



Annual Conference Set

Mark your Calendars. TATOA's 8th annual conference is set for August 14 and 15 at the Omni Hotel in downtown Austin. Conference registration will remain at last year's rates of \$100 for members, \$200 for non-members.

The 2nd annual Programming Awards luncheon will be held on Thursday, August 14. Keep an eye out for the Government Programming Award entry form and information. Entry fees are \$25 per entry for members and \$35 per entry for non-members. Awards will be presented for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places in numerous categories.

Sessions and speakers are being planned. Please contact Margaret

Somereve if you have ideas for topics or speakers as soon as possible.

TATOA is looking forward to expanding its sessions on PEG



First Place Government Programming Award

Programming. If you have any suggestions on PEG programming topics or speakers please let us know.

A New Year, A New Look

In an effort to keep TATOA members up-to-date on current telecommunications issue, TATOA will be producing a quarterly newsletter. The newsletter will include updates on the Texas Legislature, Public Utility Commission, and Federal Communications Commission. It

will also feature news briefs on member cities as well as NATOA.

If you have story ideas please contact Margaret Somereve at margaret.somereve@farmersbranch.info We would love for our members to submit articles about what their city has done or is doing.

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Web Sites:

- Public Utility Commission
www.puc.state.tx.us
- Texas Legislature Online
www.capitol.state.tx.us
- National Assoc. of Telecommunication Officers and Advisers
www.natoa.org
- FCC
www.fcc.gov

Membership Renewal Deadline

Membership Renewals have been sent out. The annual dues have not increased, remaining the same low rates as in previous years.

Agency:

\$50.00, includes one primary member and two additional members \$20.00 per agency member beyond the first three members

Individual: \$50.00 per individual

Associate: \$100.00 per individual

Be aware of the renewal deadline of March 15th. By returning your application by that date you will guarantee your place in the annual TATO A membership directory.

78th Legislature Convenes

The 78th Legislature convenes on January 14th. Bills have been pre-filed since November 12, 2002 and will continue to be filed until March 14th. Over 8800 bills were filed in 2001 and there is every indication to believe that this session will have just as many. TATO A will keep its members updated on bills that have been filed that will affect cities.

Senate Bill 377 would prohibit the PUC from regulating high speed internet or broadband

SB 377 filed by Senator Armbrister would provide that the Public Utility Commission may not regulate highspeed Internet access service or broadband service, except to the extent such

regulation may be required under federal regulations. This bill is similar to an Oklahoma bill that passed that stated that the state should leave everything alone until the federal Tauzin-Dingle bill is determined. Southwestern Bell is supporting this bill while AT&T is taking a neutral position.

FCC News

In a series of split 3-2 decisions, the FCC released new regulations relating to competition in local telecommunications services. Though the details have yet to be released, it remains unclear what impact the decision will have on local franchise fees and rights-of-way authority.

The decision is largely viewed as a partial victory for local exchange carriers in that the fiber optic or high-speed portions of their networks will be exempt from requirements that they share facilities with competitors. However, the "Baby Bells" will still be required to grant access to the copper wire portion of their networks.

Bell competitors in long-distance and the cable industry attacked the decision. The Baby Bells also reacted negatively, arguing that the decision essentially requires them to operate two networks.

In a hearing late February, Billy Tauzin (R-LA) blasted the Commission and hinted that he will soon ready legislation to address the shortcomings in the FCC decision.

AT&T Broadband Name to Change

On December 19, 2001 AT&T Broadband and Comcast Corporation announced that they would merge the two companies forming a new company called AT&T Comcast.

Not quite a year later on November 13, 2002, The Federal Communications Commission approved the AT&T/Comcast merger. The FCC said that the merged firm would serve approximately 27 million subscribers, or 29 percent of all U.S. multichannel

video programming subscribers.

The new company announced that it would be called Comcast Corporation. However, AT&T Comcast had told cities that they would be using the AT&T Comcast name for awhile. AT&T announced on February 28th that March 1 "marks a new beginning for cable customers" as AT&T officially changes to Comcast Cable.

NATOA News

Texas Coalition of Cities for Utilities Issues and NATOA v FCC

The FCC issued an order indicating that cable operators may pass through to consumers franchise fees on non-subscriber generated revenues, such as home shopping and advertising. TCCFUI/NATOA filed an appeal before the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Oral arguments were heard on December 4, 2002 and NATOA is awaiting the Court's decision.

March 6-7, 2003	Nashville, TN	Regional Conference
May 8-9, 2003	Minneapolis, MN	Regional Conference
September 10-13	Denver, CO	Annual Conference

Visit www.natoa.org for details on the conferences and all NATOA activities.

NATOA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

One City's 'Mission' with NASA

by Lynn Thomas, IT Manager, City of Nacogdoches

Minutes after the space shuttle Columbia's disastrous voyage over East Texas the morning of February 1, 2003, City of Nacogdoches emergency management staff assembled and put into action their operational emergency management plan.

Immediately upon discovery of the exact nature of the disaster, staff began establishing communication links to NASA and the Texas Division of Emergency Management. As part of the plan, the local amateur radio group was called upon to assist in the EOC. According to Fire Chief/Emergency Mgt. Coordinator, Rusty Sanders: "They are capable of setting up mobile, portable, and fixed communication sites. This group was the common communication channel to link together all of the various agencies which came to our area. There were State forces which came to town which could not talk to other State agencies except through the amateur radio link."

Additional city staff were marshaled to set up an emergency phone bank to assist the communications center with the incoming flood of phone calls. The I.T. Department responded primarily by disseminating up-to-date information to the public via the City's web page. Within two hours of the initial report of the disaster, the web site provided information on public health hazards, including hazardous materials and a list of possible chemical contacts, and instructions on how to report debris finds. Other content included important news releases, links to local news media, and links to federal agencies such as NASA and FEMA.

Links were provided to local university Stephen F. Austin, who hosts the city's GIS systems, as they were instrumental in documenting debris coordinates and assisting government agencies with equipment, technical assistance, and debris maps. In the spirit of cooperation news bulletins from other local agencies were posted as well. The City's web site evolved as a central location for disseminating information to the public. Statistical logs reported 146,000 hits to the web site during the initial two days after the disaster, fifteen percent of which were from international sources. Concern was given to the nature of the disaster and the sensitivity in how the information was presented. Days later, a guest book was added to the site to serve as a repository for visitors to log messages into. It was also important to staff, as representatives of the community, to relay this message of sympathy, "The City of Nacogdoches remembers the Astronauts aboard the space shuttle Columbia. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all their loved ones. We pledge to do our best in assisting all recovery efforts." According to Interim City Manager, Victoria LaFollett, "The effort exercised by City of Nacogdoches staff, especially during these first few days, was tremendous. Undoubtedly, the flow of information in and out from the city became a key priority. Our web site was an invaluable tool that significantly enhanced our ability to communicate with the media, citizens, the international community along with state and federal agencies."

TATOA

*Texas Association of Telecommunication
Officers and Advisors*

c/o City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

We're on the Web!
www.tatoa.org

Coming Next Issue

- Legislative Wrap Up
- City of Richardson's fiber project with RISD
- Updated Conference Info
- And much more

WWW.TATOA.ORG—Your Information Source

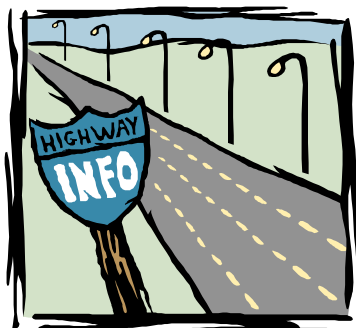
TATOA's website has resources and tools to help you and your city. TATOA is currently in the process of adding more content to the site and needs your help.

Currently cable franchises for AT&T Broadband, Grande Communications, WIN, WOW and Cablevision are on the site for review from the cities of Austin, Dallas, Farmers Branch and Lewisville. The City of Lewisville has posted their AT&T franchise transfer document.

TATOA will post franchise ordinances. If your city would like to post its franchises with cable companies or rights-of-way ordinances or any other document that would be beneficial to others, please email them to Rondella.Hawkins@ci.austin.tx.us, Other information on the website includes links to Texas and National

telecommunications sites. Also under the members only section you will find board minutes for the last several years and the current membership list. Applications for membership are available for download.

The 2002 Conference agenda and links to the speaker presentations can be viewed as well. The video of the award winning Government Programming awards is available for download. The 2003 Conference agenda will be posted as soon as it is developed.



TATOA is here to serve its members and provide useful information. Please let us know how we are doing and what we can do to improve communications with our members. Please email suggestions to margaret.somereve@farmers-branch.info or you can leave comments on the website.