

USPS-LR-RM2011-3/1

Information Regarding the Carrier Optimal Routing (COR) System

USPS-LR-RM2011-3/1 is a Category 6 library reference that presents information requested by the Commission in Order No. 964 regarding the Carrier Optimal Routing (COR) System. The discussion below describes the two .zip files that are included in this library reference.

Overview of COR

City carrier letter routes generally consist of two main components, office time and street time. Office time is used prepare mail for delivery, and street time is used to distribute the mail to customers. The routes are designed such that the sum of the office and street times on an average day is approximately eight hours. The eight hour goal is achieved through a process that incorporates several factors, such as: 1) quantity and type of volume (letters, flats, parcels, and accountables); 2) number and types of delivery (door, curbside, and central); 3) travel times; and 4) office productivity measures. A considerable change to any one of these factors on a route often results in an adjustment to the route so that the eight hour target can be preserved.

Route adjustments involve a street inspection of the route. A street inspection requires a carrier supervisor to shadow a carrier for a full day of activity. During a route inspection, the supervisor records numerous details that are germane to that specific route. Street time normally amounts to about three quarters of a carrier's workday. In addition, route adjustments routinely impact

many or all of the routes within a ZIP Code. Thus, the route adjustment process needs to be conducted in an accurate and efficient manner.

In an effort to construct economical city carrier routes, the Postal Service developed the COR system.¹ COR is an automated management tool that uses digital mapping, algorithms, and route inspection data to create efficient carrier routes by structuring them to be compact and contiguous. Note that COR does not collect nor require collection of any additional Postal Service data. Rather, it is a planning tool that uses existing data to more efficiently structure routes.

COR is a graphical database that utilizes information from the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS), route inspection data (often referred to as Form 3999), and information from NAVTEQ. NAVTEQ provides detailed geographic data including street names, one-way streets, and traffic signs. Because city routes are based on an “average” day, COR is updated only when a ZIP Code experiences one or more of the key components that lead to route adjustments (e.g., additional delivery points, new traffic pattern). COR is a graphical “live” database with a “dataview” capability, but it is not compatible with recognized spreadsheet or database software packages. It is “live” in the sense that users accessing the database have the ability to permanently change underlying route structures. Due to the proprietary nature of the software, all users require a paid licensing fee. COR is not a web-based system.

¹ COR currently only pertains to city carriers. Rural carriers have a different collectively bargained system to adjust routes that is largely based on a Rural Mail Count.

COR training entails two distinct modules: 1) database preparation; and 2) route adjustments. Each module requires forty hours of classroom training. The database preparation training focuses on validating and enhancing the NAVTEQ data. Two critical components of using COR to design efficient routes are the accuracy of the location data and types of delivery receptacle. Trained users correct data inaccuracies and incorporate the receptacle types into a ZIP Code's database. An accurate database is essential to devising an efficient route structure.

As the name suggests, route adjustment training enables a user to adjust routes in COR. However, due to the critical cost implications of a ZIP Code's route structure, extensive delivery operations knowledge, along with completion of the forty hour training module, is required before a user is granted permission to adjust city routes.

This library reference includes two zip files that provide additional information about COR: `database_prep_user_man.zip` and `route_adj_user_man.zip`. The database user manual focuses on the time-consuming process of developing the COR database. The route adjustment user manual addresses the complex processes involved in adjusting city carrier routes.