can contact to be considered for that position? I'm a laryngectomy and actually have no vocal cords.

TRAVIS: One moment.

STEVE: I did see the application. I think I sent one in a year ago or so. But I did not hear back.

TRAVIS: Okay, Steve, this is Travis. Could you email me and I'll provide you the email address and information? Because I think Al also wanted to go to break or had a comment.

AL: If there are no other comments, we'll go to break.

Jason, did you have a question?

JASON: I did not.

TRAVIS: Okay. Then I think we can go ahead and go to a break.

AL: Yes, let's go to break until 10:15. Let's do a 10-minute break, everybody. See you at 10:15.

[Break]

TRAVIS: This is Travis speaking. We've had some additional folks join us. I just want to let you know, this is, because of issues with the Facebook streaming, this is a public meeting. We typically let everyone in. It is being recorded, and the recording will be posted after this. We are having some issues, however, with our Facebook streaming.

For the people who are not board members, please hold your questions until the conclusion of the meeting, when we will have an opportunity for questions from the public. Again, just logistically, please be sure your camera is off unless you're recognized, and every time that we switch CDIs, make sure that you go to gallery view.

We will turn things over to Al at this point. We're just waiting for Al.

AL: At this stage we will turn our time to our folks from Hamilton for their reports.

TRAVIS: I'm going to ask Tarita, Jenny, and then Rebecca to go, in that order. So Tarita, if you would like to come up first.

Beautiful background, Tarita!

TARITA: I'm going to get rid of it. There we go.

Hello, everyone! Great to see everyone in 2021. It is finally here. Love it.

My name is Tarita Turner. I am the outreach coordinator for Maryland Relay. The TRS outreach coordinator for Maryland Relay.

If you guys haven't noticed, we have gone about sharing our information a little differently, so we've come together as a team now instead of individuals. So I am so excited to be able to share what we've been doing this quarter, which has been from October to December of 2020.

And mind you, since this pandemic, we are outreach coordinators, myself, Jenny, and Rebecca. We are outreach coordinators. So when you tell us three, man, you guys have to stay in now, we kind of said, what does that mean? And we have not only embraced several different platforms, because we do go to Zoom meetings and WebEx and GoToWebinar. It's such a variety of different platforms. We have embraced this new technology and this new way of doing outreach to the fullest.

So just to share, just to brag about what we've been doing in this last quarter, we've done 11 virtual exhibits, 36 meetings, 31 networking opportunities. We've been to two different sponsorships and 15 presentations or webinar-style presentations. And again, this is all in our homes because we're not, like Donna said, we're not allowed to do in-person right now. We're all in the same boat.

And the fantastic thing that has happened is that not only are we maintaining the connections that we've had in the past, but we're making new ones. These presentations, these networking events that we're doing is across all boards, right? So we are talking to folks that have speech difficulty. We are talking to folks that have mobility difficulties. We are talking to our senior citizens. So this is a very exciting time for us, and I could not be more happy and more excited.

Travis did mention RCC, and with RCC, all of our -- anything that we do online, we do try to encourage people to use RCC. If we schedule it, we do RCC ourselves, and that's remote conference captioning.

Also, I want to just a reminder that we do have Facebook. Travis mentioned that we aren't able to Facebook Live stream or whatever it's called right now today, but we do have Facebook. And a lot of our open webinars, a lot of our events are also posted on there. So if you can, go to the Facebook page, "like" it so you get the notifications and you can see what we're doing and what we're up to.

Again, I just want to say very exciting time. This has been a great opportunity for us to grow and stay connected with all of the people that we serve.

I'm going to turn it over to Jenny for more great information.

JENNY: Thank you, Tarita.

Good morning. This is Jenny Pearson. I am the caption telephone outreach coordinator for Maryland Relay. I'm going to tell you about some of the highlights we've experienced in the last quarter. We've been working specifically with agencies targeting individuals with disabilities that will be able to use a variety of Maryland Relay's resources, including services like our new RCC service, speech to speech services, as well as the number of other caption telephone services and things like that.

We are continuing to identify more outreach, and our call to action to you all participating in the call today is to keep an open mind and an ear and eye out for opportunities for us to be able to participate in more outreach opportunities. So if you hear that there's someone who is confused about Maryland Relay, let us know. We're happy to reach out to them and make sure that they are educated.

Rebecca Miller, our RTT outreach coordinator, she started attending the Maryland 911 board meeting including PSAPs from across Maryland who are excited to learn more about RTT and how that can play a role in emergency services.

We are also, as Tarita said, we have been presenting statewide webinars through our webinar series, so make sure that you keep an eye on social media for those opportunities as we continue to move forward.

I'm going to pass it on now to Rebecca Miller.

INTERPRETER: Miss Rebecca, you're muted.

REBECCA: Sorry. This is Rebecca Miller, the RTT outreach coordinator, now not muted. And I'm going to share with you guys some news, some upcoming things that outreach is working on. Just to kind of reiterate what David said earlier, we do have some exciting things going on with RTT communication with the stakeholders. We're making big progress and lots of strides with that.

We are working hard on the RTT revolution campaign, as Travis shared earlier, which is super exciting. It's going to be a huge help to folks who don't quite understand how important RTT is and what an impact it's going to make.

And then also our outreach team is focusing on promoting RCC, especially during this pandemic when so many people are doing remote work and school. RCC is really going to come in handy and be a big game changer for a lot of people who need it.

Two exciting things coming up also. First is the Hamilton Relay scholarship. So every year Hamilton awards a $500 scholarship to a Maryland high school senior who is Deaf, hard of hearing, or has a speech difficulty. And that's to put towards their college education. So the deadline for this is fast approaching, but there's still time to submit an application. If you know any graduating senior who may qualify or get some use out of this scholarship, the deadline is January 30th. And if you need any more information about that or an application, feel free to reach out to one of the outreach coordinators and we can definitely help you with that.

The other exciting thing, coming up is Hamilton each May gives out a reward called the Better Hearing and Speech Month award. This recognizes an individual who is hard of hearing, late deafened, or has difficulty speaking and who has also been a positive influence in Maryland. So this is someone who would be demonstrating a commitment to volunteerism, activism, advocacy, and enhancing lives throughout the state.

This is open for applications as well. The deadline for this one is coming up also on April 9th. So if you know anyone in the state who may qualify for this award, please let us know. We would love all the submissions that you have, or if you know someone that you would like to nominate, please reach out to one of us, and we can get you that information as well.

So that wraps up the outreach report, unless anyone has any questions. If not, I'll hand it back over to Travis.

TRAVIS: Any questions for our fantastic outreach team?

Any final questions for the TAM staff?

AL: All right. Thank you very much. We would invite one more time any questions with respect to any of the reports that we have seen this morning.

We invite any questions or comments for any of the reports that were given this morning.

Seeing none, we'll proceed to the next item on the agenda, which would be my report.

Of course the senior call check program is still top of mind for me, making sure that that program is compatible to our relay program. They're supposed to have an equitable experience for folks without work arounds or patches, as I mentioned this morning. I do trust that David will bring that issue to the attention of the appropriate folks.

Moving on, we'll invite any further questions or any further reports or any further comment.

DARRIN: This is Darrin. I wanted to comment about MCOD, the Maryland Commission on Disabilities. We had our first official meeting last Wednesday. Everything worked out relatively well. There was a lot of discussion during that meeting about several very key important pieces of information that I wanted to share out with you, particularly about legislative proposals, bills that were going to be brought forth, the role of the committee, the focus of the committee, their advisory capacity for legislators or other state agencies if they have any questions related to disability. Also it was explained how the legislative session essentially is going to operate this year. During the pandemic of course all legislative sessions and hearings will be virtual, which essentially means that anyone can provide testimony and it will be done online and it has to be submitted in writing. I'm trying to think what else they covered. I think that pretty much covers it.

Oh, also the state disability plan has been approved for the state of Maryland. It looks very good. So that's my report from MCOD.

AL: All right. Thank you, Darrin. The thanks for the update on MCOD.

Is there anyone else who would like to give a comment or report?

TRAVIS: This is Travis. Deirdre did give me her report. I can share out what she sent me via email.

It says good morning, everybody, I planned to participate this morning. Unfortunately I have a funeral to attend at 10:00 a.m. The only report out I have is that I invited Tarita to the Maryland Relay virtual webinar for Maryland Public Service Commission, and that was on the 7th of January. The chairman of the PCA introduced Tarita, and we had approximately 54 attendees. Tarita did an outstanding job and was very informative, and her information was very well received.

So that's from Deirdre.

AL: This is Sonny speaking. Travis is of course not as attractive as Deirdre, but we accept her report nonetheless.

Anything further from anyone else?

I did want to make mention that there are two vacancies for a representative who is Deaf and for someone who is a senior. I would very much appreciate if you could send me your ideas, nominate folks who might be appropriate to fill those two vacancies. Thank you.

DAVID: This is David. If we could just add about the vacancies here, a speech disability representative. Historically, for years it's been a vacancy, so if you do want to fill this position, for somebody with speech difficulties or limitations, I encourage the board to share that. So please let me know if you find somebody that is a good fit. Maybe we can reach out to them and pull them in to the board. Thank you.

AL: And I'm wondering if perhaps some folks have the inclination to join us but maybe due to transportation issues would be disinclined. Maybe going forward, after the pandemic has been resolved adequately, we could institute hybrid format meetings, where we would allow some participation via a virtual platform such as Zoom and some participation in person.

David, are you amenable to those arrangements?

DAVID: I'm open to that. We would need to adhere to the state directives in terms of what we need to do to be in person. Right now we're still under strict guidelines, but once we go back to normal and everything is regular order, then yes, I'm open to different means, because then we could reach out to people who live farther out into the community.

AL: Thank you, David.

I'll turn the floor at this time over to any members of the public. And I will allow open comments from anyone who so wishes.

TRAVIS: This is Travis. Point of clarification. Some of you, I did turn off your video. If you would like to bring your video up, please type in the chat box and I will turn on your video so you can make your public comment.

AL: You mean members of the public?

TRAVIS: Yes. As everybody joined, I controlled everybody's video settings. So if you would like to make a comment for the good of the order, please type that in the chat and I'll turn your video back on so you can then make your comment. That's only if anyone wants to say anything. Thank you.

AL: This is Al speaking. I have yet to see any members of the public come forward to give a comment. I will give you a count of 10. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Public comment is closed. We will move on to new business. I'll invite at this time any items of new business.

DARRIN: With Al become the new active Chair, that then leaves a vacancy for Vice Chair. I would like to make a motion that we have elections for the Vice Chair on the board.

AL: Darrin, you would like to hold an election for Vice Chair while I am acting Chair? Can you describe the logistics of how that would work? I would appreciate having a Vice Chair truly, and if I could be acting Chair in my capacity. Darrin, what's your pleasure?

DAVID: This is David. I believe technically Al is still the Vice Chair and acting as official Chair for the board. Which means the Vice Chair position is currently filled.

You know, we've spoken with the Governor's office of appointments and we had already made some recommendations for several new Deaf and hard of hearing members for the board, to ask for a new permanent Chair, but that just hasn't happened yet. We do expect it to happen before the next meeting. So what I would recommend is to hold on that election, and we'll put it on the next agenda for the next GABTR meeting.

AL: Excellent. Is that okay with you, Darrin?

DARRIN: That seems good. So then I make a motion to, how do I say, table that proposal and then we will have elections for Vice Chair tabled until next meeting?

DAVID: Darrin, since you made the motion and no one seconded it, you can just withdraw that motion.

DARRIN: Okay. I withdraw my motion.

DAVID: Or you can amend it to include that as a discussion item on the next agenda.

DARRIN: Okay. I withdraw my motion.

AL: Al speaking. Now that we've sorted out the matter of Vice Chair versus acting Chair, I would invite additional comment at this time.

Seeing none, I'll entertain announcements, if anyone has anything to bring forward.

JASON: This is Jason Corning speaking, if I can make a comment.

AL: Yes, Sir Jason, the floor is yours.

JASON: I'll just announce a few things. The MWADB, Metro Washington Association of the DeafBlind, has just elected a new president, and that would be Eddie Martinez. That's it for the new board business.

And also MADCHH, another advisory board, my term has ended and Eddie is now assigned to replace me on MACDHH. So I am honored to maintain my seat on GABTR.

AL: Al speaking. Jason, did you intend to let us know that you are being replaced?

JASON: Yes, my term has expired so Eddie will be replacing me.

AL: I see. All right. Then we'll have to ask for the Governor to sign off on that appointment.

JASON: I'm not really sure. I thought it was already done. I'm not sure what to do.

AL: I'll invite David to clarify Eddie's position. Of course there is a certain procedure that has to be undertaken.

TRAVIS: Point of clarification. This is Travis. He's talking about the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He's not talking about GABTR. There are three separate boards that operate in the state.

JASON: MACDHH, the Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Washington metro. My term has expired and Eddie will be replacing me for that.

For the advisory board, I've been going for 6 years on that, and now Eddie is replacing my position.

I am staying on the GABTR board. No changes there.

AL: Got it. So you are still with us, and Eddie is not replacing you on GABTR.

JASON: On the MACDHH, he will be replacing me.

AL: Right, but on GABTR, we've still got you.

Did you apply to extend?

JASON: Last year or the year before, yes.

AL: Excellent. That means we're stuck with you.

JASON: It's been a joy to be on the board.

AL: It's been our great pleasure to have you with us as well, Jason. Thank you for doing so.

I'll invite any further announcements from anyone else.

I certainly can make an announcement. Now I'll shift the hat that I'm wearing to the one that I have as President of Deaf Seniors of America, DSA, which is a national organization of Deaf senior citizens. We are going to be holding a webinar next week. The date is the 21st of January. The topic is COVID-19 vaccinations. It's being presented by three physicians, two of whom are Deaf, one of whom comes from Deaf parents. They are based in Rochester, New York. It will be conducted entirely in ASL. There will be captions and a voice interpreter for those of you who are handicapped and don't yet know ASL. There will be access provided for you pitiable folks. So again, we'll have captions and a voice interpreter.

And I certainly plan to distribute the flier to you for your review, to gauge whether you're interested and you are free to register if you are. It will be held from 4:00-6:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m. of course because it is a national webinar for a nationwide audience. We've got to capture the folks from California who will be at 1:00, and as you move through the time zones, 2:00, 3:00, and ultimately 4:00 at the Eastern Time zone. So we just want to make sure and cover the whole of the U.S.

Any further questions?

Seeing none, it appears as though we are set to adjourn. Any objection?

JASON: No objections. This is Jason.

AL: Then we'll invite everyone to come back on to gallery view, see one another, and we'll terminate this Zoom connection.

STEVE: You have the video locked down on some people.

TRAVIS: Oh, we hear you, Steve.

STEVE: Yes, it says I cannot start the video because the host has stopped it. But I didn't know if you were just referring to the board. I'm sorry.

TRAVIS: No, no, no, not at all. Excellent.

Best wishes to you all. Stay healthy, stay well, best wishes.

Thank you, Steve. Hi there. We've got you now. Hi, Steve. Lovely to meet you.

STEVE: Hi, I'm sorry. I didn't realize you were speaking to me.

TRAVIS: Absolutely I'm speaking to you. So you have interest in joining the board as a speech impaired participant?

STEVE: Yes. I'm going to contact Travis and David later on today.

I did do an application about a year ago, but didn't hear anything on it.

By the way, if I don't push on this button, I cannot talk. I would say that's speech disabled.

TRAVIS: Oh, absolutely. Sure, sure, I'm used to that.

David is back. David, let me introduce you to Steve Cooper. He has an interest in joining the board on that speech impaired position.

DAVID: Hi there, Steve.

TRAVIS: And he's going to be sending us an email and he's going to reup on his application. So we're thrilled to have your interest in the board. Truly, Steve.

STEVE: It would be my honor. I'm very active in the laryngectomy community. On that front, hopefully I can bring some issues to the table.

TRAVIS: Sorely needed, Steve. Sorely, sorely needed. Truly.

STEVE: There are not a lot of laryngectomies. I know there's other issues for speech difficulties. But anyway, we'll communicate.

And David, I put in the chat because you asked too. If you want to give me your email, I can copy you when I contact Travis. Or should I just contact Travis?

That's easy enough. Thank you.

DAVID: I appreciate that, Steve. This is David. I look forward to working with you, and Travis, if you could forward that application link. It's pretty simple, Steve. It's a pretty simple application. We just ask which location you would like to serve, that you would like to be on the advisory board, and it shouldn't take you very long.

STEVE: I filled it out once. I know it's on the website. On the Maryland Relay or the GABTR website. But I'll send it in again.

DAVID: Yes, please do that again. Perhaps you did an application before but maybe it didn't go to the right place. So I think we'll try again. If there's still a problem -- well, let me back up.

STEVE: Can I make a suggestion?

DAVID: When you click on the application --

STEVE: Like 2020, let's not look back and let's just look forward. I'll send in a new application. And I'll copy you and Travis.

DAVID: Sounds good. Thank you. Thank you.

STEVE: And thank you all. This is a very valuable service you all, commitment you all are making.

TRAVIS: Thanks, Steve. Enjoy your weekend.

STEVE: You too. Thanks again.

TRAVIS: Absolutely. We're going to have a little confab among our team, but we're grateful for you to be here, Steve.

STEVE: I got the message. I'm signed up for the February focus group. So if any of you are on that, we'll communicate again.

DAVID: Excellent.

STEVE: Okay. Take care, you all. Have a great day.

TRAVIS: Thanks, Steve. Bye bye.