

REMOTE ACCESS SURVEY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the interim, legislators connect to the state network via telephone lines to receive and send e-mail messages, receive committee meeting information, and to access the Internet. Depending on location and telephone wiring, connection speed could be as little as 5 kbps or in the 28.8 kbps range because legislators are using voice lines to transmit data. The Information Technology Department presently provides 800 number dial-up service at 10 cents per minute and local access points at no charge in the larger cities around the state. Nevertheless, slow connection speeds continue to be a major problem for legislators. It should be noted that connection speeds remain the same no matter what e-mail software is used. If a user connects to the state network at a certain speed, that speed remains the same whether the user is a Lotus Notes user or a Microsoft Outlook 2003 user.

When iNotes became available, some legislators who have access to computers with Internet service in their offices or access to other computers when attending meetings or traveling began to use iNotes to access their e-mail messages. However, iNotes does not provide the full functionality of the Lotus Notes client on the state-provided notebook computers, e.g., replication is not available so information cannot be downloaded to the personal computer that is being used in lieu of the state-provided notebook computer.

DIAL-UP AND REMOTE CONNECTION SURVEY RESULTS

In early December 2003 a survey was sent to all legislators with state-provided notebook computers regarding their use of dial-up and local access connections to the state network. Seventy-nine of 137 legislators responded to the survey. The results follow:

Dial-up connection

- 65 use the state-provided dial-up connection to access Lotus Notes e-mail, 13 do not use the dial-up connection, 1 did not answer this question.
- 24 use the dial-up connection daily, 27 use the dial-up connection several times a week, 22 use the dial-up connection in a range from monthly to never, 6 did not answer this question.

Attachments

- 41 had no difficulty opening attachments, 29 experienced problems opening attachments, 9 did not answer this question.
- Comments regarding opening attachments ranged from "too slow" to "large attachments are very difficult to open." (It should be noted there

are complaints that some attachments cannot be opened. Apparently signatures and like matter are removed when e-mail messages come into the state e-mail system and an "attachment" is appended at the end of the message, which then shows nothing if an attempt is made to open it. Word Viewer is installed on all legislators' notebook computers which allows Microsoft Word attachments to be read.)

Dial-up access

- 43 said they were satisfied with the state-provided dial-up access, 26 were dissatisfied, 10 did not answer this question.
- Comments regarding dial-up access include "too slow," "lately server has not operated right," "can be busy at times," "downloading large files is very time consuming," and "should be able to provide better than dial-up connection."

iNotes

- 41 use iNotes (web access) to access Lotus Notes e-mail, 32 do not use iNotes, 6 did not answer this question.
- Frequency of iNotes use: 16 use iNotes daily, 8 use iNotes weekly, 11 use iNotes monthly, 26 did not answer this question, and 18 recently started using iNotes, use iNotes only when traveling, or were unfamiliar with iNotes.

Internet service providers

- 66 have access to a local Internet service provider, 13 do not have access to a local Internet service provider.
- Names of service providers include: Polar Communications, Souris River Telephone, Earthlink, Qwest, NCC Communications, BTI Net, Midcontinent, NDTC, MSN, CableOne, AT&T, Consolidated, West River Telecommunications, River Jordan, Griggs County Telephone, Reservation Telephone Co-op, Dickey Rural Telephone, BEK Telephone, MLGC, Dakota Central Communications, Red River Telephone, Midco, Casselton Community Network, United Telephone, and through place of employment.
- Internet service provider telephone numbers were furnished by 26 legislators.
- Monthly cost of service ranged from \$8.35 for 50 hours, \$28 with digital subscriber line (DSL), \$35 for 50 hours, \$59.95 for 1000k plus \$5 modem rental, \$49.95 for 500k plus \$5 modem rental, to \$70, depending on the service provider.
- 38 use their service provider, 36 do not use their service provider, 5 did not answer this question.

Digital subscriber lines (DSL)

- 54 legislators indicated their telephone companies provide DSL (digital subscriber line) service, 21 legislators indicated their telephone companies do not, 2 do not know if their telephone companies provided DSL service, 2 did not answer this question.
- Monthly cost of DSL service ranged from \$27.95 to \$70.
- 14 use DSL service, 58 do not use DSL service, 7 did not answer this question or did not know.
- 7 legislators said their telephone companies required hard-coded IP (Internet Protocol) addresses, 26 said their telephone companies did not require hard-coded IP addresses, 44 legislators did not answer this question or indicated they did not know the answer to this question.

Cable modem service

- 33 legislators have access to cable modem service, 38 do not have access, 6 do not know, 2 did not answer this question.
- Names of cable companies include: CableOne, Midcontinent, Direct TV.
- Telephone numbers for local cable telephone companies that provide cable modem service were provided by 6 legislators.
- Monthly cost of service ranged from \$28 to \$50.
- 11 legislators use cable modem service, 57 do not use cable modem service, 11 did not answer this question.

Wireless service

- 36 legislators have access to wireless service, 32 do not have access, 11 did not answer this question or indicated they did not know the answer to this question.
- Monthly cost of wireless service ranges from \$20 to \$80.
- 10 legislators use wireless service, 59 do not use wireless service, 10 did not answer this question.

Personal payment for service

- To the question "How much would you be willing to pay per month to obtain a connection different from the state-provided dial-up access?", the responses ranged from \$0 to "already paying" to \$45.

Additional comments by legislators are included in Appendix A.

PRESENT CONNECTION COSTS

Billable minutes (800 number) for January 2004 were 32,078.14, which cost **\$3,207.81** at 10 cents per minute. Nonbillable minutes (local access connections) for January 2004 were 29,232.34, which cost **\$0**.

Billable minutes (800 number) for February 2004 were 32,664.09, which cost **\$3,266.41** at 10 cents per

minute. Nonbillable minutes (local access connections) for February 2004 were 29,941.99, which cost **\$0**.

Additional costs each month are \$5 per dial-up user id charges, which cost **\$685** per month for 137 users.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

In July 2004 the Information Technology Department will remove the local access connections in all cities (Fargo, Grand Forks, Devils Lake, Minot, Jamestown, Williston, Dickinson, Valley City) except Bismarck because upgrading the equipment is considered too costly (see Appendix B). The only access that legislators will have at that time is the 800 number. The cost of the 800 number will be reduced from 10 cents per minute to 7 cents per minute. The \$5 per month per user dial-up charge also will be eliminated. Using the billable and nonbillable minutes from the January and February 2004 billings, access costs at 7 cents per minute would have been \$4,382.43 for January and \$4,341.41 for February connections using the 800 number solely.

The Information Technology Department staff has recommended that each legislator obtain a local service provider with or without DSL (digital subscriber line) service in lieu of the local access connection that is provided by the Information Technology Department.

NETWORK CONNECTION ACCESS

The 800 dial-up number should continue to be available for use by legislators who have no other access and legislators who travel outside their normal local phone service area.

Each legislator should be authorized a \$25 per month allowance to be applied by that legislator toward better connections, if available, provided that:

- No service provider loads any software on state-provided notebook computers without coordination with the Legislative Council information technology staff to be sure settings are not changed that are required in legislative systems.
- The Virtual Private Networking (VPN) client approved by the Information Technology Department staff for security purposes is loaded on the legislators' notebook computers.
- IBM Access Connections software (which simplifies the changing of hard-coded Internet Protocol (IP) addresses) is loaded on each notebook computer when a service provider requires a hard-coded IP address so that legislators can more easily change IP addresses to work on the network while in chambers or through access to the service provider elsewhere. This software is available without cost.

Those legislators who do not have access to service providers would not have need for the allowance. The

monthly cost of the \$25 allowance if used by 110 legislators would be \$2,750. This allowance is approximately equivalent to paying for the formerly free minutes (obtained through the local access connections to be eliminated by the Information Technology

Department) at 7 cents per minute plus the discontinued \$5 per user monthly dial-up access fee but with the benefit of better connection speeds.

ATTACH:2