

# NALC, USPS agree to new route adjustment process

**I**n March, NALC President Fredric V. Rolando signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Postal Service on a new Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP) for 2011.

“The NALC and the Postal Service continue to recognize the advantages of jointly adjusting routes,” Rolando said.

The significant changes to the joint route adjustment agreement include better training and much more decision-making authority at the local level. The

biggest change for a letter carrier will be the opportunity to review and address the volume and actual office and street time data being recorded every day, as well as the information recorded by a manager who goes out with the carrier on the street as these events happen. Director of City Delivery Lew Drass explains all this and much more below. If you want to see all the details, read the parties’ joint training presentation (M-01748).

## Joint Alternative Route Adjustment Process—2011 (JARAP)

The National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service have entered into three agreements that establish a Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP) for 2011. The agreements are listed by the assigned NALC Materials Reference System (MRS) numbers below:

**M-01748**—A training document developed by the national parties that provides a mutual understanding of the terms of the MOU Re: Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process—2011

**M-01747**—A document developed by the national parties that provides a mutual understanding of the terms of the MOU Re: Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process—2011

**M-01746**—National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP)—2011

These agreements are available on the City Delivery page of the NALC website at [nalc.org/depart/citydel](http://nalc.org/depart/citydel), so if you have access and can find some time, I’d strongly encourage you to read them.

Are you wondering why the “M” numbers referenced above are backwards? This is no accident. If you want to understand this year’s process, start by reading M-01748, as this is where most of the changes to this year’s JARAP are shown.

There are several key changes and additions to JARAP 2011. I’ll try to

explain a few of the highlights here, but you really should read the agreements in their entirety before making decisions on what is best for each office.

Each party has the right to select entire zones for evaluation and possible adjustments. In selected zones, no changes can be made to routes (including line of travel, relays, park points, etc.) unless they’re made jointly.

### New 3999 review process

We finally have a review process that provides new rules for all 3999s conducted after March 22, 2011. This review gives us a real opportunity to ensure that a fair street time credit is given when territory is transferred from one route to another. **This doesn’t mean we’re just using the time spent on the street based on the one day they go with you to establish street time credit for a route!** This is about trying to finally address the age-old problem of having streets transferred to another route without enough time to actually deliver the mail. This has always been one of the main causes of improperly adjusted routes.

This process starts with a requirement for a manager to sit down with you within three days after they have someone go with you all day on the street. Rather than just going into the office for your consultation to talk about your route months after the day they go out with you, management is now



Director of City Delivery Lew Drass

required to tell you right away—while you still remember—about all the non-recurring street time they recorded for you and explain the reasons why this was done.

This is where they take time from you for claims, such as taking too long for or taking too many comfort stops, talking to customers, delivering blocked boxes, making too many motions to the box, tying your shoe, etc. You now have the right to tell your side of the story by writing down comments about what happened that day. All of this information then gets forwarded to the joint route adjustment team for consideration before any route adjustments are made.

The joint route adjustment team is also required to review the 3999 and get any other mistakes corrected either before or during the route adjustment process.

The last piece of our new 3999 process addresses those places where managers go 3999 shopping and just keep going out with you over and over again until they get the time they want. This year, they have to use the 3999 that is closest to the agreed-upon street time for your route to move territory.

For instance, let's say they went with you three times and the street times you used were 5:45, 6:30 and 6:45. Let's also say the joint route adjustment team determined that your route was worth 6:38 on the street. In this example, the team would be required to use the 3999 that took 6:45 to move territory from your route. The hope is that this provision will eliminate a lot of the game-playing that often takes place when a manager goes out with you on your route over and over.

### **Volume and actual office and street time verification**

One of the biggest criticisms out there with regard to our previous joint route adjustment processes has been that the volume information was unreliable because it comes from the Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS). This volume data is used because it is the only place this information can be found. The true part of this criticism is that the volume information recorded is only as good as the person who entered it into the system.

We might not be able to fix the people who enter volume information into the system, but we're going to have the opportunity to insist that the volume information and time credits are more accurately entered into the system.

This year, management is required to post the *Workhour Workload Report (All Routes)* report for the previous day in a convenient location for the whole year. It is very important that you insist that the correct report is posted. This is the only report that doesn't include names but shows you all the different types of volume recorded and the actual time credits entered.

The reason for negotiating the right for you to be able to see information as it's being recorded is so you can make sure you're not getting ripped off as things happen. Keep in mind that JARAP is largely a data-driven process. If we want fair adjustments in the end, it just makes good walking-around sense to keep a watchful eye on those folks who enter the volume and actual time data that will be used, as it happens.

For example, what if you had three buckets of flats yesterday with a thin coverage that had to be cased, and you look on the report and see that they only have you down for 225 flats? What if you clock on at 7:45 and you remember getting out at 9:45 yesterday, but you look on the report and see that they only have you down for an hour of office time? What if you got help on the street yesterday and when you look on the report you see that the time wasn't recorded?

In each of these examples, there's an obvious mistake. So what do you do about it? I think the answer depends on your situation. If you have a supervisor who isn't trying to rip you off on purpose, you should be able to get it fixed by pointing out the problem to him or her. If that doesn't work, you should ask to see your shop steward and ask him or her to investigate the matter on your behalf.

There are also projected office and street times for each route on this report. Please be advised that as far as the NALC is concerned, these figures are meaningless. Don't let anyone tell you that the union agreed to these figures because it just ain't true!

The intent of the parties at the national level in making an agreement



**Carriers from around the country helped put together the training on the new JARAP.**

to post the *Workhour Workload Report (All Routes)* report is to attempt to ensure that volumes and actual office and street times that are entered aren't fictional. Time will tell about how effective this effort will be. We'll have to see how many of you choose to participate in this effort.

The reason we don't agree with projected times is that they are totally bogus. If you want to see for yourself, just look at the projected times for your route on the Workhour/Workload Report (All Routes) that is being posted in your office each day and you'll see why this is true. You'll notice that it's like the movie "Groundhog Day." The street time credit never changes. Management's theory is that extra DPS (and now FSS in some places) delivers itself; that weather, percentage of coverage, number of parcels and/or accountables, etc. doesn't matter.

If you look at your p.m. office-time projection each day, you'll notice that it's like "Groundhog Day II." The p.m. office-time credit never changes either. It will always be five minutes. Every route in the country gets five minutes for PM office duties every day. Isn't that something?

If you look at your a.m. office-time projection each day, you'll see a different fictitious movie. The shell game works like this: Management records volume that gets translated to a piece count of mail. The piece count is given a time credit by using the 18 letters and eight flats cased per minute standard plus the 70 pieces per minute pull-down standard. This amount of time credit is then reduced by different

amounts of time using something called percent-to-standard. The end result is usually that they want you out sooner than your workload dictates.

These are just some of the reasons the NALC will never buy into, accept or agree to projected times. Another reason is the fact that this matter has been previously settled. The parties at the national-level have previously agreed to a national level settlement (M-01664) on this very issue that states in relevant part, "DOIS projections are not the sole determinant of a carrier's leaving or return time, or daily workload."

It's really important that we are all on the same page with why projected times are meaningless, so we can move on to attempting to ensure that the volume and actual time information that is entered into the system isn't garbage. Will you help us?

### More decision-making authority at the local level

NALC representatives at the local level will play a larger role in this year's joint route adjustment process. Local office contacts will conduct a review of route adjustments within 30 days after your initial adjustment. The purpose is to fix any problems with relays, lines of travel, park points, etc., and any obvious problems with adjustments quickly. Any further route reviews thereafter also begin at the local level. Local contacts have the right to request another route review within 120 days of the initial adjustment. There is a simple form to fill out to exercise your right. Either side can force a review when you don't have mutual agreement at the local level.

The local contact is also tasked to ensure that the 3999 process is happening as agreed to and report any problems to his or her branch president and district lead team as they happen.

Honoring seniority has always been a goal of the NALC when routes are adjusted. That's not to say every carrier will get what they want. However, our joint process gives us language that can't be found in our handbooks (M-41 and M-39) that govern the traditional route count and inspection process. Our joint process states in relevant part, "Seniority should be considered when excessive route changes are anticipated, provided such consideration does not adversely affect the efficiency or effectiveness of the adjustments."

This year, we've added an expedited bidding process option that is available

Director of City Delivery Drass talks about the changes from last year's agreement.



to branches where carrier optical routing (COR) is used for what's called "optimization." When routes are optimized in COR, there is usually a major shift in territory. It's been said many times that the most unfair thing about COR is that it robs too many carriers with seniority of the type of route they bid on. When this happens in an office this year, you'll have a new option. The idea of this option is to give carriers in the affected zone the chance to choose territory they will serve, by seniority, when major territory shifts occur.

Whether or not this option is used in a given delivery zone will be decided by the branch president. The advice on this is simple. Look at each zone individually and use the expedited bidding option where it makes sense to do so and don't use it where it doesn't make sense.

### Improved training/ COR technicians

We plan to do more with training this year at every level of the process. We'll begin by creating our own NALC COR training manual. This manual will be designed to break down the Postal Service's COR program and make it easier to understand for NALC activists and members both in and out of our joint process. The NALC COR training will be delivered to a selected NALC representative in each district right after they go through the same COR training the Postal Service gives its own people.

After that, we will have a letter carrier NALC COR technician in each district. This NALC COR technician will serve in conjunction with, or in lieu of, the district team member during the adjustment process when using COR. The NALC COR technician's role is to provide NALC direction to the management COR technician or assist the NALC district team member in doing so. If this NALC COR technician is not available, the NALC district team member may be replaced by another district team member for the adjustment phase of the process when using COR. This gives us two additional chances to provide the best representation possible to you when the COR mapping program is used to make route adjustments.



### Additional training

The national parties will then conduct a face-to-face joint training session with all of the area teams and district lead team members to explain JARAP 2011 and answer any questions people have. Next, the parties trained at the national level will do the same with the district evaluation and adjustment teams.

The agreement is that no evaluations and adjustments take place until all this has happened and only after district evaluation and adjustment teams have contacted the local contacts and explained/discussed their roles and responsibilities in JARAP 2011.

We plan to take a few more steps this year. First, we'll deliver our NALC COR training to our people at the district level. Next, we're going to create a pocket guide for carriers to use. The plan for this guide is to provide advice and information on a number of relevant subjects such as 3999s, consultations, conflicts over auxiliary assistance requests (PS Form 3996), and other issues that affect letter carriers.

If you're still reading and don't like what you see, but still would like to have a joint process, there's another road that you're welcome to travel. The parties at the national level have agreed to another national memorandum of understanding that provides an alternate route adjustment option. This agreement is listed below with the assigned NALC Materials Reference System (MRS) number:

**M-01749**—National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Alternative Evaluation and Adjustment Processes

This MOU gives the local parties the opportunity to develop a proposal for an alternate route adjustment process. The local parties then submit the proposal to the national parties for approval. This agreement expires December 31, 2011. If you have any questions about developing an alternate evaluation and adjustment process, please contact your national business agent. ☒

The work on the training took place at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD.