

PENNSYLVANIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE/TRS ADVISORY BOARD

Commonwealth Keystone Building

400 North Street

Harrisburg, PA 17120

June 4, 2025, Second Quarter Meeting Minutes

Virtual Platform Teleconference Using MS Teams

ATTENDEES & AFFILIATIONS

Board Members

Amy Goldman, Chairperson

Past President, US Society for Augmentative & Alternative Communication (USSAAC), 2024-2025. Director, National Council of State Boards of Examiners in Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology. Public Member

Kay Tyberg, Secretary

HLAA National member; HLAA-Blair County PA Chapter President; National Association of the Deaf (NAD) member; Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of Deaf (PSAD) Lifetime member; National Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) member; Say What Club, and TDI member. Public Member

Sandi McNally

Assistant Director, TechOwl, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University

Melissa Hawkins

Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. PA Department of Labor and Industry

Allison LaBrie

Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay

Steve Samara

Pennsylvania Telephone Association

TRS STAFF & GUESTS

Eric Jeschke

PUC Bureau of TUS, Annuitant

Melissa Derr

PUC Bureau of TUS

Spencer Nahf

PUC Bureau of TUS

Matt Hrivnak

PUC Bureau of Consumer Services

Denise McCracken

PUC Office of Communications

Tom Giannantonio

PUC Bureau of Consumer Services

Derek Sharp

PUC Bureau of TUS

Bobbie Anderson

PUC Bureau of Consumer Services

Christian McDewell

PUC Vice Chairman's Office

Aaron Margolis

PUC Office of Communications

John Paul Rogers

PUC Bureau of TUS

Riley Schaeffer

Public Utility Commission

David Screven

PUC Law Bureau

Joel Cheskis

PUC Chairman's Office

Kayla Rost

PUC Commissioner Legal Assistant

Laura Grassia

TDDP Program Manager, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University

Jenny Pearson

Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton CapTel

Public Member Vacancy: 3

Thaddeus Graham (absent)
Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton Relay

Board Members Absent

Kay Tyberg
Thad Graham

Legal Advisor to the Board:
Tiffany Tran
PUC Law Bureau

Sign Language Interpreters:
Jessica Bentley-Sassaman
Cathy Zimmerman

CART/Real Time
Archive Reporting and Captioning

Call to Order

Chairperson Amy Goldman welcomed members and guests to the Third Quarter TRS/PUC Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday, June 4, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m.

Virtual Platform Etiquette Protocols

While conducting Virtual Platform meetings, the board established appropriate protocols to adequately accommodate the needs of those with hearing loss, deafblind, and speech disabilities, including the use of hearing assistive technology for communication. We ask for everyone’s cooperation:

- a) Before addressing the board, members, please unmute your audio and state your first name before speaking,
- b) articulate clearly when speaking,
- c) one person speaks at a time when called upon by the chairperson,
- d) face and look into the camera’s headshot when speaking to allow those who rely on lipreading to see you,
- e) avoid backlighting in the background,
- f) **allow time for members relying on the sign language interpreter to translate to the hearing loss person to communicate or cast their vote,**
- g) to assure accuracy, raise your hand and say “yah” or “nay” during the voting process, giving people with disabilities time to respond or to second a motion, and
- h) while communicating live or virtual platform avoid wearing abstract or loud patterns due to those who experience vertigo.

OLD BUSINESS

Welcome/Introductions

Amy Goldman welcomed the board members, the PUC staff, and guests. Amy Goldman administered the roll call, requesting board members to introduce themselves, followed by PUC staff, PUC Commissioners' representatives, sign language interpreters, Archive Reporter/CART, and guest(s).

Chairperson's Report

Amy shares that there may be a potential public board member. Further communication is being activated.

The chairperson announced that PUC will not administer a surcharge for 2026. More information will be provided during the meeting.

Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes

In Kay's absence, Amy requested that the board review the June meeting minute. There were corrections or comments. Sandi McNally made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, and Allison LaBrie seconded. The board unanimously approved the March meeting minutes as submitted.

Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) including Wireless (WEI) Report by Laura Grassia

Laura Grassia reported that the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) includes wireless equipment distribution and support services. Her report is attached. She focused on the TDDP Report and outreach projects from January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

Amy asked whether TDDP has the funds to cover operating costs without the surcharge. During the 2024-25 fiscal year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, TDDP distributed 336 devices, totaling \$263,730.45. From January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, there were 380 pieces distributed for a total of \$330,861.10. The quarter is not over, which indicates an increase in devices. Laura's outreach efforts for the new fiscal year have expanded to legislative offices in surrounding Philadelphia counties, additional events, referral services, and subcontractors. Successful attempts through the Hearing Loss Association of America's thirteen chapters throughout Pennsylvania, the deaf residential schools in the Pittsburgh and Scranton areas. This includes consumers with low vision and the blind, and the hearing loss community. It is unknown how the tariffs will affect the cost of equipment distributed through TDDP.

Hamilton CTRS Report by Thad Graham wasn't he absent?

Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay Services (CTRS) provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. CTRS is like its counterpart's traditional relay service with an added feature that allows consumers to receive captions on their telephone so that they can understand the caller's remarks.

Thad was busy during February and April with various outreach contacts. Such events was a presentation to Bloomsburg University's (Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania) ASL Interpreting students, virtual presentation to Penn West Language and Speech Pathology students, multiple presentations at senior centers in the Erie, Pennsylvania region, hosting a booth at the Perry County Networking Event, Multi-Day Resource Center at Bald Eagle High School, and CapTel installs in State College area. He presented at various health fairs for legislative leaders.

PA TRS Quarterly Update Report by Allison LaBrie

Allison LaBrie provided the Pennsylvania TRS Quarterly Report referencing Pennsylvania captioned and traditional relay services.

Allison's TRS report included the requirement to answer calls within 10 seconds. In the last two years, the response time has been above 85% criteria. A decline in requests for CapTel telephones is relevant due to the progress of analog-to-digital and wireless technology. The reports were submitted in advance for the board's review and are attached to the minutes.

Allison shared with the board a compliment Thad received from a client. ***"That Thad has been incredibly kind, professional, and knowledgeable throughout a challenging situation involving their father's eligibility for the CapTel phone. Despite some complications, Thad showed remarkable patience, especially with frequent texts, and handled everything with integrity and care."***

(Attachment)

Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson provided a report for the quarter on Hamilton's TRS Outreach. Jenny attended the Montgomery County Senior Games and the senior expo. She is attending the Lehigh Valley Aging in Place Symposium, which provides an excellent opportunity to share information about CapTel telephones while aging adults remain in their homes. Jenny will be attending various senior expos coming up in the Fall 2025 in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia.

(Attachment)

Broadband and Telecommunications – Joel Cheskis

Joel counsels PUC Chairman Steve DeFrank on telecommunication and broadband issues. In addition, Joel is involved in the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority under Chairman DeFrank.

Joel shared that he did a presentation at the Consumer Advisory Council the week before today's meeting—the federal administration's uncertainty on the funding for broadband services at the microlevel. In the best interest of all, the attached information shared with the board is necessary to comprehend the status to date and the questionable amount of how much Pennsylvania will receive. The Broadband Development Authority is disbursing funds to continue as people pick up the shovels, checks have been sent in the mail, and moving forward.

The Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) is still working diligently. The disbursement of the one billion dollars is up in the air.

Attachment

Public Members Recruitment – Denise McCracken

Amy reports a potential candidate for the board, David Phaneuf, has not applied to TRS/PUC Advisory Board. Amy will pursue contacting him.

Hamilton Relay staff are willing to put recruitment flyers out at locations where events will be held.

NEW BUSINESS

ODHH's Hearing Loss Expo

Melissa announced the Hearing Loss Expo will be held March 10 and 11, 2026, at Penn Harris in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. Block off those dates on your calendar. Preparations are underway to disseminate information and plans for the Expo in the months ahead.

2025 Meeting Dates

The Third Quarter TRS/PUC Advisory Board MS Teams virtual meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025. Virtual meetings will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. Please log in sooner to set up your connection.

The Fourth Quarter meeting is scheduled for December 3rd, 2025.

Public Comment

No comment was presented.

Meeting Adjourned

Amy Goldman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sandi McNally made the motion, which Melissa Hawkins seconded. The board unanimously approved it.

Respectfully submitted,

Annita Kay Tyberg

Annita Kay Tyberg, Secretary

Reports Attached

08/16/25, Rev. 08/29/25

Joel Cheskis's Report:

-Per CART-“And in looking at the meeting minutes from the last meeting of this group, I think that some of the things that I was anticipating happening I guess have in fact happened. But mostly with regards to the uncertainty created by or coming out of the new federal administration, which obviously is completely within their right to do. But a lot of what we hear going on at a macro level in the news that's coming out of Washington is also impacting what we're doing here in Pennsylvania on broadband issues at a microlevel.

Most of what I have presented in the past has dealt with various funding mechanisms from the Federal Government to Pennsylvania, some of which are significant amounts of money that came mostly out of the acts passed following in response to the COVID-19 pandemic where it became obvious that we still had some unserved and underserved areas throughout the country in terms of broadband. And there have been some success stories. Some of the money that we have gotten from the Federal Government has been put to good use. And there are checks being written, poles going up or wires going up or shovels in the ground, whatever analogy you want to use. Devices are being distributed.

We have seen at least some action with regards to some of the money that the Pennsylvania government has been allocated in these Federal statutes.

However, I think, again, as has been going on nationally with other Federal funding, I think there's a lot of uncertainty now about whether or not Pennsylvania will be getting the money that we originally thought that we would be getting for broadband issues.

Although it's not clear yet. It's just a little bit up in the air. The new administration is taking a closer look to make sure that these programs are consistent with its goals and policies, which obviously it has every right to do.

Some of the money has already been withdrawn or canceled, which is disappointing as we have been ramping up to distribute that money here in Pennsylvania. Now we're finding out that there is none in certain categories to be able to use.

The big one, which I think you have heard me refer to in past presentations, BEAD is the acronym. I have used that acronym so many times, I can't remember exactly what it stands for. I think the broadband equity access and deployment program. This was the big pot of more than \$1 billion with a B that was allocated just for Pennsylvania. And as the broadband development authority had been establishes guidelines and accepting applications for that money, again, now it seems that it's not entirely clear if that money will in fact be coming to Pennsylvania or when, given the new review from the Federal Administration.

So I'm sorry if I don't have any better news to report. Like I said, a lot of this is happening in other pots of Federal funds. But I think as of right now, the broadband development authority is doing the best that it can to distribute what money it does have. And be prepared to distribute money that still might be coming. So stay tuned and hopefully I will have more to report at the

next meeting of this group.

So if anyone has any questions, I would be more than happy to answer them at this time. "



2025-06-04 PA
Advisory Board PPT /



TDDP Update for
TRS Advisory Council