Route Protection
in a COR environment
Pocket Handbook

Dear NALC Member:

Several years ago every City Letter Carrier was mailed a booklet entitled "The NALC Route Protection Pocket Handbook". Since that time much has changed and Letter Carrier routes are currently being adjusted under the MIARAP process.

This follow up book has been designed locally to provide you with a few insights into the MIARAP process and better ways to prepare yourself for adjustments made under the MIARAP agreement.

BACKGROUND

In the past, the route inspection process could at best be described as "uncomfortable" for the typical Letter Carrier. Six-day counts and one-day walks were used to determine the "size" of a route for what in many cases proved to be years. Letter Carriers would accuse management of "hiding" the mail and "redlining" the Carrier for any improper or "excessive" activity. The end results were grievances, and in a growing mail volume environment, routes that were soon out of adjustment anyway.

In 2008 in response to an unprecedented drop in mail volume, management began preparing for a massive amount of full-blown route count and inspections in order to capture "undertime". Postal management indicated that it was their intent to use

COR (Carrier Optimal Routing) wherever and whenever they could. NALC responded in many ways, eventually entering into an agreement for a new "Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process" (IARAP), in which almost every route in the country was adjusted at the same time by local parties.

Following the IARAP process, NALC then entered into an agreement for MIARAP (Modified Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process). The hope was that the process would allow Carrier's to receive better adjustments and Management would save the huge financial burden attached to conducting six-day route counts and inspections. COR was utilized much more widely than in the past and because the process began so quickly, both Carriers and local management had little time to prepare.

Traditionally, NALC Branches have made numerous efforts to better educate the members on how to protect routes and ensure that Letter Carriers had good understanding of the process and how best to demonstrate the time necessary to do the job properly. Hopefully, this information will help you be better prepared for the next round of MIARAP.

UNDERSTANDING COR

Realizing that your route is going to be adjusted utilizing COR, you should know a little about it.

COR is a software application designed for realigning territory within a zone (zip code). COR runs within another software application called Maptitude (in other words COR is a program within a program). Maptitude is a geographic information system sold commercially and used for things such as creating school districts, sales areas, congressional re-districting, and other uses where custom made maps and routing information are necessary.

Before COR is utilized it is prepped by loading route data into the program. For example, DEAT teams load COR with 3999 data, DPS volumes and

caseable volumes.

OPTIMIZATION

During the MIARAP process two areas where Carriers lost substantial time were the adjustment of the travel pattern (the way you drive to, from and on the route) and thru the elimination of Allied Time (Allied Times are non delivery functions we do on the street such as relays –loading the bag, delivering parcels, customer contacts, comfort stops, etc.)

COR calculates route times based on data collected during the 3999. It then uses a process know as "optimization" to "maximize efficiency". To put it another way, this is where COR attempts to make time disappear.

COR uses inputted volumes (including DPS data) to set a supposed bag weight (we used 25 pounds in MIARAP). COR then attempts to set the size

of a relay to maximize this bag weight, and make every relay of such a size that you have 25 pounds of mail in the satchel.

The result of this optimization process is that in many (though not all) cases COR eliminates relays and therefore the time associated with those relays.

For Example. A carrier has a park and loop street that consists of 90 stops. Currently he carries the street in four loops (two loops of say 25 and two of 20). COR will adjust the way the street is carried into either two or three loops (instead of four) based on the calculated bag weight. So you now have say three loops of thirty or two loops of 45 or thereabouts.

COR then eliminates the associated Relay time (the time you use to load your bag and prepare the mail before

each loop). So, on a route that has say 400 stops and 19 loops, COR might reduce that to 12 or 13 loops. If your average relay time is one minute and thirty seconds, and you lose 6 relays, COR eliminates nine minutes of street time.

HOW CAN I COMBAT THE ELIMINATION OF MY RELAY TIME?

Well, on the day of inspection, you can maximize the size of your loops as much as you can and minimize your park points. COR can't take away time that isn't there to begin with and COR never removes time actually used making deliveries, it only tries to eliminate Allied Times.

If there's a reason you carry main street in 4 loops of 20 instead of 2 or 3 loops, indicate it on your consultation form, give the DEAT team something

to argue against with management. Such arguments might include: “third house on loop is a business and gets extremely heavy volume” or there might be parking restrictions, whatever the reason, express it or you stand a good chance of losing that relay time.

TRAVEL TIME

Each Route has travel to, from and within the route. On many of the routes I adjusted, COR attempted to remove lots of travel time. When we would ask local contacts to verify that time, typically they agreed with COR. Many routes would appear to lose 20 or 30 minutes of “travel within” from them based on the new COR travel pattern. How is this possible?

COR Calculates a time from one point on the route to the other. If you currently park at 100 main, do two loops,

then drive to 200 main and do two loops and COR adjusts your route so that you now only park at 100 main, you will lose your travel time driving from 100 to 200 main. That's pretty straightforward. But, if on the way to your next loop, you still have to drive past 200 main, odds are you shouldn't lose this time. If this time is removed, you need to argue it in your final consultation.

Another way in which COR deducts travel time is the difference between what COR calculates and the way your supervisor recorded the time on your last 3999.

FOR EXAMPLE: You finish delivery at 100 main and start walking to your vehicle to drive to the next loop. Your supervisor hits the travel within button when you leave the porch, or when you put your key in the lock of

the vehicle. You're not travelling, but your time is being recorded as if it is. After unlocking the vehicle you reach for a piece of Kleenex and blow your nose, then check your look in the mirror. You finally start the truck and wait to ease into traffic. Your supervisor put you on travel within 1 minute ago; it takes you 12 seconds to drive to 200 main. Your supervisor waits until you park and walk to the back of the truck and unlock the door. Then he puts you onto relay time. Elapsed time another 48 seconds. That's two minutes of travel time that COR will reduce to 12 seconds. Your supervisor needs to know (and I would tell him when you begin your next 99) that you should only be on travel within when the wheels of your truck are moving, not before and not after the wheels stop moving.

After your 3999 is done, ask to review

it, look carefully at the travel within times. COR is typically set to calculate travel times by using a speed of 10 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit and calculating the time over the distance travelled. The lower speed limit is used so as to allow for stop signs, acceleration, deceleration and traffic lights. Using a residential side street, with a speed limit of 25mph (which COR would reduce to 15mph), your vehicle should travel 1320 feet per minute. If your 3999 shows you using 4 minutes to move one block, you know the Supervisor screwed up and needs to edit the 3999.

PROTECT YOUR ROUTE

This is not the end all, be all to COR or MIARAP. COR and MIARAP are new programs that are still in development. But in the meantime, by using

the above strategies you can help to protect your route in the current COR driven environment. Remember, even if you only protect 15 minutes of time on your route, if 32 people do the same, together you've saved one route.

Important things to remember:

1. Review your 3999 after the examiner (usually your Supervisor) walks with you.
If your Supervisor doesn't give you a copy of the 3999 within 48 hours, consult with your steward.

2. The MIARAP memo says the 3999 must be representative. If you have a business route and they walk with you on a Saturday when most businesses are closed, that's not representative. Ask the examiner to note it on your 3999 and bring it up during your

initial consultation during MIARAP. This is just one example, if you have any reason why you feel the 3999 is not representative of the route, bring it up to the examiner to note on the 3999 and during your initial consultation.

3. Note and address any anomalies when reviewing your 3999. Ask the examiner to add your comments and bring them up during your initial consultation.

4. Minimize your travel pattern and your relays to the extent possible.

Notes From Day of 3999

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Notes From Consultation

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