

State of Florida



# Public Service Commission

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TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0850

**-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-**

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**DATE:** June 28, 2023

**TO:** Office of Commission Clerk (Teitzman)

**FROM:** Office of Industry Development and Market Analysis (Williams, Fogleman)<sup>CH</sup>  
Office of the General Counsel (Imig, Harper)<sup>AEH</sup>

**RE:** Docket No. 20230047-TP – Commission approval of Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc.'s fiscal year 2023-2024 proposed budget.

**AGENDA:** 07/11/23 – Regular Agenda – Interested Persons May Participate

**COMMISSIONERS ASSIGNED:** All Commissioners

**PREHEARING OFFICER:** Administrative

**CRITICAL DATES:** None

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:** Anticipate the need for sign language interpreters and assisted listening devices. Please place near the beginning of the agenda to reduce interpreter costs.

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## Case Background

The Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991 (TASA) established a statewide telecommunications relay system. Section 427.704(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.), provides that the Florida Public Service Commission (Commission) shall establish, implement, promote, and oversee the administration of the statewide telecommunications access system to provide access to telecommunications relay services by persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. TASA provides for the purchase and distribution of specialized telecommunications devices as defined in Section 427.703(11), F.S. As defined by Section 427.703(16), F.S., this system is to provide telecommunications service for deaf or hard of hearing persons that is functionally equivalent to the service provided to hearing persons.

The telecommunications access system provides deaf or hard of hearing persons access to basic telecommunications services by using a specialized Communications Assistant that relays information between the deaf or hard of hearing person and the other party to the call. The primary function of the telecommunications access system is accomplished by the deaf or hard of hearing person using a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD). The person using the TDD types a message to the Communications Assistant who in turn voices the message to the other party or types the message to a Captioned Telephone that displays real-time captions of the conversation.

Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI), a non-profit corporation formed by the local exchange telephone companies, was selected by the Commission to serve as the telecommunications access system administrator. FTRI is primarily responsible for the purchase and distribution of specialized telecommunications equipment. As part of this process, FTRI contracts with other organizations to assist in the distribution of equipment and provide customer training on the proper use of the equipment and the relay service. FTRI also conducts marketing to raise awareness of available specialized equipment and related relay service. Finally, FTRI pays the relay services provider that is selected by the Commission through a request for proposals process. The current relay service provider is T-Mobile USA, Inc. (T-Mobile).

FTRI, as the TASA Administrator, is funded through the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge. This surcharge was capped by the Florida Legislature at a maximum of \$0.25 per switched access line (landline) per month. The Florida Legislature limited collection of the surcharge to only 25 lines per account billed. Only local exchange telecommunications companies are required to collect and remit this surcharge to FTRI. The initial TRS surcharge was set at \$0.05 per access line per month.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Commission has changed the surcharge to meet FTRI's budgetary needs. The monthly surcharge is currently \$0.10 per access line.

As part of its oversight responsibilities of the telecommunications access system, the Commission reviews and approves a budget submitted by FTRI on an annual basis. On March 30, 2023, FTRI submitted for approval its proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 budget, which is included as Attachment A to this recommendation. FTRI also compared its proposed budget to the Commission-approved budget, as well as the estimated revenue and expenses, for Fiscal Year 2022/2023. FTRI's estimated revenue and expenses were based on actual data from the first two quarters and estimated data for the third and fourth quarters of the current fiscal year.

Staff sent data requests to FTRI on a number of issues included in its Fiscal Year 2022/2023 estimate of expenses and its proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 budget. FTRI's responses to staff's data requests are included in the docket file. On May 15, 2023, FTRI filed third quarter financial information. With this updated information, staff formulated its own estimated expenses for Fiscal Year 2022/2023, which is reflected in Attachment B.

This recommendation addresses FTRI's proposed budget and recommended TRS surcharge for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. The TRS surcharge is the only rate the Commission establishes for

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<sup>1</sup> Order No. 24581, issued May 24, 1991, in Docket No. 910496-TP, *In re: Implementation of Florida Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991*.

Docket No. 20230047-TP

Date: June 28, 2023

telecommunications companies. The Commission is vested with jurisdiction pursuant to Chapter 427, F.S.

## Discussion of Issues

**Issue 1:** Should the Commission approve FTRI's proposed iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project (Tablet Pilot)?

**Recommendation:** No. Staff recommends the Commission deny FTRI's proposed Tablet Pilot based on the absence of statutory authority. (Williams, Fogleman, Imig, Harper)

### **Staff Analysis:**

As part of FTRI's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, FTRI included a Tablet Pilot (see Attachment C). FTRI notes that equipment distribution and client servicing has been declining because clients and potential clients are transitioning to newer advanced technologies. The purpose of the Tablet Pilot is to address this issue by offering more advanced technologies as part of its equipment distribution program.

FTRI's stated purpose of the Tablet Pilot is to make available iPad and Samsung (Android) Tablets for underserved Floridians with hearing loss, including those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, Deafblind, and those with speech disabilities. The tablets will be pre-loaded with communication applications. FTRI also seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of using these tablets with Wi-Fi broadband connection for the purposes of the communication application. The tablets will not connect directly to cellular networks and the cost associated with Internet access is not supported by the pilot. FTRI also states that:

It is our goal for this iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project to become permanent once [the] State Legislature makes changes to TASA to allow FTRI to continue offering telecommunications equipment with broadband connectivity, including iPad/Samsung Tablets.

### Tablet Procurement

FTRI seeks approval to purchase up to 220 iPad and/or Samsung S6 Lite (Android) Tablets. FTRI intends to purchase these tablets with warranty and support agreements through Teltex, a disability equipment supplier. FTRI projected start-up funding of \$221,600 during the first year of the pilot project. The initial cost (as of 8/30/22 per Teltex) for each device is as follows: iPad 64GB Wi-Fi with a 10.2" screen or Samsung S6 Lite 64GB Wi-Fi with 10.4" screen, at \$980.00 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing or \$1,280.00 for Speech Disabilities. The Tablet Pilot budget proposes 200 TDD tablets and 20 tablets with the additional speech disability software.

### Qualification Process

FTRI initially proposed to set income-eligibility for Deaf customers at 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and for individuals who are hard of hearing or speech impaired at 400 percent of the federal poverty level. Those receiving benefits from Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance, Veterans Affairs, Social Security, Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or Welfare would be exempt from this financial eligibility requirement. However, in response to a staff data request, FTRI modified its proposal to set a uniform financial eligibility threshold of 200 percent of the 2023 Federal Poverty Guidelines

(income of less than \$29,160 for one person). Clients can also be eligible to participate in the Tablet Pilot if they meet Lifeline eligibility requirements.<sup>2</sup>

### Other States

FTRI notes that some state programs are able to distribute more advanced types of equipment. In response to a staff data request, FTRI reports a survey it conducted via Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) members in November 2022 that showed at least 14 states have distribution programs providing various types of iPad and/or Android devices. FTRI also stated that Teltex has deployed over 20,000 Apple and Android devices to at least 25 state programs as of June 1, 2023.

According to FTRI, two states reported that they use a state relay surcharge on landlines to cover the cost of iPad and Android devices. Furthermore, of the 21 states that responded to FTRI's survey, 14 have both landline and wireless surcharges, and 3 states responded that they rely on public funding instead of a surcharge to pay for the wireless services.

### Legal Barriers

Because the TRS industry is evolving and basic TRS and Captioned Telephone Service (CapTel or CTS) users are transitioning to Internet Protocol (IP) Relay,<sup>3</sup> Video Relay Service (VRS),<sup>4</sup> IP CTS,<sup>5</sup> and Wireless Service,<sup>6</sup> FTRI's Tablet Pilot may benefit FTRI's clients' current needs. The TASA statute provides that the specialized telecommunications devices and the relay service should utilize "state-of-the-art" technologies and encourages the incorporation of new beneficial technologies as they are developed.<sup>7</sup> However, the question is whether tablets fall within that category in the context of TASA, which also provides in relevant part:

'Specialized telecommunications device' means a TDD, a volume control handset, a ring signaling device, or any other customer premises **telecommunications equipment specifically designed or used to provide basic access to telecommunications services** for a hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired person.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, TDD is defined as:

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<sup>2</sup> Currently, eligibility programs include: SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans or Survivors Pension Program.

<sup>3</sup> IP Relay allows people who have difficulty hearing or speaking to communicate using a computer and the Internet, rather than a Text Telephone (TTY) and a telephone line.

<sup>4</sup> VRS enables persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment, rather than through typed text. Video equipment links the VRS user with a TRS operator so that the VRS user and the operator can see and communicate by signed conversation.

<sup>5</sup> IP captioned telephone service allows users to simultaneously listen and read the text of what the other party in a telephone conversation has said, where the connection carrying the captions between the service and the user is via an IP addressed and routed link.

<sup>6</sup> Wireless services offer applications such as text, instant messaging, and video chat.

<sup>7</sup> Section 427.702(g), F.S. and Section 427.702(3)(c), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 427.703(14), F.S.

‘Telecommunications device for the deaf’ or ‘TDD’ means a mechanism **which is connected to a standard telephone line**, operated by means of a keyboard, and used to transmit or receive signals through telephone lines.<sup>9</sup>

The Tablet Pilot equipment is basically a computer tablet. Consumers can use such tablets for browsing the web, reading and sending email, viewing and taking photos, watching videos, listening to music, playing games, and reading e-books. Software can be purchased for other productivity functions, such as drafting documents, creating spreadsheets, developing presentations, and editing photographs. While additional applications may be available that provide assistance to the deaf and hard of hearing community, staff believes that a tablet is not a specialized telecommunications device specifically designed or used to provide basic access to telecommunications service for a hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired person. Thus, such computer tablets are not supported by TASA. Furthermore, the statutory definition for TDD equipment is even more restrictive, requiring that equipment be connected by a standard telephone line, which is not an option for either tablet proposed in the pilot project.

FTRI acknowledges that it intends to make the Tablet Pilot permanent once legislation is passed to authorize the use of such equipment. If the TASA statute is not updated before the end of the first-year project, FTRI has indicated that it may request second-year funding from the Commission. Staff contends that such a change in legislation is necessary for either a permanent or a pilot program. Simply limiting the number of tablets and scope of participants as FTRI proposes does not address the statutory barriers.

Further, even if the statute explicitly allowed for the use of such equipment as proposed in the Tablet Pilot, there remains a potential fairness/subsidization issue as to paying for such devices. Although access line revenues to support the relay program continue to decline as consumers move away from landlines in favor of other technologies, the current TASA statute allows for a surcharge to be applied only to basic telecommunications access lines.<sup>10</sup> Thus, basic telecommunications service customers would be paying for computer tablets under FTRI’s proposed program, rather than just basic access to telecommunications services as TASA is currently designed.

#### Other Funding Sources

Although staff understands the potential benefits of the Tablet Pilot, staff recommends that the Tablet Pilot be denied based on the current statute. However, staff believes nothing prevents FTRI from pursuing external funding for this or similar projects. Section 427.705(5)(c), F.S., provides for FTRI to apply for, contract for, receive, and expend for the purposes of this part any appropriation, grant, gift, or donation from the Federal Government or any other public or private source. Staff encourages FTRI to pursue such options, particularly in the absence of statutory changes granting authority to distribute advanced equipment. Potential funding and/or partner organizations may include: Florida Office of Broadband, Florida Alliance for Assistive Technology (FAAST), Florida Department of Education - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), federal grants, and grants from corporate foundations.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 427.703(11), F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Section 427.704(4)(a)(1), F.S.

**Conclusion**

Staff recommends the Commission deny FTRI's proposed Tablet Pilot based on the absence of statutory authority.

However, if the Commission chooses to approve the Tablet Pilot, staff recommends FTRI's Tablet Pilot expense should not be subject to supplemental funding requests during Fiscal Year 2023/2024. In addition, the Commission should require FTRI to provide a status report with its quarterly financial filings providing information on the number of participants, dollars spent per client, vendor expense, and any additional pertinent information.

Date: June 28, 2023

**Issue 2:** Should the Commission approve FTRI's proposed budget as presented in Attachment A for Fiscal Year 2023/2024?

**Recommendation:** No. Staff recommends the Commission modify FTRI's proposed budget expenses of \$3,734,638 to increase relay service expense by \$159,924, decrease TDD equipment expense by \$196,000, decrease Volume Control Phone (VCP) Speech Impaired equipment expense by \$25,600, and approve a total budget expense of \$3,672,962 for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, effective upon issuance of the consummating order. (Williams, Fogleman, Imig, Harper)

**Staff Analysis:**

**Traditional Telecommunications Relay Service**

The traditional TRS cost to FTRI as approved in the T-Mobile contract is currently \$1.60 per session minute. T-Mobile's projections indicate that traditional TRS minutes of use during Fiscal Year 2023/2024 will decrease by 23 percent from the current fiscal year. It has been observed that traditional relay users are transitioning to the following services:

- IP Relay
- VRS
- IP CTS
- Wireless Service

**CapTel Service**

The CapTel cost to FTRI as approved in the T-Mobile contract is currently \$1.67 per session minute. CapTel service uses a specialized telephone that provides captioning of the incoming call for a deaf or hard of hearing person. T-Mobile's projections show that CapTel minutes of use during Fiscal Year 2023/2024 will decline by 35 percent from the current fiscal year. CapTel users are also transitioning to other forms of advanced services as listed above.

**Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. Budget**

Attachment A reflects FTRI's Fiscal Year 2023/2024 proposed budget, which was reviewed and adopted by FTRI's Board of Directors prior to filing with the Commission. FTRI submitted its budget on March 30, 2023, projecting total expenses of \$3,734,638. FTRI presented two options for the TRS surcharge. FTRI proposed the Commission establish a surcharge of \$0.07 per line, which would result in total surcharge revenue of \$2,413,410. As an option, FTRI proposed a \$0.09 TRS surcharge that would generate total surcharge revenue of \$3,102,955.

In addition, FTRI is expected to generate significantly more interest income than in previous years through investments in an Investment Trust Money Market account and 3-month T-bills. Interest income is projected to be \$682,040 during Fiscal Year 2023/2024, resulting in total operating revenue of \$3,095,450 at the \$0.07 surcharge and \$3,784,995 at the \$0.09 surcharge. Staff will address both surcharge options in Issue 3 of the recommendation.

T-Mobile's forecasted Fiscal Year 2023/2024 traditional TRS minutes of use are 651,963, while its forecasted CapTel minutes of use are 153,345. FTRI's proposed TRS and CapTel service



provider expense for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 is \$1,139,303. For comparison, the Commission-approved budget for the current fiscal year reflected traditional TRS minutes of 851,208 and CapTel minutes of 237,981, with a total TRS and CapTel service provider expense of \$1,759,361.

### **Analysis**

Staff developed an estimate of FTRI's final expenses for Fiscal Year 2022/2023, which is presented in Attachment B. Staff used actual data from the first three quarters and took an average of those three quarters to estimate the fourth. Staff's estimates were then used as one element in evaluating FTRI's proposed budget, along with analyzing past Commission-approved FTRI budgets to identify and evaluate ongoing cost reduction measures.

Below is staff's review of selected items from FTRI's proposed budget expense by category.

### **Category I – Relay Services**

Category I captures Dual Party Relay (DPR) provider expenses for traditional TRS and CapTel service currently provided by T-Mobile. In Fiscal Year 2022/2023, basic TRS and CapTel minutes of use decreased from the prior fiscal year. Based on continued advancements in technology, along with the expansion of consumer choice, it appears that minutes of use for these services will continue to decline.

The relay service expenses are calculated using the minutes of use as projected by T-Mobile and relay service contract rates. The proposed budget presented \$1,139,303 in relay service expense. However, staff determined that this total expense was calculated using the previous contract rates of \$1.35 for TRS and \$1.69 for CapTel. The correct contract rates are \$1.60 for TRS and \$1.67 for CapTel, which when applied to the forecasted minutes of use increases relay service expense by \$159,924, resulting in total expense of \$1,299,227.

### **Category II – Equipment & Repairs**

Category II expenses reflect the purchase of equipment to be distributed to clients and the repairs that FTRI must make to keep the equipment in working order. FTRI has requested \$623,058 for Fiscal Year 2023/2024. FTRI's proposed budget represents a \$246,353 increase in expense from the current Commission-approved budget. The proposed increase in equipment and repairs expense is largely associated with its proposed Tablet Pilot. The Tablet Pilot is comprised of a \$196,000 increase in TDD equipment expense and a \$25,600 increase in VCP Speech Impaired equipment expense. Implementation of the proposed Tablet Pilot would represent 90 percent of the increase in expense for Category II. As discussed in Issue 1, staff recommends not approving the additional equipment expense related to the Tablet Pilot based the absence of statutory authority.

Staff recommends approval of \$401,458 for equipment and repairs expense.

### **Category III – Equipment Distribution & Training**

Category III reflects the cost of distributing equipment throughout the state and the training of consumers in the use of that equipment. FTRI's proposed budget requests \$315,766 for

distribution and training, which reflects a \$95,046 increase from the current Commission-approved budget.

Expenses related to Regional Distribution Centers (RDCs) are the largest component of Category III expenses. FTRI's proposed budget for RDCs is \$249,291, which is \$46,845 higher than the current Commission-approved budget. Staff supports FTRI's efforts to expand the quantity of RDCs and provide adequate funding to increase RDC contributions to FTRI's equipment distribution efforts.

Staff believes FTRI's proposed budget for Category III expense is reasonable for budgeting purposes and provides FTRI flexibility while continuing to negotiate fees with the RDCs.

#### **Category IV – Outreach**

Outreach efforts are designed to promote FTRI's equipment distribution services and to raise awareness about Florida relay service. FTRI's proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Outreach budget increases expense by \$26,783.

FTRI employs various forms of communication in its outreach strategy. FTRI plans to continue advertising in newspapers using free-standing insert ads (flyers) in markets where effective. However, FTRI acknowledges that it has witnessed rapid changes in the newspaper industry. In response, FTRI will utilize other print tools such as direct mail post cards and coupon book advertisements. FTRI also plans to continue expanding its digital marketing campaign, including increased use of banner ads on websites, as well as targeted email and social media campaigns.

The Commission has encouraged FTRI to research and consider more technologically advanced and cost-effective forms of outreach. For example, the Commission encouraged FTRI to consider adding an online chat function to help with customer inquiries. FTRI implemented the chat function, termed "FTRI Chat", in its proposed Fiscal Year 2022/2023 budget. Staff believes FTRI's proposed budget for Category IV expense is reasonable.

#### **Category V – General & Administrative**

Category V reflects expenses associated with FTRI's operations, such as office and furnishings, employee compensation, contracted services (auditors, attorney and computer consultants), computers, and other operating expenses. FTRI is proposing \$1,094,079 for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, which represents a \$24,770 increase in Category V expense from the current Commission-approved budget. Staff believes FTRI's Category V expenses are reasonable.

#### **Conclusion**

Staff recommends the Commission modify FTRI's proposed budget expenses of \$3,734,638 to increase relay service expense by \$159,924, decrease TDD equipment expense by \$196,000, decrease VCP Speech Impaired equipment expense by \$25,600, and approve a total budget expense of \$3,672,962 for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, effective upon issuance of the consummating order.

**Issue 3:** What TRS surcharge should the Commission approve for Fiscal Year 2023/2024?

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends the Commission approve FTRI's optional proposal to reduce the TRS surcharge to \$0.09. Staff recommends the Commission order all local exchange companies to bill the \$0.09 TRS surcharge for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, effective September 1, 2023. (Williams, Fogleman, Imig, Harper)

**Staff Analysis:** Based on current industry trends, FTRI estimates that access lines will decrease at the rate of approximately eight percent from the current fiscal year as more consumers transition from landline phones. Holding the TRS surcharge constant, a decrease in access lines results in a decrease in revenues to support FTRI's activities. FTRI's proposal to reduce the TRS surcharge from \$0.10 to \$0.07 per access line places further downward pressure on revenues. FTRI's justification for reducing the surcharge by this amount is to reduce the reserve account. FTRI also filed an optional proposal to reduce the TRS surcharge to \$0.09 per access line for the Commission's consideration.

If approved, a surcharge of \$0.09 is expected to generate \$3,102,955 in surcharge revenue, resulting in total operating revenue of \$3,784,995 when combined with interest income. This represents a \$112,033 surplus for Fiscal Year 2023/2024.<sup>11</sup> Staff estimates that FTRI's revenue less expenses at the current fiscal year-end will result in a surplus of \$520,074, which will be added to the operating account for 2023/2024.

Staff notes that reducing the surcharge to \$0.07 would generate surcharge revenue of \$2,413,410, resulting in total operating revenue of \$3,095,450 when combined with interest income. This would result in a budget shortfall of \$577,513. By comparison, a \$0.08 surcharge would result in a budget shortfall of \$232,740. In previous years, the Commission has allowed FTRI to draw from the reserve account to cover shortfalls in the approved budget.

FTRI maintains a reserve account with a current balance of approximately \$23 million. The reserve account represents funds that were originally set aside in anticipation that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) might delegate intrastate costs associated with Video Relay Service (VRS) and Internet Protocol Caption Telephone Service (IP-CTS) to states. FTRI explained that based on its review and understanding, there is no indication that the FCC will delegate VRS and IP-CTS authority to states in the foreseeable future. Given the overall size of the surplus account, and the expected surplus from the current fiscal year, staff believes a reduction in the surcharge is reasonable.

Staff supports the \$0.09 option because it balances the budget more precisely assuming the Commission approves staff's recommended expense adjustments in Issue 2. Further, maintaining the reserve account at or near current levels provides financial flexibility and support if FTRI obtains authority in the future to distribute more advanced equipment.

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<sup>11</sup> Budget surplus and shortfalls for each TRS surcharge are calculated using staff's recommended budget expense amounts.

**Conclusion**

Staff recommends the Commission approve FTRI's optional proposal to reduce the TRS surcharge to \$0.09. Staff recommends the Commission order all local exchange companies to bill the \$0.09 TRS surcharge for Fiscal Year 2023/2024, effective September 1, 2023.

**Issue 4:** Should this docket be closed?

**Recommendation:** If no person whose substantial interests are affected by the proposed agency action files a protest within 21 days of the issuance of the order, this docket should be closed upon the issuance of a consummating order. (Imig, Harper)

**Staff Analysis:** At the conclusion of the protest period, if no protest is filed this docket should be closed upon the issuance of a consummating order.

**Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc.  
 Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget @ 7 cents surcharge**

	2022/2023 APPROVED BUDGET	2022/2023 ESTIMATED REV & EXPEND	2023/2024 BUDGET	Estimated to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024	Budget to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>					
1	3,956,784	3,747,530	2,413,410	(1,334,120)	(1,543,374)
2	1,521	171,653	682,040	510,387	680,519
<b>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE</b>					
	3,958,305	3,919,183	3,095,450	-823,733	-862,855
<b>OTHER REVENUE/FUNDS</b>					
3	19,075,296	19,026,533	19,024,958	(1,575)	(50,338)
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>					
	23,033,601	22,945,716	22,120,408	(825,309)	(913,193)
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>					
<b>CATEGORY I - RELAY SERVICES</b>					
4	1,759,361	1,759,361	1,139,303	(620,058)	(620,058)
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY I</b>					
	1,759,361	1,759,361	1,139,303	(620,058)	(620,058)
<b>CATEGORY II - EQUIPMENT &amp; REPAIRS</b>					
5	0	0	196,000	196,000	196,000
6	0	0	0	0	0
7	225,523	353,463	273,454	(80,009)	47,931
8	0	0	25,600	25,600	25,600
9	39,800	22,388	24,875	2,487	(14,925)
10	67,137	70,767	70,370	(397)	3,233
11	540	682	665	(17)	125
12	5,269	2,473	3,569	1,096	(1,700)
13	100	63	100	37	0
14	38,336	29,908	28,425	(1,483)	(9,911)
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY II</b>					
	376,705	479,744	623,058	143,314	246,353
<b>CATEGORY III - EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION &amp; TRAINING</b>					
15	17,806	41,968	41,475	(493)	23,669
16	202,446	221,635	249,291	27,656	46,845
17	468	468	25,000	24,532	24,532
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY III</b>					
	220,720	264,071	315,766	51,695	95,046
<b>CATEGORY IV - OUTREACH</b>					
18	535,650	535,650	562,433	26,783	26,783

**Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc.  
 Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget @ 7 cents surcharge**

	2022/2023 APPROVED BUDGET	2022/2023 ESTIMATED REV & EXPEND	2023/2024 BUDGET	Estimated to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024	Budget to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024
SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY IV	535,650	535,650	562,433	26,783	26,783
<b>CATEGORY V - GENERAL &amp; ADMINISTRATIVE</b>					
19 Advertising	0	0	0	0	0
20 Accounting/Auditing	20,588	25,090	26,698	1,608	6,110
21 Legal	30,288	28,755	37,790	9,035	7,502
22 Computer Consultation	6,960	7,632	6,210	(1,422)	(750)
23 Dues & Subscriptions	1,380	1,638	1,700	62	320
24 Office Equipment Purchase	21,048	13,129	15,650	2,521	(5,398)
25 Office Equipment Lease	1,713	1,931	1,747	(184)	34
26 Insurance-Hlth/Life/Dsblty	180,943	126,825	189,179	62,354	8,236
27 Insurance-Other	11,034	10,351	11,405	1,054	371
28 Office Expense	10,097	12,263	12,762	499	2,665
29 Postage	2,951	2,993	3,100	107	149
30 Printing	750	350	750	400	0
31 Rent	94,877	94,950	94,950	0	73
32 Utilities	4,356	5,188	5,086	(102)	730
33 Retirement	89,941	75,684	88,469	12,785	(1,472)
34 Employee Compensation	526,525	418,892	521,992	103,100	(4,533)
35 Taxes - Payroll	39,316	30,428	39,932	9,504	616
36 Taxes - Unemplmt Comp	70	63	70	7	0
37 Taxes - Licenses	61	61	61	0	0
38 Telephone	19,500	16,967	17,178	211	(2,322)
39 Travel & Business	4,055	3,303	12,000	8,697	7,945
40 Equipment Maint.	631	1,164	1,350	186	719
41 Employee Training/Dev	225	0	500	500	275
42 Meeting & Interpreter Exp	2,000	4,275	5,500	1,225	3,500
SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY V	1,069,309	881,932	1,094,079	212,147	24,770
 TOTAL EXPENSES	 3,961,745	 3,920,758	 3,734,638	 (186,120)	 (227,107)
REVENUE LESS EXPENSES	19,071,856	19,024,958	18,385,769	(639,189)	(686,087)

**Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc.**  
**Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget @ 9 cents surcharge**

	2022/2023 APPROVED BUDGET	2022/2023 ESTIMATED REV & EXPEND	2023/2024 BUDGET	Estimated to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024	Budget to Budget VARIANCE 2022/2023 2023/2024
<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>					
1 Surcharges	3,956,784	3,747,530	3,102,955	(644,575)	(853,829)
2 Interest Income	1,521	171,653	682,040	510,387	680,519
<b>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE</b>	<b>3,958,305</b>	<b>3,919,183</b>	<b>3,784,995</b>	<b>-134,188</b>	<b>-173,310</b>
<b>OTHER REVENUE/FUNDS</b>					
3 Surplus Account	19,075,296	19,026,533	19,024,958	(1,575)	(50,338)
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>23,033,601</b>	<b>22,945,716</b>	<b>22,809,953</b>	<b>(135,763)</b>	<b>(223,648)</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>					
<b>CATEGORY I - RELAY SERVICES</b>					
4 DPR Provider	1,759,361	1,759,361	1,139,303	(620,058)	(620,058)
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY I</b>	<b>1,759,361</b>	<b>1,759,361</b>	<b>1,139,303</b>	<b>(620,058)</b>	<b>(620,058)</b>
<b>CATEGORY II - EQUIPMENT &amp; REPAIRS</b>					
5 TTY/TDD	0	0	196,000	196,000	196,000
6 CapTel Phone Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
7 VCP Hearing Impaired	225,523	353,463	273,454	(80,009)	47,931
8 VCP Speech Impaired	0	0	25,600	25,600	25,600
9 TeliTalk Speech Aid	39,800	22,388	24,875	2,487	(14,925)
10 In-Line Amplifier	67,137	70,767	70,370	(397)	3,233
11 ARS Signaling Equip	540	682	665	(17)	125
12 VRS Signaling Equip	5,269	2,473	3,569	1,096	(1,700)
13 Accessories & Supplies	100	63	100	37	0
14 Telecomm Equip Repair	38,336	29,908	28,425	(1,483)	(9,911)
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY II</b>	<b>376,705</b>	<b>479,744</b>	<b>623,058</b>	<b>143,314</b>	<b>246,353</b>
<b>CATEGORY III - EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION &amp; TRAINING</b>					
15 Freight-Telecomm Equip	17,806	41,968	41,475	(493)	23,669
16 Regional Distr Centers	202,446	221,635	249,291	27,656	46,845
17 Training Expense	468	468	25,000	24,532	24,532
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY III</b>	<b>220,720</b>	<b>264,071</b>	<b>315,766</b>	<b>51,695</b>	<b>95,046</b>
<b>CATEGORY IV - OUTREACH</b>					
18 Outreach Expense	535,650	535,650	562,433	26,783	26,783
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY IV</b>	<b>535,650</b>	<b>535,650</b>	<b>562,433</b>	<b>26,783</b>	<b>26,783</b>



**Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc.  
 Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget @ 9 cents surcharge**

	2022/2023	2022/2023	2023/2024	Estimated to Budget	Budget to Budget
	APPROVED	ESTIMATED	BUDGET	VARIANCE	VARIANCE
	BUDGET	REV & EXPEND	BUDGET	2022/2023	2022/2023
				2023/2024	2023/2024
<b>CATEGORY V - GENERAL &amp; ADMINISTRATIVE</b>					
19 Advertising	0	0	0	0	0
20 Accounting/Auditing	20,588	25,090	26,698	1,608	6,110
21 Legal	30,288	28,755	37,790	9,035	7,502
22 Computer Consultation	6,960	7,632	6,210	(1,422)	(750)
23 Dues & Subscriptions	1,380	1,638	1,700	62	320
24 Office Equipment Purchase	21,048	13,129	15,650	2,521	(5,398)
25 Office Equipment Lease	1,713	1,931	1,747	(184)	34
26 Insurance-Hlth/Life/Dsbly	180,943	126,825	189,179	62,354	8,236
27 Insurance-Other	11,034	10,351	11,405	1,054	371
28 Office Expense	10,097	12,263	12,762	499	2,665
29 Postage	2,951	2,993	3,100	107	149
30 Printing	750	350	750	400	0
31 Rent	94,877	94,950	94,950	0	73
32 Utilities	4,356	5,188	5,086	(102)	730
33 Retirement	89,941	75,684	88,469	12,785	(1,472)
34 Employee Compensation	526,525	418,892	521,992	103,100	(4,533)
35 Taxes - Payroll	39,316	30,428	39,932	9,504	616
36 Taxes - Unemplmt Comp	70	63	70	7	0
37 Taxes - Licenses	61	61	61	0	0
38 Telephone	19,500	16,967	17,178	211	(2,322)
39 Travel & Business	4,055	3,303	12,000	8,697	7,945
40 Equipment Maint.	631	1,164	1,350	186	719
41 Employee Training/Dev	225	0	500	500	275
42 Meeting & Interpreter Exp	2,000	4,275	5,500	1,225	3,500
<b>SUBTOTAL-CATEGORY V</b>	<b>1,069,309</b>	<b>881,932</b>	<b>1,094,079</b>	<b>212,147</b>	<b>24,770</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3,961,745</b>	<b>3,920,758</b>	<b>3,734,638</b>	<b>(186,120)</b>	<b>(227,107)</b>
<b>REVENUE LESS EXPENSES</b>	<b>19,071,856</b>	<b>19,024,958</b>	<b>19,075,315</b>	<b>50,356</b>	<b>3,459</b>

**STAFF'S BUDGET COMPARISON**

	2022/2023 APPROVED BUDGET	2022/2023 FTRI ESTIMATED	2022/2023 FPSC STAFF ESTIMATED	2023/2024 FPSC STAFF PROPOSED BUDGET	2023/2024 FTRI PROPOSED BUDGET @ \$.09
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Surcharge	3,956,784	3,747,530	3,747,530	3,102,955	3,102,955
Interest	1,521	171,653	171,653	682,040	682,040
<b>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE</b>	<b>3,958,305</b>	<b>3,919,183</b>	<b>3,919,183</b>	<b>3,784,995</b>	<b>3,784,995</b>
Surplus Account	19,075,296	19,026,533	19,026,533	19,024,958	19,024,958
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>23,033,601</b>	<b>22,945,716</b>	<b>22,945,716</b>	<b>22,809,953</b>	<b>22,809,953</b>

**OPERATING EXPENSES**

<b>CATEGORY I - RELAY SERVICES</b>					
DPR Provider	1,759,361	1,759,361	1,415,629	1,299,227	1,139,303
<b>SUBTOTAL CATEGORY I</b>	<b>1,759,361</b>	<b>1,759,361</b>	<b>1,415,629</b>	<b>1,299,227</b>	<b>1,139,303</b>

<b>CATEGORY II - EQUIPMENT &amp; REPAIRS</b>					
TDD Equipment	-	-	-	-	196,000
Large Print TDD	-	-	-	-	-
VCO/HCO-TDD	-	-	-	-	-
VCO-Telephone	-	-	-	-	-
Dual Sensory Equipment	-	-	-	-	-
CapTel Phone Equipment	-	-	-	-	-
VCP Hearing Impaired	225,523	353,463	277,260	273,454	273,454
VCP Speech Impaired	-	-	-	-	25,600
TeliTalk Speech Aid	39,800	22,388	26,533	24,875	24,875
Jupiter Speaker Phone (InferaRed/Hands Free)	-	-	-	-	-
In Line Amplifier	67,137	70,767	77,551	70,370	70,370
ARS-Signaling Equipment	540	682	-	665	665
VRS-Signaling Equipment	5,269	2,473	-	3,569	3,569
Equipment Accessories/Supplies	100	63	33	100	100
Telecom Equipment Repair	38,336	29,908	30,367	28,425	28,425
<b>SUBTOTAL CAT II</b>	<b>376,705</b>	<b>479,744</b>	<b>411,744</b>	<b>401,458</b>	<b>623,058</b>

<b>CATEGORY III - EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION &amp; TRAINING</b>					
Freight - Telecomm Equipment	17,806	41,968	40,187	41,475	41,475
Regional Distribution Centers	202,446	221,635	217,931	249,291	249,291
Workshop Expense	-	-	-	-	-
Training Expense for RDCs	468	468	624	25,000	25,000
<b>SUBTOTAL CAT III</b>	<b>220,720</b>	<b>264,071</b>	<b>258,741</b>	<b>315,766</b>	<b>315,766</b>

**STAFF'S BUDGET COMPARISON**

	2022/2023 APPROVED BUDGET	2022/2023 FTRI ESTIMATED	2022/2023 FPSC STAFF ESTIMATED	2023/2024 FPSC STAFF PROPOSED BUDGET	2023/2024 FTRI PROPOSED BUDGET @ \$.09
Outreach Expense	535,650	535,650	455,939	562,433	562,433
<b>SUBTOTAL CAT IV</b>	<b>535,650</b>	<b>535,650</b>	<b>455,939</b>	<b>562,433</b>	<b>562,433</b>

<b>CATEGORY V - GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE</b>					
Advertising	-	-	-	-	-
Accounting/Audit	20,588	25,090	32,113	26,698	26,698
Legal	30,288	28,755	19,505	37,790	37,790
Consultation-Computer	6,960	7,632	4,599	6,210	6,210
Dues/Subscriptions	1,380	1,638	865	1,700	1,700
Office Furniture	-	-	-	-	-
Office Equipment Purchase	21,048	13,129	6,159	15,650	15,650
Office Equipment Lease	1,713	1,931	1,745	1,747	1,747
Leasehold Improvements	-	-	-	-	-
Insurance -Health/Life/Disability	180,943	126,825	111,607	189,179	189,179
Insurance-Other	11,034	10,351	10,064	11,405	11,405
Office Expense	10,097	12,263	12,069	12,762	12,762
Postage	2,951	2,993	1,379	3,100	3,100
Printing	750	350	-	750	750
Rent	94,877	94,950	95,145	94,950	94,950
Utilities	4,356	5,188	5,124	5,086	5,086
Retirement	89,941	75,684	77,733	88,469	88,469
Employee Compensation	526,525	418,892	419,971	521,992	521,992
Temporary Employment	-	-	-	-	-
Taxes - Payroll	39,316	30,428	31,611	39,932	39,932
Taxes - Unemployment Comp	70	63	9	70	70
Taxes - Licenses	61	61	81	61	61
Telephone	19,500	16,967	16,864	17,178	17,178
Travel & Business Expense	4,055	3,303	4,404	12,000	12,000
Equipment Maintenance	631	1,164	1,352	1,350	1,350
Employee Training	225	-	-	500	500
Meeting Expense	2,000	4,275	4,656	5,500	5,500
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-
<b>SUBTOTAL CAT V</b>	<b>1,069,309</b>	<b>881,932</b>	<b>857,056</b>	<b>1,094,079</b>	<b>1,094,079</b>

TOTAL EXPENSES	3,961,745	3,920,758	3,399,109	3,672,962	3,734,638
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REVENUES LESS EXPENSES	(3,440)	(1,575)	520,074	112,033	50,357
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**2023-2024 Florida FTRI/PSC - iPad/Tablet Pilot Project:**  
**Tablets with Telecommunication and Communication Apps**

**Introduction**

Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI), a not-for-profit statewide program that provides landline telecommunications devices for eligible Floridians with hearing loss as well as those with speech disabilities, requests approval from Public Service Commission to initiate an iPad/Tablet Pilot Project during SFY 2023-2024.

The purpose of this proposed FTRI iPad/Tablet Pilot Project is twofold:

First, to make available iPad and Samsung (Android) Tablets for underserved Floridians with hearing loss, including those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, Deafblind, and those with speech disabilities. The versatile iPad and Samsung Tablets will be pre-loaded with Telecommunication and Communication applications (Apps).

Secondly, to evaluate effectiveness on the use of iPad and Samsung Tablets via IP/wireless/Wi-Fi/broadband connections.

This pilot project will examine whether people who are Deaf and hard of hearing as well as those with speech disabilities will embrace and benefit more with iPad or Samsung (Android) Tablets instead of with FTRI's current offerings of landline devices, including Teletypewriter for the Deaf (TTY), amplified phones, and Telitalk. This pilot project will also examine benefits of telecommunication and communication Apps (i.e., captioned relay service, video relay service, real-time text, speech to text). It is also important to mention other valuable benefits of these tablets. For instance, these iPad and Samsung Tablets provide greater flexibility and better mobility among these population groups, in or outside of their homes. Secondly, wireless texts or Apps provide for safety and disaster/hurricane advance notices, warnings, and updates, either at home or anywhere. None of current FTRI's inventory of TTY and amplified or captioned phones offer these important features.

**Background and Justification for Project**

According to FCCDHH 2015 Biennial Report ([www.fccdhh.org](http://www.fccdhh.org)), over 2.5 million Floridians have hearing loss and around 1.5 million individuals have speech disabilities ([www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/quick](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/quick) - statistics - voice). Many lack or have limited access to phones. FTRI has distributed over 670,000 devices, including TTYs and amplified phones. Since its inception, FTRI has served over 571,000 eligible Floridians who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and Deafblind, and those with speech disabilities. Over 337,000 Floridians with hearing loss or speech disabilities still use FTRI devices.



**Telecommunications Access Systems Act (TASA)** (FS 427.701-.708), a state law, now over 30 years old, has not been updated since its inception in 1991 to address ongoing rapid changes in telecommunications systems and infrastructure, including broadband.

According to **Public Service Commission (PSC)**, TASA limits FTRI to only provide landline telecommunications devices with analog technology or POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) to individuals with hearing loss or speech disabilities. In the “**Report on the Status of Competition in the Telecommunications Industry**” by PSC to the State Legislature dated December 31, 2021, the landlines (analog) are both fast disappearing and replaced with VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) in the coming years. This report also states that “residential access lines totaled over 400,000 as of December 2021, representing a decline of 19.1 percent from the previous year,” and “for the five-year period from 2017 through 2021, the total number of traditional wirelines (*landlines*) decreased by over 1.3 million, a decline of 53.7 percent” (Page 11). Also, the wireless networks are proliferating and contributing to further demise of landline service, and per this report, there are over 22 million wireless subscriptions (Page 20). Therefore, it is of utmost urgency that FTRI start offering a choice of newer equipment that are more compatible with broadband. Our current inventory of analog devices is fast becoming obsolete due to loss of landlines.

One example, Teletypewriter for the Deaf (TTY), which is 40-years old and uses analog technology, does not operate effectively with today’s newer digital/VOIP via local exchange carriers (phone companies) and is not compatible with wireless/internet technology. In comparison, I-Pad and Samsung (Android) Tablets as provided by Teltex offer several text and video communication Apps. These tablets, in addition to smartphones, are in a great demand and are preferred by individuals with hearing loss. Specialized tablets can assist those with speech disabilities with dexterity issues so they can communicate more effectively via Apps. Because of TASA, FTRI is prohibited from offering devices that work with broadband but offers few available specialized dual-functioning phones that work with either landline (analog), or Bluetooth (to connect with existing cellular phone service).

Broadband, including cellular communications, is a fast-growing phenomenon that most Floridians take for granted for use in their daily functions, at home and work. While today’s devices that work with broadband technology are in a greater demand, TASA still prohibits FTRI from obtaining and distributing wireless equipment, using landline phone surcharges. Through this unique **iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project**, we hope to both offer eligible Floridians with hearing loss and speech disorders an opportunity to get these tablets and evaluate their use with IP/wireless/ Wi-Fi/broadband connections. We need to examine whether these tablets benefit our consumers better than what FTRI offers with its landline equipment.

## **Comparison Between FTRI and Other State Programs**

Many states have a state administrator to oversee a similar statewide program like FTRI. Unlike Florida, other states offer their consumers with hearing loss a wide choice of telecommunications equipment, including broadband (i.e., iPad, Android). To see an example of one state program in our neighbor State of Georgia, visit <https://www.gcdhh.org/equipment> (Click on TEDP).

## **The FTRI iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project**

The FTRI iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project will work with Teltex ([www.teltex.com](http://www.teltex.com)), the largest supplier of telecommunications equipment and services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Telecommunications Equipment Distribution programs (TEDPs) in the country. Teltex reports that as of September 6, 2022, there are currently 25 state programs offering wireless equipment through Teltex with three additional state programs looking to add wireless programs to their TEDPs

## **Which Tablets will be Offered?**

The **iPad (Apple)** is the iPad 9<sup>th</sup> generation Wi-Fi only tablet with 64GB of memory size. This is a 10.2" retina display tablet, with the A13 Bionic Chip. The 9<sup>th</sup> generation iPad is the most basic iPad that all State TEDPs currently purchase. This iPad, costing \$980.00 each, includes the latest iPad OS (Apple iPad Operating System), the native Apple apps (for example, App Store, Mail, Messages) and the pre-loaded consumer specific app package for communication (for example, the Deaf & Hard of Hearing App Package includes VRS, IPCTS, and Video Call apps, while the Speech Package includes VRS and AAC apps).

The **Samsung S6 Lite Tablet** (Android) is a Wi-Fi only tablet with 64GB of memory size. This is a 10.4" TFT LCD screen with the Snapdragon 720G processor. The Samsung S6 Lite, costing \$980.00 each, includes the latest Android OS, the native Android apps (for example, App Store, Mail, Messages, etc) and the pre-loaded consumer specific app package for communication (for example, the Deaf & Hard of Hearing App Package includes VRS, IPCTS, and Video Call apps, while the Speech Package includes VRS and AAC apps).

There is also a version of these tablets benefitting consumers with speech disabilities. These specialized tablets for this population cost \$1280.00 each. The price difference between the **Deaf & Hard of Hearing iPad/Android Tablet** and the **Speech Disabled Tablets** are because of the cost of added Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) apps. For an iPad or a Tablet to benefit individuals with Speech Disabilities, an AAC app must be provided with the device – and the average cost of an AAC app is +/- \$300. This \$300 amount gives State TEDPs the flexibility to provide an AAC app, and if the consumer requests a different AAC app for greater accessibility, Teltex can pull the original app from the tablet and remotely send a new AAC app with no additional cost to the State TEDP (while the device is covered by TeltexCare).

Please note, 99.9% of Speech Consumers request and receive an iPad as opposed to an Android Tablet, as AAC apps are developed in higher numbers for the iPad than the Android platform – though new apps are being developed and added to the Android App Store constantly.

In addition, there is no volume discount available for both iPad and Samsung Tablets, and Teltex encourages the State EDP to order on demand as opposed to bulk purchasing, ensuring the program has access to the latest devices available and never stuck with older and outdated equipment.

### **Project Funding Needs - How Many Tablets?**

Up to 220 iPad and/or Samsung S6 Lite (Android) Tablets will be purchased directly and initially through Teletex with a projected start-up funding of \$221,600 during the first year of this Pilot Project. The initial cost (as of 8/30/22 per Teltex) for each device is as follows: iPad 64GB Wi Fi comes with a 10.2" Screen (\$980.00 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or \$1280.00 for Speech Disabilities), and Samsung S6 Lite 64GB Wi Fi comes with 10.4" Screen (\$980.00 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or \$1280.00 for Speech Disabilities).

The following is our proposed budget breakdown:

<u>iPad and/or Samsung S6 Lite (Android)</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Cost per Unit</u>	
Deaf/hard of hearing	200	x \$980.00 =	\$196,000
Speech Disabilities	20	x \$1280.00 =	\$ 25,600
<b><u>Total Costs for I-Pad Project</u></b> (First Year)			<b>\$221,600</b>

Note 1: FTRI will assign responsibilities of I-Pad Pilot Project Coordinator to its unfilled Distribution Program Coordinator (DPC) position. The increase in outreach travel budget will also cover travel/on-site promotions/outreach/education/training for I-Pad/Samsung Tablets.

Note 2: FTRI will provide office space and use its equipment and utilities as an in-kind contribution to this project.

Note 3: Should the demand by consumers for iPad/Samsung tablets exceed our budget, FTRI will request approval from PSC to draw additional funds from reserve/savings account to accommodate an increase in orders of I-Pads/Samsung tablets.

Note 4: FTRI will offer iPad Pro for consumers who are Deaf-Blind but with low-vision as an option only if Teltex has this product.



### **Qualification Process**

The tablets will be distributed on a loan basis like what FTRI currently does with other telecommunications devices. However, income-eligibility process will also be utilized to limit the tablets to individuals who are unable to afford these tablets. Initial focus will be on reaching out to Deaf customers who currently utilize FTRI's analog TTYs or captioned phones since landlines are disappearing in a few years. The preliminary plan is to set income-eligibility for Deaf customers at 200% of the federal poverty level, and for individuals who are hard of hearing or speech impaired at 400% of the federal poverty level. Those relying on SSI/SSDI, VA, Social Security, WC, Welfare, etc. will be exempted from this financial eligibility requirement.

To qualify for an iPad/Samsung Tablet, the individual must:

1. Be a legal resident of Florida with proof of address.
2. Have a documented hearing or speech disability.
3. Meet a qualifying income-level to obtain I-Pad or Samsung (Android) Tablet.

### **Set-Up and Procedures**

FTRI, through its main office in Tallahassee, will oversee this iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project. FTRI will also work with its local Regional Distribution Centers (RDCs) to assist and provide training to consumers receiving the tablets directly from Teltex.

The new combined position of Distribution Program Coordinator (DPC)/iPad Tablet Pilot Project Coordinator will include duties such as: responding to public inquiries, reviewing, and approving new applications, ensuring proper shipments of tablets directly to qualified consumers' homes, and working with RDCs to serve and train customers receiving tablets.

The iPad Tablet Coordinator will also work with Teltex which handles shipping, maintenance, and repair of these tablets.

To start the pilot project, the new iPad Tablet Pilot Project Coordinator will conduct the following steps:

1. Announce availability of iPad/Samsung Tablets to the General Public
2. Create a new separate application form for Tablets and posting of this separate application link on the Website.
3. Determine which documents are required to qualify for one of the Tablets including hearing loss or speech disability, and proof of service
4. Develop qualifications, including income levels, to qualify for a tablet.
5. Create agreement and instruction forms on using iPad/Samsung Tablets
6. Identify accessories to include with iPad/Samsung Tablets
7. Set-Up coordination with Teltex for direct shipping and maintenance of iPad/Samsung Tablets.



8. Develop iPad and Samsung Tablets Guide and Instructions with assistance from Teltex
9. Coordinate with and assist RDCs regarding customer training on use of iPad and/or Samsung Tablets

### **The role of Teltex in this I-Pad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project:**

The cost differential between MSRP on this model of iPad/Samsung and what Teltex propose is directly related to the Wireless Program Services, known as Teltex Care. Teltex Care is a unique program designed by Teltex specific for state government programs that serve individuals with disabilities and is not available through any other outlets. When an iPad is purchased directly from Apple or an Android tablet direct from Samsung, the device arrives with the charger, a charging cable and one-year limited warranty. Consumers are left to work directly with the manufacturer (Apple or Samsung) for all operational and service issues.

As Teltex noticed that State Equipment Distribution Programs (EDPs) require a more comprehensive service and support package, it designed Teltex Care to reflect this. Teltex Care is an all-encompassing three-year warranty of hardware and software and covers replacement of defective or accidental damaged units without charging the consumer or Program an additional fee. In addition, consumers work directly with Teltex for all warranty needs, and there is never an additional charge placed on the consumer for repair and/or replacement of units covered under TeltexCare. Teltex Care includes:

#### Purchasing

Teltex is an authorized Government Contractor for both Apple and Android, offering the full line of wireless products; plus, Teltex is the strategic partner for State & Local Government Disability Programs for Apple. Teltex simplifies FTRI purchasing process by accepting our purchase orders and individual unit versus multi-unit ordering.

#### Warehousing

All equipment is warehoused in a secure climate-controlled building equipped with alarms and sprinkler systems. All our equipment and the equipment of other programs are heavily insured, and all data files are remotely stored offsite. All Wireless equipment is sourced via Apple's and Android's State & Local Government Channel, complying with Teltex's agreements as an Authorized Government Contractor. Teltex provides State Agencies with a secure warehouse in Kearney, Missouri.

#### Laser Etching for Asset Management

Teltex laser etches in a large easy to read font with logo, the wireless device with the State Agency's name, logo, and asset tag number. In addition, other information such as "Not for Resale" or any other information the program requires can be etched. The laser etching

protects the State Agency's return on investment by reducing the risk for waste, fraud (such as reselling the device) and abuse. In addition, the Otterbox case can be laser etched with the identical large easy to read font and logo as the wireless device.

#### Warranty

All wireless devices purchased from Teltex include an all-encompassing three-year warranty of hardware and software coverage for 3 years. TeltexCare covers replacement of defective or accidental damaged units without charging the consumer or Program an additional fee. In addition, consumers work directly with Teltex for all warranty needs, and there is never an additional charge placed on the consumer for repair and/or replacement of units covered by TeltexCare.

Customer abuse, or intentional neglect or damage caused by the wireless device being removed from the protective case may void the warranty.

Teltex processes 100% of all services through our in-house Technical Department. All Teltex's customer service, technical support and TeltexCare warranty services are provided at Teltex's Kearney, Missouri location. All services provided to the State and to consumers are performed domestically, never internationally, and by Teltex staff members-never contractors or subcontractors.

TeltexCare requires the wireless device to be distributed in an OtterBox Case (or comparable protective case provided by Teltex) for the device's protection. OtterBox Defender cases are the most recognized protective cases for wireless devices, offering the highest level of protection against drops, bending, cracking and more.

Teltex also requires all equipment to be enrolled in the Teltex MDM Servers for the State and/or client to purchase TeltexCare.

#### Complete list of what type of damage is covered.

- Damages covered under warranty include:
- Apps purchased by State Program
- Electronic and software failures (main control board, charging ports, cameras, all switches, home button, Wi-Fi and cellular modules, speakers, microphones and displays)
- Accidental cracked screens
- Batteries
  
- Power supplies that are defective
- Charging cables that are defective

Damages not covered under warranty include:

- Lost devices
- Stolen devices
- Missing equipment
- Power supplies
- Cables
- Otterbox
- Intentionally damaged and/or abused wireless devices

Customizing

Each wireless device can be programmed to operate in a variety of ways. The State Agency can decide to give full access to the App Store allowing for a consumer to feel greater connection and usability of the device. Some examples of customizing a device are:

- access to the App Store;
- access to the internet;
- locking down the wireless device into single app mode rendering the equipment useless if the consumer is in violation of the State Program agreement.

Enrolling

Each wireless device is enrolled into a server at Teltex that allows for the following services to be conducted remotely, and reports provided to the State:

- Track and/or locate the device
  - For example, is the device still within the State
- Is the device being used
  - For example, no activity could equate to the device being lost or stolen
- Customization of device
- Application Management & Custom App Store for State
- Send messages to the device and consumer
- Send updates of software and apps to the device
- Push new apps directly to the device
- Remove apps from the device
- Remote diagnostics and fixing of service issues
- Reset screen lock password
- View remaining storage capacity and physical memory
  
- Configure email accounts
- Ability to help consumer locate device with an alarm.

### Packaging & Shipping

Each iPad/Samsung tablet is distributed in a specially designed FTRI box to protect the device and include any accessories the State orders for the consumer (for example, cases, cords, styluses, mounting brackets) All equipment can be drop shipped directly to the client's home in the specialized packaging. "Save the Box" labels will be placed on the inside and outside in the event a consumer must return the equipment.

### Support

Teltex provides all operational and technical service directly to the client. This includes any type of repair service, re-installation of apps and operating system updates.

Operational and technical service is provided in the following ways:

- Telephone: Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm Central via voice or TTY
- Email: [iOS@teltex.com](mailto:iOS@teltex.com)
- Website & Social Media: [www.iaccessibility.com](http://www.iaccessibility.com)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/iOSaccessibility](https://www.facebook.com/iOSaccessibility)
- Twitter: @i\_accessibility
- YouTube

### Training

Teltex can provide in-person training to State Programs staff members launching wireless devices. Training includes:

- Introduction to iOS & Android OS devices
- Introduction to TeltexCare
- Warranty
- Service & Support
- Introduction to Accessibility & Native Apps

How to create an Apple ID or Google ID

- How to Access WiFi
- How to make a native operating system video call
- How to Set-Up Email
- How to Set-Up iMessage®

Accessibility Features

- Introduction to Accessibility Apps
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Apps Package
- Speech Package



Teltex has launched [www.iAccessibility.com](http://www.iAccessibility.com). iAccessibility.com was designed to offer a new and innovative platform for individuals with disabilities who use wireless devices to have equal and full access to information about the device, apps and accessories. In addition to consumers, the website and accompanying social media provides tools for government agencies deploying wireless devices to individuals with disabilities.

Consumers can access videos 24/7/365 in spoken English, American Sign Language and closed captioned for information and training on operating a wireless device.

#### Imaging (Pre-Loading Apps)

Teltex images the wireless device with approved apps for telecommunications and communications, specific to the consumer's disability or disabilities. The apps remain property of the State and can be reissued to other wireless devices if the original device is lost, stolen or damaged beyond repair. The imaging of the wireless device allows for consumers to immediately use the device upon receiving it. The breakdown of app packages is included in this packet.

### **App Package: Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

#### IP Relay

IP (Internet Protocol) Relay is a form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) that enables persons with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate with voice telephone users through mobile equipment. The Communication Assistant facilitates the call.

The wireless device can accomplish this by accessing IP Relay Service (T-Mobile IP Relay) through the built-in Wi-Fi and/or 4G and installed app and using the device touch screen to type outgoing communication to the Communication Assistant and read incoming communication from the Communication Assistant.

#### Video Relay Service

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) that enables persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment. The Interpreter facilitates communication

The wireless device can accomplish this by accessing Video Relay Service through the built-in Wi-Fi and installed app and using the front facing camera to communicate.

- Convo
- Purple P3
- Sorenson nTouch
- ZVRS Z5

### IP Captioned Telephone Service

IPCTS is a form of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) that allows a person with hearing loss but who can use his or her own voice and has some residual hearing, to speak directly to the called party and then listen, to the extent possible, to the other party and simultaneously read captions of what the other party is saying.

The wireless device can accomplish this by accessing IP Captioned Telephone Service through the built-in Wi-Fi and installed app, using the wireless device screen to read the captions to communicate while using a landline or wireless phone to speak and use residual hearing.

- CaptionMate
- ClearCaptions
- Hamilton CapTel
- InnoCaption

### Video Calls & Video Messaging

Video Calls enable persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language (ASL) or Speech Reading to communicate through their iOS device.

The wireless device can accomplish this by accessing Video Calls through the built-in Wi-Fi and installed apps and using the wireless device front facing camera to communicate.

- Skype
- Glide
- Google Duo
- Marco Polo
- Weather, Emergency Preparedness & General Access

### App Package: Speech

#### Alternative Augmentative Communication

- AAC apps are software applications for mobile devices that can help individuals who are non-speaking or those whose speech is not usually understood by others.
- The consumer can select various text and/or icons, and the wireless device will speak for the consumer.
  - Proloquo2Go<sup>2</sup>

### Text to Speech

Consumers can type what they want to say using the wireless keyboard, and the iOS device will speak for them.

- iSpeech TTS
- Say It! Free TTS
- Speak4Me Free

### Yes/No

Consumers can touch a Yes icon or No icon on the screen to answer questions

- Yes/No from I Can Do Apps

### Video Calls

- Skype
- Glide
- Google Duo
- Marco Polo
- Weather, Emergency Preparedness & General Access

<sup>2</sup>Please note, Proloquo2Go is the standard Speech app included in the Speech Accessibility Package but can be substituted for any of the AAC apps in the Apple App Store. Additional costs may apply.

### App Package: General Accessibility (Weather, Emergency Preparedness & General Access)

- Accuweather
  - Accessible weather
- American Red Cross
  - Emergency, First Aid, Hurricane, Tornado, Earthquake, Wildfire & Flood
  - Emergency preparedness, information, and location-based alerts for emergencies.
- FEMA
  - Emergency preparedness and information in an accessible format.
  - NIXLE One Bridge
  - Location based and accessible public safety information
- YouTube

### Access to accessible training videos

App packages for the Deafblind, Blind & Low-Vision, Mobility & Physical and Cognitive/Developmental/Intellectual communities are available.

All wireless devices have the following native iOS and OS apps for telecommunications and communications:

- Mail
- Video Call
- Messages/SMS

### **Maintenance, Repair, and Refurbishment:**

Teltex, the vendor that FTRI currently uses to refurbish our amplified phone and TTY equipment, will also be contracted to provide, ship, maintain, repair, and refurbish returned **iPad/Samsung Tablets**. As stated earlier, Teltex also works with 25-28 TEDPs in other states with shipping, repairing, and servicing these tablets. Each tablet carries a 3-year warranty.

Teltex Care includes the Wireless Equipment (iPad/Android Tablet) Refurbishment Program – which is a must have for State TEDPs that are LOANER programs. The Refurbishment Program allows the State EDP to have the highest return on investment when purchasing the iPad or Android tablet by offering the EDP the ability to reuse purchased iPads and Android tablets that have been returned by consumers and refurbished to like new condition. FTRI currently has a similar refurbishing program set up for their traditional equipment, which is administered by Teltex. The Wireless Equipment Refurbishment Program does not cover the cost of missing or worn peripherals like power supplies, charging cables, screen protectors and cases. As Florida is a loaner State, the Refurbishment Program provided by Teltex is vital to ensuring that devices can be repurposed per the program's requirements.

More information and tutorials are found at this website: [www.iAccessibility.com](http://www.iAccessibility.com).

### **Project Evaluation**

This **iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project** will involve periodical evaluation of its use and effectiveness with customers who qualify for these iPad/Samsung Tablets. Each customer who receives one will agree to participate in evaluation surveys through mail and/or emails. The customer will be asked to respond to questions that address comfort, ease of use, and any issues/challenges they face in accessing broadband while using the tablet in making calls or using any of the telecommunications or communication Apps. Also, compare their experiences



with these tablets with current FTRI current offerings of landline devices (i.e., Teletypewriters for the Deaf (TTY), amplified phones, Telitalk).

A final report will be presented to PSC at the end of the first year of **iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project** along with data and results of evaluation surveys as well as customer satisfaction plus any recommendations for continuation of this project, pending outcome of legislation in updating TASA.

### **Future of iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project**

It is our goal for this **iPad/Samsung Tablet Pilot Project** to become permanent once State Legislature makes changes to TASA to allow FTRI to continue offering telecommunications equipment with broadband connectivity, including iPad/Samsung Tablets. If TASA is not updated by the State Legislature before the end of first-year project, FTRI may request second-year funding from PSC to allow FTRI to continue this project for another year. It is our hope that TASA will be updated by the State Legislature by that time.