



8th Annual Conference



Hot Topics in Telecommunications

TATOA's 8th Annual Conference— Hot Topics in Telecommunications, is set for Thursday and Friday, August 14 and 15 at the Omni Downtown Austin Hotel. Conference Registrations will remain at last year's rates of \$100 for members, \$200 for non-members.



Omni Downtown Austin

The 2nd annual Programming Awards luncheon will be held on Thursday, August 14. Luncheon only tickets are available for \$25.

This year, there were 115 entries for the programming competition, up from 97 last year. It should prove to be an exciting luncheon.

For more information on registration, check out the registration form inside this newsletter or go to www.tatoa.org for a complete listing of sessions and a downloadable registration form.

Registration deadline is August 1.

It's Over!

The 78th Legislature

The 78th legislative session adjourned on Monday, June 2. The big news this session was the budget, school finance and a trip to Ardmore, Oklahoma by the "Killer D's".

5,754 bills were introduced this session, only 42 more bills than in 2001. 1,403 were passed, down 218 bills that were passed in the previous session.

What did this session mean to telecommunications?

PASSED:

- SB 732 called the Win Back Bill will allow long distance telephone service providers to make a reasonable business offer to a customer in response to a competitor's offer.
- SB 1829 protects customers and incumbent local exchange carriers by allowing the PUC to oversee an orderly transfer of customers in an area where a CLEC is discontinuing service.

Continue on Page 6

Inside this issue:

President's Message	2
TATOA Officers	2
Conference Schedule	3
Conference Registration	4
FCC News	5
Programmer's Preview	5
NATOA News	6

Web Sites:

TATOA	www.tatoa.org
NATOA	www.natoa.org
PUC	www.puc.state.tx.us
FCC	www.fcc.gov
Texas Legislature Online	www.capitol.state.tx.us

President's Message

Starting with this issue, the TATO A newsletter will include a message from the president, offering a chance to share some observations about our organization, our line of work, and developments that have an impact on both.

The FCC decision on June 2 was a big move toward further deregulation. In a decision split along party lines, the Commission significantly lowered or removed many of the restrictions on media ownership. The reaction, though, has definitely been bipartisan.

Critics on both sides of the political fence are saying that now there is even less to prevent big media players from becoming even bigger -- and fewer, resulting in fewer points of view available to the public. However, those who favor the ruling don't think that this is likely, and that more competition will help maintain diversity. It's making for some lively debate, to say the least -- many news stories about the decision say that there will probably be some legislative challenges to it.

It seems that everyone in government is dealing with budget woes these days, and the State is no exception. Facing a huge budget shortfall, the Texas Legislature recently made a move to sunset the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board a year early, funding only enough for administrative shutdown. It's not scheduled to go into effect until the end of summer, however, and the matter is on the agenda for the Special Session, so some are still hopeful.

Even if TIF does end early, the TIF assessments on telecom services may not. Word has it that the continuing assessments would go into general revenue instead of infrastructure. This move has created a great deal of controversy and confusion, even talk of lawsuits. It may be a while until we see this one sorted out.

Meanwhile, we can look to this summer for a

couple of exciting events. First, TATO A is conducting its Second Annual Government Access Programming Awards competition. The response last year was enthusiastic -- 97 entries from ten cities, and the presentation of the winning videos turned out to be one of the highlights of the conference. The quality of these pieces was truly impressive, especially considering the typical budgets that were available. This year, entries are up to 115, submitted from fourteen cities statewide.

The other event is our eighth annual conference, "Hot Topics in Telecommunications," to be held on August 14th and 15th. If you haven't already done so, be sure to check the TATO A website (www.tatoa.org) for the program schedule and other conference details. We've got some great panelists lined up, and topics include franchise renewals, PUC activity, technology, and even "beating the budget blues." We had over 65 attendees turn out for last year's conference, and if the increased participation in the programming competition is any indicator, we can expect to top that this year, in spite of slim budgets all around.

As always, it will be a great opportunity to mix with colleagues and catch up on what's happening in the industry and government. See you there!

Rondella Hawkins

2002-2004 TATO A OFFICERS

President	Rondella Hawkins, City of Austin
Vice Pres.	Pat Nicks, City of Irving
Treasurer	Ernest Davis, City of Houston
Secretary	Margaret Somereve City of Framers Branch
North Regional Rep.	Janet Mastronardi, City of Richardson
East Regional Rep.	Victoria LaFollett, City of Nacogdoches
West Regional Rep.	Tommy Hudson, City of Midland
South Regional Rep.	vacant

Conference Schedule

THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 2003

8:00 Conference Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:30 Opening Remarks

9:45 General Session—**Activities at the Texas Public Utility Commission**

Update on recent PUC rule making projects including municipal authorization to review access line reporting and enforcement procedures.

11:00 Networking Break

11:15 Concurrent Sessions

Beating the Budget Blues

Learn tips and tricks that can help you produce television programming on budgets that are getting tighter.

Cable rate regulation and effective competition; Franchise Fee & Compliance Audits

Gain important insight into the approach to be taken and the expectation regarding results. Learn about the issues surrounding compliance with cable franchise obligations, monitoring, record keeping and enforcement of the current agreement.

12:30 2nd Annual TATO Government Programming Awards Luncheon

2:45 General Session **Technology 101**

Technology issues discussed will include digital cable service, digital compression, and the new waves of wireless technologies (WI-FI) and the future of wireless.

4:00 Networking Break

4:15 Concurrent Sessions

Programmers' Technology

In this session, veteran programmers discuss technology basics and offer advice on format, equipment and software.

Franchise Renewals and Transfers

Learn about PEG access fees and the allowable limitations and use of them to fund access television operations. The latest legal news about changing enforcement mechanisms, gross revenue definitions, exclusive program contracts, equipment and facilities requirements and other important legal issues.

5:30 Business Meeting – Agency Members only

6:15 Reception

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2003

8:45 General Session - **Legislative and Regulatory Update**

An overview of federal and state developments related to telecom and cable regulation.

10:00 General Session- **Overbuilders**

Learn about the state of competition and what cities have learned from experience with recent overbuilders.

11:15 Conference Adjournment

For more detailed information on sessions, please check out the complete registration form at www.tatoa.org.

Registration Form

TATO A 2003 Conference

August 14-15, 2003

Registration and payment must be received by TATO A by August 1, 2003. One form per person, please. Limited on-site registration will be available. Cancellations must be received in writing by August 5, 2003 in order to receive a 50% refund.

Please make checks payable to TATO A. When sending registration form via fax, please include a copy of your check or purchase order for our records.

Individuals must make their own hotel reservations with the Omni downtown by July 23, 2003 to receive the discounted rate. A limited number of rooms are available.

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

NAME AS IT SHOULD APPEAR ON BADGE: _____

CITY/ORGANIZATION: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

E-MAIL: _____

COMMENTS OR SPECIAL NEEDS: _____

Check one:

Member Registration (\$100 per person) _____

Non-Member Registration (\$200 per person) _____

Luncheon Only Registration (\$25 per person) _____

TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Payment Type: _____ Check or money order
_____ Government purchase order number _____

Return the completed form with payment to:

TATO A

c/o TARA

City of Austin

P.O. Box 1088

Austin, Texas 78767

PHONE: (512) 974-2422

FAX (512) 974-2416

FCC News

The Township of Middletown Pennsylvania has filed comments before the Federal Communications Commission in the matter of Comcast Cable Communications for petition for declaratory ruling and petition for revocation of certification.

The issue is that Comcast Cable took an operator selected rate (OSR) that was lower than the maximum permitted rate (MPR) effective June 1, 2002 until May 31, 2003 which is allowed by law. On March 1, 2003, Comcast sent notice that it would be increasing its rate but it would still remain below the MPR.

According to Comcast, rate regulation consists merely of calculating a maximum permitted rate, then once such calculation has been made the oversight responsibility of the franchising authority would end (FCC CSR-6165R). In essence, Comcast

could continue to change the OSR as often as it wanted with giving proper notice and that it remained below the franchised ordered MPR.

Middletown argues that the Commission's rules state in Section 76.922(e)(1) that "operator's that elect the annual rate adjustment method may not adjust their rates more than annually". Exceptions are for adding or deleting channels or equipment, none of which Comcast did in this circumstance. Comcast has petitioned the FCC to decertify Middletown as to rate regulation.

TATOA will keep you up-to-date when the FCC rules on this issue.

Programmer's Preview

by Keith Reeves, Producer/Director, City of Denton

Cities are constantly in search of an effective means of communicating to their residents. Government access television is the ideal way of delivering positive city information and entertainment specific to your community.

If you are a government access producer in Texas, the TATOA Conference is a great resource to help you create a quality cable television channel. This year's conference has a stronger focus on programming and features two programming sessions, the 2nd Annual TATOA Programming Awards Luncheon, and a Producer's Roundtable.

The first of two sessions on Thursday, August 14 is "Beating the Budget Blues." Three government access producers from around the state, representing cities with diverse budget and population sizes, will give informative presentations. They will discuss how budget cutbacks or small budgets affect programming and how to work around these budget woes. We are working in a time when most cities are facing budget cuts and government access is not always the first priority. Your challenge is to make use of dwindling or scarce resources to maintain the same level of quality on your channel to preserve your viewership. Find out how these cities accomplished this challenge and join in a discussion to share ideas with colleagues.

The 2nd Annual TATOA Government Programming Awards Luncheon will be held in between the two Thursday sessions. This year TATOA received over 100 entries from 15 different cities. Winning an award gives your channel some recognition in the eyes of your viewers, City Council, fellow city employees, and enhances the image of your city. Even if you don't win an award, you benefit from the most important part of the award process – judge's feedback from your government ac-

cess peers. Their invaluable comments will tell you what works and what doesn't work. If your city produces programming and didn't submit any entries, then make sure to submit next year. You won't be able to find another competition with an entry fee as low as TATOA (member entry fee \$20 and non-member entry fee \$35) and the trophy is very attractive.

The second session is "Programmer's Technology." This will be the perfect session if you are starting a channel or if you need an update on new technology. Two veteran technicians will describe the technology they use every day and an industry consultant will describe the process of identifying your equipment needs. A question and answer session will give you the opportunity to discuss your technology issues with the panel.

On Friday morning, there will be a Programmer's Roundtable. This will be an informal session that will allow you to watch tapes of the TATOA award winners, network with other producers, and discuss government access television.

If you are not able to attend the conference, contact other cities your size and what type of programming are producing or visit the following websites for more information:

www.tatoa.org
www.natoa.org
www.gatvinstitute.org
www.alliancecm.org



see
they

And much more
 Spotlight on the City of Irving
 President's Message
 Programming Award Winners
 Conference Wrap Up
Coming Next Issue

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

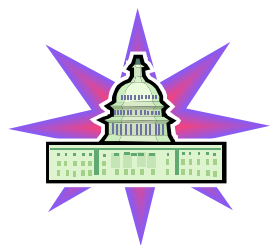
TATOA
*Texas Association of Telecommunication
 Officers and Advisors*
 c/o City of Austin
 P.O. Box 1088
 Austin, TX 78767

Legislative

Continued from Page 1

FAILED:

- HB 2088/SB 1852 would have authorized a review by municipalities of a certified telecommunication provider's business records regarding payment of ROW fees to ensure accuracy.
- HB 1658 related to the regulation of high-speed internet access and broadband services
- HB 2864 related to the deployment of high-speed telecommunications services by allowing the PUC to establish programs to assist under-served communities obtain access to broadband and internet services.
- SB 377 would have prohibited the PUC of imposing any regulation or obligation on a provider of high-speed internet access service or broadband service except to the extent required under the FCC regulations.



NATOA News

2003 Annual Conference: New Frontiers in Telecommunications: Back to the Future

September 9 - 13, 2003
Adams Mark Hotel, Denver, Colorado

FCC Commissioner Michael Copps will be delivering the Keynote remarks at the luncheon Friday, September 12.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS BALLOTS

Candidates for the 2003-2004 Board of Directors have been certified and ballots were mailed in June. If you are a member of NATOA cast your ballot!