

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

Station and Branch Optimization and
Consolidation Initiative, 2009

Docket No. N2009-1

PRESIDING OFFICER'S INFORMATION REQUEST NO. 3

(Issued November 3, 2009)

The United States Postal Service is requested to provide the information described below to assist in developing a record for the consideration of the Postal Service's request for an advisory opinion. The answers are to be provided within 14 days.

1. Witness Matalik identifies factors used to pre-screen stations and branches for possible discontinuance. USPS-T2 at 8-9. During the September 30, 2009 hearing, Commissioner Acton asked witness Matalik "if there are certain factors that can be identified as being consistently driving the decisions to remove these stations and branches for consideration during your process?" Tr. 2/578. "These stations" refers to the list of approximately 750 stations and branches being reduced to approximately 400 facilities. This question initiated the following questions from the Chairman:

Chairman Goldway: So of the 300 and some odd case studies which have been dropped off the list, there is no trend in terms of what the concerns were that caused them to be dropped off the list?

Witness: I don't --

Chairman Goldway: You think it could be any one of the 10 factors or whatever the number is? You don't see a particular pattern emerging among those?

Witness: And to be honest with you, I have been focused on this hearing so I have not had a chance to evaluate that data that came in on that.

Chairman Goldway: Do they report to you on why they've taken them off the list?

Witness: Yes, they do.

Id. at 579-80.

The Postal Service filed a list on September 2, 2009 which identifies nearly 760 facilities for possible discontinuance. On October 9, 2009, the station and branch candidate list was narrowed to 371 facilities. Given that witness Matalik asserts the information is available as to why individual facilities have been removed from the candidate list, please identify the factor (or factors) that drove the decision to change the status of each of the approximately 389 facilities (760-371=389) from under consideration to no longer under consideration.

2. During the September 30, 2009 hearing, witness Matalik testified that the prescreening process is complete. *Id.* at 586. Commissioner Langley pursued this topic by questioning the witness about how far the Postal Service was into the discontinuance studies for the facilities that have completed prescreening and remain under consideration. It was determined that an indicator of when a specific discontinuance study is underway is when the Postal Service starts to obtain public input. Witness Matalik indicated that the Postal Service is obtaining bi-weekly tracking reports. *Id.* at 587. For the 371 facilities remaining under consideration, please provide the number of facilities that have initiated some form of public input. For these facilities also provide the number of facilities with

completed discontinuance studies that have been submitted to headquarters. Please update this information on a monthly basis until this docket is closed.

3. Witness VanGorder explains that the Postal Service is able to undertake the Station and Branch Consolidation Initiative at this time in part because “[a]lternative access channels are now widely available, especially to urban and suburban customers.” USPS-T-1 at 6-8. One basic alternative to visiting a post office to deposit First-Class Mail into the system is the use of collection receptacles (blue boxes). However, in response to Commission Information Request No. 1, Question 19 (Tr. 2/228) the Postal Service states:

On a national basis, the number of collection points declined from 333,873 in 2000 to 227,600 at the end of June, 2009, or a 31.8 percent reduction. Blue collection boxes represent approximately 80 percent of the total collection points.

Thus, the alternative of depositing mail in blue boxes is declining at the same time the Postal Service is proposing to reduce access by eliminating some stations and branches. Later in the response, the Postal Service explains:

As collection mail volumes have declined (especially in business areas), some boxes at station and branch locations were considered excess and were removed, leaving behind one or two boxes where formerly many more had stood. At other locations with multiple boxes, ‘overflow’ boxes were removed in response to changes in customer mailing habits (the declines in mail volumes that continue), leaving one box behind at many such locations. In these cases, a box removal would not appear to have any effect on mailers, and in some cases may not have been noticed.

Id. at 228-9.

The response indicates that over 100,000 collection points have been removed during the past decade. However, the Postal Service appears to argue that this decline might be mitigated by the fact that in some instances only excess boxes

were removed and that a box might still remain at a particular location. For the 106,273 collection points that were removed from service between 2000 and 2009 please provide:

- a. The number of collection points that were located at stations and branches;
 - b. The number of collection points that were considered “overflow” boxes;
 - c. The number of collection points that were removed from locations where at least one collection point remained after removal; and
 - d. An explanation of what criteria is used to determine whether a collection point is “excess.”
4. Witness Matalik testified that information on the makeup of the community is provided in any discontinuance report forwarded to headquarters. *Id.* at 509. She stated that this information is obtained from the Regional Optimization Access Management (ROAM) system. *Id.* at 510.
- a. Please describe the ROAM system and the types of data stored within it.
 - b. Please describe how each type of ROAM system data is utilized in each stage of the discontinuance process.
 - c. Please describe the types of data stored within the ROAM system that would describe a community’s makeup (or other demographic information). If possible, provide data field headers and descriptions.

- d. Please provide examples of ROAM data for three randomly selected branches or stations that remain under consideration. Complete data sets for each facility in readable electronic format are acceptable.
5. Please provide the following information in reference to library reference USPS-LR-N2009-1/10, Access Table PODTS_DP:
 - a. Please specify what combination of cell entries must be examined to determine whether or not a facility has in fact been closed.
 - b. Please confirm that a record with a suspend date and an official closure date indicates that a facility was in fact suspended. If this cannot be confirmed, please provide an explanation.
 - c. Please specify what data fields must be examined to determine the duration of an emergency suspension.
6. The following questions refer to the Post Office Discontinuance and Emergency Suspension System (PODESS) as described in the response to interrogatory PR/USPS-T2-25(a). *See Id.* at 446-49.
 - a. What type of data does PODESS contain for any given entity concerning:
 - i. The number of employees by type;
 - ii. The number of retail transactions over one or more periods;
 - iii. The wait-time in-line data for a gaining facility;
 - iv. The number of customers (such as was contained in the PODTS database); and
 - v. The volume of incoming and outgoing mail?

- b. What data validation procedures are provided within the PODESS database?
- c. Who is responsible for reviewing the completeness of data concerning the suspension/closure/potential closure of a given station or branch, and at what stage in the process would such a review occur?
- d. Page 28 of the User Guide to the PODESS database (See USPS-LR-N2009-1/8) shows a screen shot illustrating a type of report that the PODESS database can generate. What other reports does the Postal Service anticipate that it will generate using the PODESS database?

Ruth Y. Goldway
Presiding Officer