



FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF THE RTA'S TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTER

-Prepared by Audit & Review Division-

December 16, 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Audit & Review Division conducted a follow-up review of the RTA's Travel Information Center (TIC). The TIC responds to telephone requests from the general public for information on using CTA, Metra or Pace services to travel within the six-county northeastern Illinois area. The overall objectives of the original review were:

1. To evaluate RTA's management and operation of the TIC and recommend possible changes, if any.
2. To review the RTA's and Cambridge's compliance with contractual requirements.
3. To recommend changes the RTA and Cambridge should consider to enhance service.

Our original review resulted in ten recommendations to improve the overall operational efficiency of TIC. Our follow-up review found that one recommendation will not be implemented. Five of the recommendations have been fully implemented with the remaining recommendations scheduled for full implementation by March 31, 2011.

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INTRODUCTION

The Travel Information Center (TIC) has been relocated to 547 W. Jackson, Suite 810, Chicago, Illinois. The TIC responds to telephone requests from the general public for information on using CTA, Metra or Pace services to travel within the six-county northeastern Illinois area. TIC operates 20 hours a day, 365 days per year, between 5:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. The RTA contracted with Cambridge Integrated Services Group, Inc. (Cambridge), Chicago, Illinois to staff and operate TIC. Cambridge's current contract runs from January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2013, and it is administered through the RTA's Planning & Regional Programs Division. The RTA is responsible for the overall management and operation of TIC. The RTA Manager, Customer Service & TIC works in conjunction with Cambridge management to oversee TIC. The RTA also provides the computer equipment, telephones and fully furnished office space required by TIC.

The specific objectives of this review, for which a report was issued on November 6, 2009, were:

1. To evaluate RTA's management and operation of the TIC and recommend possible changes, if any.
2. To review the RTA's and Cambridge's compliance with contractual requirements.
3. To recommend changes the RTA and Cambridge should consider to enhance service.

The review resulted in 10 recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the TIC. The purpose of the follow-up review is to determine whether the recommendations have been implemented and are achieving their intended purpose.

BACKGROUND

The contract the RTA has with Cambridge provides that Cambridge will be responsible for hiring, training and managing its own work force while serving the public in the name of the RTA. In turn, the RTA provides Cambridge with office space, a computer system and a telecommunications system. The RTA's five year contract with Cambridge provides for a rate of \$320,501 monthly (\$3,846,012 annually). The contract provides an estimate of the volume of calls TIC will answer in each month during the term (referred to as the Monthly Call Cap). The total Annual Call Volume Requirement is 5,393,000 calls.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The scope of the follow-up review was limited to the observations set forth in the original report. The follow-up report is not intended to expand upon the observations of the initial review, but rather to determine the current status of the recommendations included in that report. Within this scope, we interviewed the Manager, Customer Service & TIC, the Manager of Information Technology, and Cambridge management who had the responsibility to implement the recommendations.

STATUS OF ORIGINAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes the original observations, recommendations, and responses from our first report, as well as the current status of those recommendations.

RTA

1. Relocate TIC

Previous Observation: As stated in the contract, there is the possibility of relocating TIC. We agree with this point as our tour of the TIC area found the current location to be a tight working space in need of extensive remodeling. Since the termination of the contract with the previous administrator of TIC in December 2008, no additional funds have been utilized to improve the TIC area in anticipation of the move.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend that RTA management finalize its decision on whether to relocate TIC.

Previous Response (Provided by RTA senior management): RTA senior management has determined it would be cost effective to relocate the TIC area. RTA senior management will present its recommendation to relocate TIC to the RTA Board to obtain final approval.

Status of Previous Recommendation: The recommendation has been implemented.

2. Collect Busy Signal Data

Previous Observation: TIC can accept up to 83 calls at one time. If more than 83 calls are received at one time, AT&T's central office switch determines there is no space available to handle the call and the caller receives a busy signal. The number of callers receiving busy signals is available only by paying AT&T to track this information.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend that the RTA periodically obtain busy signal data from AT&T to monitor this situation.

Previous Response (Provided by the Manager of IT): IT management agrees with the recommendation and will proceed to secure a contract with AT&T for conducting a busy signal study.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has not been implemented. The RTA anticipates AT&T conducting the busy signal study by the end of January 2011. We will follow-up on this issue during the 2011 annual review of IT.

3. Implement Error Resolution Timeframe

Previous Observation: Cambridge's TIC management informs the RTA's IT Department when there are problems with the computer equipment and when incorrect travel data is loaded into the computer system. This information is reported to the IT Department on two different logs, the

Data Error Log and the Computer Maintenance Log. We reviewed both logs and found the errors were not always resolved in a timely manner.

Previous Recommendation: Cambridge's TIC management now reports all errors through the RTA help desk ticketing system for better tracking purposes. However, the RTA needs to set timeframes for fixing the errors experienced by TIC. If the error can not be resolved within that timeframe, then an action plan needs to be implemented to ensure a prompt resolution. Furthermore, there should always be a record of when an error is resolved.

Previous Response (Provided by the Manager of IT): IT management agrees with the recommendation and will work with the Manager, Customer Service & TIC when hired to develop a timeframe for fixing data and computer system errors. Additionally, IT will work within Planning & Regional Programs' budget limitations and act more accordingly to resolve errors.

Status of the Recommendation: This recommendation has been partially implemented. The IT Department is to resolve errors within five business days of receipt. If this is not possible, a record should be made documenting how the case will be handled until it is resolved. Audit & Review reviewed the error resolution log and noted instances where the error reported by Cambridge did not appear to be resolved within the timeframe developed by the RTA IT Department. We will follow-up on this issue during the 2011 annual review of IT.

4. Report RTA Monitoring to Cambridge

Previous Observation: The contract issued by the RTA indicated that RTA staff, in addition to Cambridge's staff, would monitor CSR calls with an emphasis on the quality of customer service provided to the caller. Also, the RTA is to monitor call volume and staffing levels quarterly and provide input to Cambridge. We found that the RTA is not performing an adequate level of monitoring TIC agent activity.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend the following:

- RTA monitoring should emphasize the quality of customer service provided to each caller.
- A weekly report should be submitted to Cambridge management identifying any unusual problems or trends.
- Cambridge should prepare a summary report for the RTA showing the actions taken to correct problems noted.

Previous Response (Provided by the SDED, Planning & Regional Programs): The Manager, Customer Service & TIC will be responsible for monitoring calls and reviewing reports.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been implemented.

5. Inform TIC Callers of the Current Estimated Hold Time

Previous Observation: If callers to TIC must be put on hold until a CSR is available, they have no idea how long they might be on hold. Although the feature is estimated to cost \$20,000, it would be beneficial to callers to know how long the wait would be to obtain the travel directions they are seeking.

Previous Recommendation: Technology is available for a recorded voice to tell callers what the current estimated hold time is before the caller is placed on hold. We recommend the RTA investigate the feasibility of obtaining this technology.

Previous Response (Provided by SDED, Planning & Regional Programs): This feature is desirable and has been considered in the past, but was determined to be cost prohibitive. Staff will re-investigate the possibility of adding this feature to the Interactive Voice Response system.

Status of the Recommendation: This recommendation will not be implemented due to RTA budget constraints.

6. Improve the Automated Telephone System

Previous Observation: The introductory message of the IVR was rated as overwhelming and lengthy by some of the RTA staff calling in to TIC to ask for directions. The IVR system should also be reviewed periodically to ensure the features offered are working properly. Furthermore, the message provides the caller with information on reaching the RTA online trip planner, but the information on the website is only available in English.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend that RTA management review the message script of the IVR system to ensure it accurately and efficiently introduces the caller to the features of the system. Travel information should also be made available for individuals fluent in other languages. Furthermore, the options available for selection on the IVR system should be reviewed periodically to ensure they are working properly.

Previous Response (Provided by the Manager of IT): RTA management agrees with the recommendation. We will review the IVR system on at least a monthly basis to ensure the options available through the IVR system are working properly. The introductory message was scripted by the former Director of Regional Services and recorded by the IT Department as written. We will defer the TIC introductory message to the new Manager, Customer Service & TIC for review and to make any necessary changes.

Previous Response (Provided by SDED, Planning & Regional Programs): Staff will investigate and work with the IT Department on establishing Spanish and other language translations on the trip planner.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been partially implemented. The RTA's online trip planner is also available in the Spanish and Polish languages. As the TIC has moved and relocated the IVR system, it has not been reconnected at the new location as the RTA has to coordinate with the vendor the timing for installation. The RTA anticipates having the IVR

system installed and making any needed changes to the automated telephone system by the end of the first quarter in 2011. We will follow-up on this issue during the 2011 annual review of IT.

Cambridge

7. Record Action Taken Consistently for TIC Complaints

Previous Observation: The contract with Cambridge requires that they submit a monthly report to the RTA indicating the number, nature and resolution of complaints. It also requires that the report delineate the source or origin of the commendation or complaint, such as Cambridge, the RTA, service boards, or the general public. TIC received 56 complaints (out of over 4,000,000 calls) during the first nine months of 2009.

Previous Recommendation: When the caller is able to identify the CSR, it is imperative that Cambridge follow through with the agent to resolve the complaint and counsel the agent as necessary. The corrective action taken by Cambridge management should be recorded on the complaint form so it can be reported to the RTA.

Previous Response: Cambridge management agrees with the recommendation. Follow-up does occur with the CSR as well as a formal apology to the customer. However, more attention can and will be given to documenting the follow-up that occurs.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been implemented. During the first nine months of 2010, TIC received 151 complaints (out of over 3,993,000 calls). Out of the 151 complaints, 43 were regarding the CSRs. When feasible, Cambridge management identified the follow-up taken with the agent and the customer over the complaint received.

RTA and Cambridge

8. Enhance Customer Service

Previous Observation: Phone monitoring conducted by Audit & Review and RTA staff of CSR interaction with the public disclosed that overall CSRs provide quality customer service. Areas where performance could be improved are listed below (comments relating to the performance of specific TIC employees were shared directly with Cambridge management).

- The travel itinerary provided seemed to not be the most efficient route information for the caller to get to their desired location.
- At times, CSRs would rush through the call as they gave directions. However, if the caller stated they needed any part of the information repeated, the CSRs repeated the necessary information in a professional manner.
- The TIC translator and CSR converse on the telephone while the caller is listening instead of placing the caller on hold to discuss the directions needed. Listening to this dialogue was found to be very confusing.
- The CSR gives the entire itinerary to the TIC translator to repeat to the caller instead of stating the directions line by line to make it easier for the translator to provide the directions to the caller.

- It was not understood why the CSRs state ‘We appreciate your business’ when ending the call when the RTA does not sell any type of product or service.

Previous Recommendation: We found the information obtained from our sampling to be very helpful in measuring the quality of service that TIC provides to the public. The RTA’s TIC management and Cambridge should utilize these results to discuss possible changes in the way CSRs interact over the telephone with callers.

Previous Response (Provided by Cambridge management): The comments provided by RTA staff will be further analyzed and discussed with RTA management to make the necessary changes that ensure CSRs are giving the best possible service to the public.

Previous Response (Provided by the SDED, Planning & Regional Programs): While sometimes cumbersome, both the translator and the CSR need to be on the line. The translator does not know the transit system; the CSR must provide the correct transit information to the translator. Staff agrees that itineraries should be broken down to pieces for translation and will work with the vendor to have this added to the CSRs training curriculum.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been implemented. Cambridge management has enhanced its call monitoring and CSR training to better the service provided to the public.

9. Provide Payment for Telephone Services

Previous Observation: As stated in the contract, Cambridge is responsible for all telephone charges incurred by its personnel. The RTA’s Telecommunications Specialist is responsible for reviewing the statement received from AT&T and preparing and forwarding to Cambridge management a detailed listing of the telephone charges incurred along with an invoice. We noted the invoices were not forwarded to Cambridge in a timely manner. In some instances, the invoice forwarded to Cambridge was incorrect. Furthermore, Cambridge was not paying the invoices submitted by the RTA, as the firm required the RTA to complete IRS Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification). It did not appear anyone at the RTA was monitoring this situation.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend that the Telecommunications Specialist forward telephone invoices to Cambridge in a timely manner and ensure the invoices are accurate. Cambridge should promptly reimburse the RTA for the telephone charges incurred.

Previous Response: RTA and Cambridge management agree with the recommendation. The Telecommunications Specialist will forward the telephone invoices to the Manager, Customer Service & TIC and to Cambridge management within two weeks of receipt from AT&T. The RTA’s Manager of IT will review the telephone invoices before they are forwarded to ensure accuracy. The Manager, Customer Service & TIC will be responsible for ensuring that Cambridge provides payment for the invoices received.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been partially implemented. We reviewed the invoices submitted to Cambridge for the first nine months of 2010. We noted the invoices were not always submitted to Cambridge in a timely manner. We also noted that

Cambridge has not consistently paid the RTA for the TIC telephone charges. The Telecommunications Specialist should ensure that the invoices are submitted to the Manager, Customer Service & TIC and Cambridge management within two weeks of receipt from AT&T. It would be beneficial for the RTA to include a due date on the invoices submitted to Cambridge. Lastly, the Manager, Customer Service & TIC should ensure that Cambridge provides payment for the invoices received. We will follow-up on this issue during the 2011 annual review of IT.

10. Determine the Records to be Retained

Previous Observation: The terms of the contract the RTA has with Cambridge states “The Contractor’s records relating to the Services must be kept in accordance with generally accepted principles of accounting consistently applied and must be retained by the Contractor for a period of not less than five years following the completion of the Services.” However, per discussion with Cambridge staff, the records to be retained have not been defined by RTA management.

Previous Recommendation: We recommend that RTA staff determine the records to be retained by Cambridge to comply with the terms of the contract and to ensure an adequate audit trail exists. At a minimum, the Quality Monitoring Forms and Compliment/Complaint Forms should be maintained on file. Cambridge management should ensure these records are maintained in a centrally located file for easy retrieval.

Previous Response: RTA and Cambridge management agree with the recommendation and will work to determine the appropriate records to be retained.

Status of the Recommendation: The recommendation has been implemented.

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