

# Florida Relay Service

## Relay Your Way

ORIGINAL

Docket No. 040763-TP  
Request for Proposal to provide  
Telecommunications Relay Service  
Submitted by  
Hamilton Telephone Company  
d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications



### Price Proposal

November 18, 2004

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**D. THE PRICE PROPOSAL FORMAT**

*Bidders shall submit their bids on the basis of a charge per billable minute for all services described with the exception of CapTel in item B.22 (or its equivalent) and those optional services described in items B.51-55. The prices per billable minute (or other basis) for items in B.22 and B.51-55 shall be separately stated. A format similar to that shown below should be used for the price proposal.*

Hamilton has complied with all price proposal requirements and has used a format similar to that in the RFP. Hamilton has submitted its bids on the basis of a charge for billable (session) minute for all services described with the exception of CapTel and Video Relay in which Hamilton has submitted pricing based on conversation minute as defined below.

**NOTE: THE PRICE PROPOSAL SHALL BE FILED IN A SEPARATE SEALED ENVELOPE MARKED: "SEALED – TO BE OPENED ONLY BY THE FPSC PROPOSAL OPENING OFFICER"**

Hamilton does comply. Hamilton has filed its Price Proposal in a separate sealed envelope and has marked it according to the RFP requirement stated above.

**SERVICE PRICE PER BILLABLE MINUTE**

***1. Basic Relay Service***

*Bid price should be on a flat rate basis per billable minute for all billable minutes and not vary depending upon the volume of traffic.*

Hamilton will operate the Florida Relay Service for a fixed rate of **\$.78 per billable\* minute**.

\*Hamilton has identified a per billable (**session**) minute rate to be utilized throughout the term of the contract for purposes of calculating its due compensation for traditional Telecommunications Relay Service. Hamilton understands that its sole reimbursement for TRS will be calculated by taking the actual number of monthly session minutes per month multiplied by Hamilton's session minute price for traditional telecommunications relay service. A session minute is defined as the time in minutes and seconds that a Communication Assistant is connected to either the calling or called party. Session time includes call set-up and wrap-up, but does not include any queue time.

Hamilton's price includes all the work required to implement and operate the Florida Relay Service. This includes all equipment, personnel, facilities, software, and features and services (i.e. Speech to Speech, Spanish and Intrastate Spanish translation to English relay service if so

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desired, True Caller ID, Turbo Code, plus all the features listed in Attachment 4 unless otherwise marked). If additional features or services are required or desired during the term of the contract, Hamilton will provide pricing for those additional services to the Public Service Commission.

**2. Captel or Equivalent Service**

*Bid price should be on a rate per billable minute for all billable minutes and may vary depending upon the volume of traffic.*

**CapTel™ Service**

Hamilton will provide CapTel™ Service at the following rates. The Public Service Commission can choose between the two pricing plans:

**Conversation Minute Plan**

**\$1.45 per conversation minute**

Conversation minutes are defined as the time, in minutes and seconds, from the time period the relay originator is connected to the called party's number and transcription begins and continues until the moment the CA directs the workstation to end the call or when one of the two parties disconnect. This includes answering machine, or voice menu. Conversation Minutes do not include the time in queue (call is ringing, waiting for the call to connect to the other phone number), call set-up, call wrap-up, or calls that have reached numbers that are busy or received no answer.

**Session Minute Plan**

**\$1.30 per session minute**

A session minute is defined as the time in minutes and seconds that a Communication Assistant is connected to either the calling or called party. Session time includes call set-up and wrap-up, but does not include any queue time.

Currently, Captel Service is averaging approximately 84 conversation minutes for every 100 session minutes. This is a ratio of 84 percent from conversation to session minutes. This is an important ratio when evaluating pricing. For example, \$1.45 per conversation minute multiplied by 84 percent equals \$1.22 per session minute. One can see that Hamilton's session minute price is \$1.30 per session minute. Hamilton prefers to provide Captel Service using on conversation minute bases and has priced its Conversation Minute Plan more aggressively.

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### **CapTel™ Service + 2 Line CapTel™ Service**

If the State of Florida elects to purchase CapTel™ Service including 2 Line CapTel™ Service, the rate would be **\$1.60 per conversation minute** as defined above for all levels of minutes. Because of the way 2 Line CapTel™ is provisioned, there is no session time when using 2 Line CapTel Service.

All CapTel™ pricing will be effective for the full three years of the initial contract period.

Please see Tab B Section 22 for additional information and conditions regarding CapTel.

### **3. Optional Features**

*a. Custom Calling Services  
(see RFP item B.51)*

**Hamilton will provide this service at no charge. Relay users pay their LEC for any desired features.**

### **LEC Calling Services**

- True Caller ID (SS7)
- CID Per Line (Global) Block / CID Per Call Block
- Call Screening (Call Rejection) (Call Block)
- Call Acceptance
- Anonymous Call Rejection
- Preferred Call Forwarding
- Unique Flash
- Three-Way Calling
- Call Forwarding

*b. Video Relay Service  
(see RFP item B.52)*

Hamilton will provide Video Relay for the State of Florida for a rate of **\$9.50 per conversation minute** in the event the State becomes responsible for funding this service during the contract period. Conversation minute is defined as the time, in minutes and seconds, from the time period the relay originator is connected to the called party's number and conversation begins and continues until the moment the CA directs the workstation to end the call or when one of the two parties disconnect. This includes answering machine, or voice menu. Conversation Minutes do not include the time in queue (call is ringing, waiting for the call to connect to the other phone

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number), call set-up, call wrap-up, or calls that have reached numbers that are busy or received no answer.

As explained in Tab B, until the FCC orders States to begin administering and paying for Video Relay Service in some manner, Hamilton will accept the NECA rate and payment from NECA. There is great potential that this price will decrease with more volumes and as Video Relay Service matures. Hamilton will provide an updated price to the State of Florida at such time that the FCC orders States to begin paying for intrastate Video Relay Service that includes all then current FCC requirements.

*c. IP-Relay  
(see RFP item B.53)*

Hamilton will provide Internet Relay for the State of Florida for a rate of **\$.78 per session minute** in the event the State becomes responsible for funding this service during the contract period.

As explained in Tab B, until the FCC orders States to begin administering and paying for Internet Relay Service in some manner, Hamilton will accept the NECA rate and payment from NECA. Hamilton will provide a more "current" price for this service at the time the FCC orders States to begin paying for Internet Relay Service that includes all then current FCC requirements.

*d. Account Manager  
(See RFP item B.54)*

Hamilton will provide an Account Manager for no additional charge. In order to manage the Florida Relay Center, Hamilton will need a management person who will perform some if not all of the functions of an Account Manager. Hamilton believes that the benefits of this type of position are so valuable to Hamilton, that Hamilton is willing to absorb the costs associated with this position.

*e. Other Optional Features Not Included in Basic Relay  
(see RFP item B.55)*

Hamilton has not offered other optional features not included in Basic Relay.

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**Efficiency**

Hamilton is a highly efficient relay provider. Please see the following pages for a complete description of how Hamilton will bring cost savings to Florida.

**Hamilton encourages the Public Service Commission to look beyond cost per minute differences. Hamilton has reduced the number of minutes by reducing the conversation time on a per call basis in each State that it has taken over from another provider, allowing us to lower the State's costs on a per call basis.**

The following information indicates the amount of savings Kentucky, Wisconsin, Louisiana and Rhode Island have realized as a result of Hamilton's efficiency in call handling and accurate billing mechanisms.

**Kentucky**

**Savings of 20%**

**Previous provider (AT&T) Average session minutes 232,385.73**

(November 1997-April 1998)

**Hamilton Average session minutes 185,902.19**

(1<sup>st</sup> year Sept 98-Aug 99)

**Savings of 46,483.54 minutes = 20%**

**Wisconsin**

**Savings of 6%**

**Previous provider (MCI) Average session minutes 313,798.06**

(January 98-June 98)

**Hamilton Average session minutes 294,933.80**

(1<sup>st</sup> year Sept 98-Aug 99)

**Savings of 18,864.26 minutes = 6%**

**Louisiana**

**Savings of 17%**

**Previous provider (MCI) Average conversation minutes 228,912**

(April 1997)

**Hamilton Average conversation minutes 191,012.19**

(Feb 1998-Dec 1998)

**Savings of minutes 37,899.81 = 17%**

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**Rhode Island**  
Savings of 27%

Previous provider (AT&T) Average Session minutes 92,474  
(January to May 2001)  
Hamilton Average Session minutes 67,170  
(August 01-Dec. 01)  
Savings of 25,304 minutes = 27%

There are several factors which contribute to Hamilton's claim that we are the most efficient relay provider in terms of what the relay user and Florida get for their time and money including:

- **Rounding:** - No other relay provider rounds any closer on a per call and on a total minutes basis than Hamilton. Hamilton rounds to the nearest second in its call detail records. Calculations for invoicing are rounded to the nearest 100<sup>th</sup> of a minute. Hamilton has taken over states in the past where the rounding has been in considerably larger increments resulting in a significant percentage difference in cost to the State.
- **Efficiency** – Hamilton has increased the speed of its equipment within its second generation relay platform. In addition, Hamilton's CAs are very efficient at call processing.
- **Call Measurement Techniques** – Hamilton uses very accurate reporting and measurement techniques. Timing of relay call events is outlined at the end of this Tab so that the Public Service Commission knows exactly what it is being billed for. Hamilton's background is in the Local Exchange Carrier business as well as the call center business. Hamilton does not include in its inbound time measurements any network associated time or time associated with holding a call in queue.

*As one can see, even if a competitor submits a per minute price lower than Hamilton, the overall costs to Florida with Hamilton may still be less, making Hamilton the lowest cost provider.*

**The net effect is that Hamilton's bottom line is very competitive and we may in fact, be the lowest cost provider even though the actual rate per minute may be higher. Hamilton has certainly seen a trend towards savings when selected as a new relay provider.** We encourage the Evaluation Committee to contact our Contract Administrators in Wisconsin, Louisiana, Rhode Island and Kentucky to specifically discuss the savings each state has realized.

**Why is "efficiency" so important to relay? An efficient relay provider can handle more calls rapidly and reduce the number of minutes, thus cutting costs on a per call basis. Efficiency, i.e. quicker calls also leads to satisfied customers. Satisfied customers in turn make more relay calls thus more people are served by the Florida Relay.**

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**Hamilton is an extremely efficient relay provider.** Below is a list of the tools Hamilton uses in regards to hardware, software, staffing, training, and call processing to make Hamilton the most efficient relay provider.

### **Call Arrival**

Hamilton assigns each of its relay states to its own queue. Our relay switch will first look for a dedicated Florida Communication Assistant. If there is not a Florida Communication Assistant available, the relay switch will automatically look for the next available Communication Assistant system wide. This includes Communication Assistants connected to all relay switches – in other words, Hamilton’s entire relay network. Larger queue size lets Hamilton handle more relay calls per Communication Assistant per hour thus saving labor costs and allowing Hamilton to reduce its per minute rate to the Public Service Commission.

### **Delivery to Workstation**

Hamilton makes use of an ANI driven customer profile and self-learned profile that allows for faster call setup. Hamilton has an automatic identification of connection speed system within its relay platform. This feature provides automatic connection at the speed of the equipment used by the caller for any caller who has used Hamilton’s Relay Services at least one time before. Our switch has a “self-learning” database which is updated the first time callers reach our center with their originating telephone number and the speed at which they connected to our center. Hamilton first sends Turbo Code signals and then ASCII signals to the new relay user. If no connection is made, Baudot tones are then sent. Once a connection is made, this information is recorded and stored with the relay user’s associated ANI in Hamilton’s database. Call type identification time will vary for first time callers through Hamilton’s relay center, depending on the equipment used. Since Baudot tones are the last tones sent, relay users with this type of equipment will wait a few seconds more on the first call. However, after the relay user's first call, the connect time is reduced significantly since Hamilton recognizes the user’s ANI and connects at Baudot immediately on the next call. *After the first call, our center’s equipment automatically connects at the correct speed the next time it is connected to that particular telephone number. The advantage to the relay user is that connections are made faster with more reliability. Our internal testing indicates that this feature and the manner in which we have deployed it saves anywhere from 2 to 5 seconds of call set-up time compared to other centers, thus cutting costs to Florida on a per call basis.*

### **Customer Profile**

There are several features in Hamilton’s customer profile that lead to call efficiency. A complete description of Hamilton’s profile can be found in Attachment 4. The features below directly impact call efficiency:

- Frequently called numbers – Acts as speed dial for enhanced dial speed and accuracy.

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- Carrier of Choice – This feature stores carrier of choice information for both intralata and interlata relay calls and automatically routes a long distance relay call to the correct carrier of choice. This prevents the need for customers to request a carrier on every long distance relay call.
- Greeting – This feature stores a customer's custom greeting, and automatically places it in a hot key, so neither the relay user nor the CA need to type it each time.

### **Outbound call connection**

Hamilton displays calling information to the Communications Assistant as the call takes place. For example, a Communications Assistant can ensure accurate call routing as call destination (city and state) information is displayed to the CA at dial time. This helps eliminate misdials.

Hamilton's relay software has been designed to ensure fast terminating connections. When the called party answers the phone, the CA can connect directly to ASCII or Baudot by pressing only one key. This allows the CA to set up the outbound call faster.

### **Workstation**

Hamilton has organized its relay workstation software making it easy for the Communications Assistant to keep track of the originating and terminating parties. Everything typed to or typed by the originating party is in capital letters. Everything typed to or typed by the terminating party is in lower case. Each party has its own "window" making the system even more efficient – one box contains the text conversation received and the other box contains the conversation typed by the Communications Assistant. Because Hamilton can process a variety of call types, including VCO to TTY in which the CA types to both parties, Hamilton has established an easy mechanism that allows Communications Assistants to dictate and change which party receives typed communication. The workstation has the ability to abbreviate standard messages (hot keys) and handle them with one keystroke thus saving call set-up, connect and wrap-up time. The workstation can also be monitored by the supervisor workstation for training and quality assurance purposes. **All of these features assist the CA in maintaining the flow of the conversation, assuring that clear conversation takes place, while at the same time promoting efficiency at the workstation.**

### **Conversation**

Obviously, the more information conveyed in a given time, the more efficient the relay call. Hamilton uses the features listed below to ensure that all words, sounds, background information, etc. are transmitted clearly, quickly, and always verbatim. Hamilton's CAs are not just fast, but they are also accurate. All Communications Assistants must achieve a 60 word per minute or higher typing speed **after errors are deducted**. CAs must also achieve a 95% accuracy score. *Hamilton CAs must meet both the typing speed and accuracy requirements*

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*before processing any live relay calls.* Hamilton has calculated average typing speed and accuracy in each of its relay centers. Hamilton's relay centers have a combined average typing speed of 74.75 wpm with 97.73 % accuracy.

Hamilton was one of the first providers to have all of its CAs meeting the FCC's 60-WPM requirement. Hamilton has continued to improve its average typing speed and accuracy since that requirement went into effect.

The following is a list of items that Hamilton uses to increase the speed of the conversation between relay parties:

- 60 and beyond word per minute typists (Communications Assistants)
- Turbo Code
- Automatic Spell Check as the conversation is being typed
- Automatic expansion of commonly used abbreviations
- ASL to English translation upon request
- Hot keys
- Higher pay to CAs who exceed the mandated typing speed and accuracy standards
- Quality Assurance and live call monitoring processes to allow supervisors to monitor calls in progress. One of the measurements scored in Hamilton's quality process is call efficiency. Quality scores are a large part of performance evaluations and are used to determine CA wages.

*Hamilton's average call times have been reduced, probably in part because of its CAs' excellent typing speed. This results in dollar savings. To put it concisely, users are getting more conversation for the same amount of money or it takes less time to complete their conversation. Generally speaking, that improves the service and tends to save money for Florida at the same time.*

### **Communications Assistants**

Another key to relay call efficiency is well trained, rested and experienced Communications Assistants.

Hamilton uses a combination of classroom learning, lab settings, role playing, and CA mentoring to insure that our new CAs are fully trained before they take relay calls. Hamilton is constantly performing refresher training for all CAs. Refresher training is mandatory for CAs who have been monitored and receive low quality scores. In addition, a current procedure manual is available at every workstation for CAs to review between calls.

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Hamilton makes use of real-time call statistics, hourly reports and reader boards (indicating if calls are in queue, number of CAs logged on, etc.) to ensure all calls are being answered as quickly as possible. Hamilton also uses these tools to ensure that Communications Assistants receive timely breaks, to make certain they are always fresh and ready to process the next relay call in a manner that delights the customer and promotes efficiency.

Experienced Communications Assistants develop not only from training, but also longevity. Once a Communications Assistant joins the Hamilton team, they stay. **Hamilton's turnover rate is exceptionally low.** Hamilton's employee friendly work environment and outstanding benefits package have allowed us to grow the number of employees with a wealth of relay call processing experience. All of Hamilton's management teams works to increase employee retention every day and their efforts are easy to quantify. **Hamilton decreased its annualized turnover rate from 148 percent to 51 percent in less than one year.** GC Services shares in Hamilton's philosophy. **GC's annual turnover rate is 65.41%.** These are the types of numbers that indicate efficiency. Communications Assistant skills are at the heart of relay efficiency. Hamilton has experienced, knowledgeable, and most importantly, caring Communications Assistants who work very hard to ensure that each relay user experiences customer delight.

Hamilton will not only bring call efficiency to Florida, but also a management team, with the needed knowledge and experience, flexible technology, and outstanding outreach and customer service programs to guarantee the successful operation of the Florida Relay Service.

**Hamilton has never lost a state once awarded a relay contract.** Hamilton's customers keep coming back not only because of the high quality of service they receive from Hamilton, but also because they are finding Hamilton to be very economical. Hamilton's per minute costs are almost always among the most competitive. **Even when our costs are perhaps higher than our competitors' stated per minute rate, the difference in efficiencies created by a combination of our rounding; no network time; our technology; reduced call setup and wrap up times; as well as excellent typing speed make us, in reality, the low cost solution while still providing the relay users with a first class relay service.**

*Hamilton welcomes the opportunity to meet with the Florida Public Service Commission in person. Hamilton desires to work in partnership with the FPSC to provide a customized relay service that meets the individual needs of all relay users in Florida. Hamilton truly wants to deliver the relay users of Florida "Relay Your Way®."*

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# *Time Billed To State*

