



Telecommunications Access Minnesota

2025 Annual Report to the Public Utilities Commission

Docket Number P999/PR-26-5

February 19, 2026

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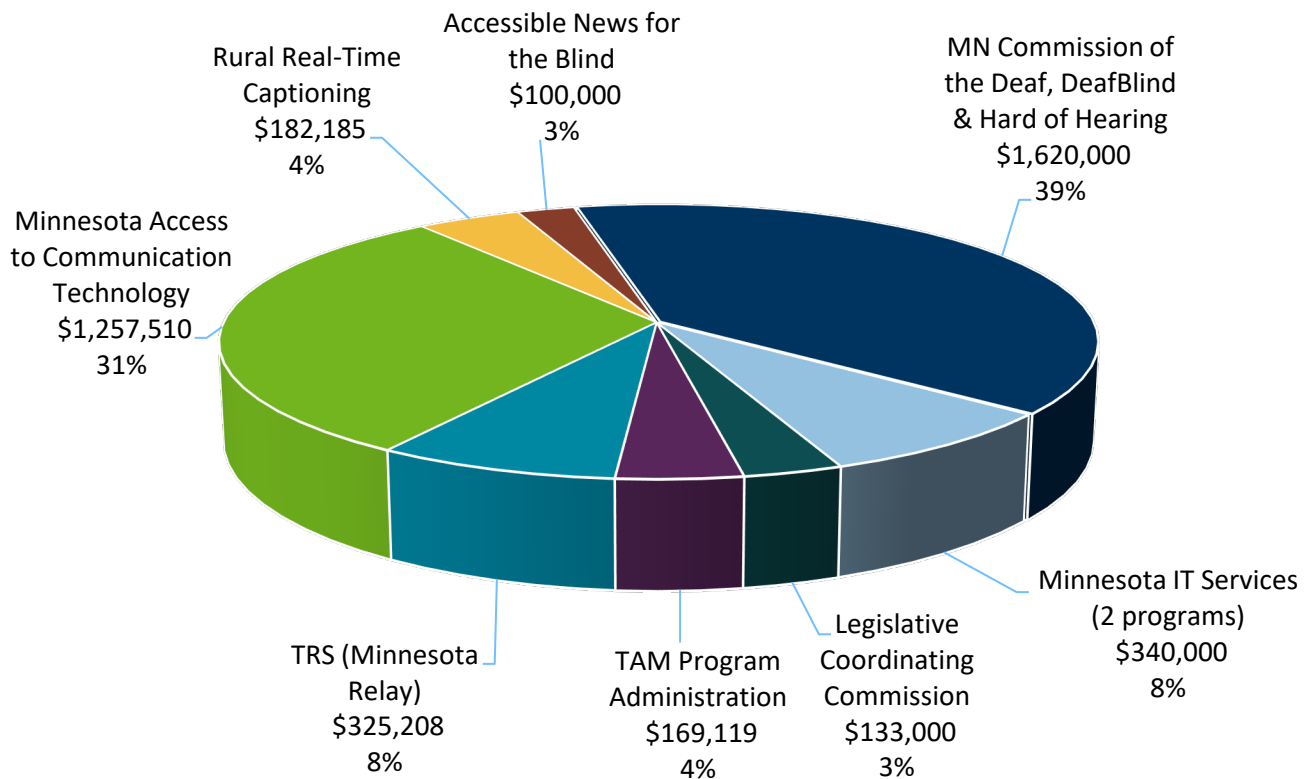
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Executive Summary

In accordance with Minn. Stat. § 237.55, the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Commerce) submits the 2025 Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM) Annual Report to the Public Utilities Commission (Commission). This report provides information on the TAM fund, and on Minnesota Relay and Minnesota Access to Communication Technology (MN ACT), which were established to provide equal access to the telecommunications network for people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, speech disabled, or physically disabled.

This report also reviews the accessibility of telecommunications services to persons who have communication disabilities, describes services provided, accounts for annual revenues and expenditures for each aspect of the fund to date, and predicts future program operation.

Minnesota Relay and MN ACT, as well as six additional TAM fund supported programs are funded by a surcharge on all wired and post-paid wireless telephone access lines in Minnesota, and by a fee on each Minnesota retail transaction for prepaid wireless telecommunications services. The fiscal year 2026 budgets for TAM funded programs are:



Key Points

- In fiscal year 2025, TAM surcharge and interest generated revenue of \$2,711,708 to fund eight programs providing a variety of services, with expenditures totaling \$3,481,254.
- In 2025, Minnesotans placed 24,804 outbound relay calls with a total of 104,789 conversation minutes of use.
- From 2024 to 2025, Minnesota Relay outbound calls declined 41 percent, and conversation minutes decreased 28 percent. Many relay users have migrated to internet-based services, which are under the Federal Communications Commission’s jurisdiction.
- On November 21, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to initiate a proceeding to modernize analog Telecommunications Relay Services. Analog relay services are administered by state programs.
- In 2025, MN ACT served 81 new clients and 297 repeat clients.
- From 2024 to 2025, MN ACT experienced:
 - A 33 percent decrease in new MN ACT clients served.
 - A 7 percent decrease in repeat clients served.
 - An 8 percent decrease in telecommunication devices distributed.
 - A 9 percent increase in the number of auxiliary devices distributed.
- MN ACT staff provided outreach for both MN ACT and Minnesota Relay at 22 booths and 13 presentations with a total of 6,809 event attendees.

Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM)

TAM Program History

In 1987, the legislature established two programs to ensure people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled have access to telephone service: Minnesota Relay, which began service on March 1, 1989; and the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program, which began as a pilot program on October 1, 1988. The legislature created the Telecommunications Access for Communication Impaired Persons board to administer these programs.

In 1995, the legislature eliminated the Telecommunications Access for Communication Impaired Persons board and transferred the responsibilities for administering the fund and Minnesota Relay to the Department of Public Service (the Departments of Public Service and Commerce merged on September 15, 1999). In 2002, the name of the Telecommunications Access for Communication Impaired Persons program changed to Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM). Commerce sought the name change at the request of consumers, who objected to the word “impaired” in the program name.

The Department of Human Services (DHS), through an interagency agreement with Commerce, administers the Minnesota Access to Communication Technology program (MN ACT). MN Act was formerly known as the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program but changed its name in August 2024.

Beginning in 2005, the Minnesota legislature appropriated TAM funds for various other state programs (see [TAM Surcharge Funded Programs](#) below).

TAM Administration

Commerce administers the TAM fund and manages the following vendor contracts and interagency agreements:

- Minnesota Relay services are provided to the State of Minnesota under contracts with T-Mobile USA, Inc. and Hamilton Relay, Inc.
- MN ACT (including Minnesota Relay outreach services) and the Rural Real-Time Captioning program are provided through interagency agreements with DHS.
- The Accessible News for the Blind program is provided through an interagency agreement with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

TAM Funding

TAM is funded through a monthly surcharge on all wired and post-paid wireless telephone access lines in Minnesota. In addition, there is a fee on each Minnesota retail transaction for prepaid wireless telecommunications services.

The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the Federal District Court’s decision that Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone service provided by Charter Advanced Services is an information service and that the Federal Communications Commission’s “policy of nonregulation” of these services preempted state law. *Charter*

Advanced Servs. (MN), LLC v. Lange, 903 F. 3d 715, 718 (2018). Thus, VoIP services, where there is a net protocol conversion, are not required to collect and remit the TAM surcharge.

The TAM surcharge is currently \$0.04 per wired and post-paid wireless access line and prepaid wireless retail transaction.

TAM Surcharge Funded Programs

- Minnesota Relay Services and Outreach
- Minnesota Access to Communication Technology
- Accessible News for the Blind
- Rural Real-Time Captioning
- The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing
- Minnesota IT Services for coordinating technology accessibility and usability
- Minnesota IT Services for a consolidated access fund for other State agencies
- Legislative Coordinating Commission for captioning live streaming of legislative activity

In addition, the TAM fund supports TAM Administrative expenses.

Minnesota Relay

Minnesota Relay is a federally mandated Telecommunications Relay Services program that allows an individual who is deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or speech disabled to communicate over the telephone in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of an individual who does not have hearing loss or a speech disability. Minnesota Relay must be in full compliance with the requirements and intent of Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 47 U.S.C. § 225, 47 CFR §§ 64.601 to 64.606, and Minn. Stat. §§ 237.50 to 237.56.

Minnesota Relay Services Provided

Types of Relay Services

- Captioned Telephone Service (CTS): CTS uses a special telephone with a text display screen so a person who is hard of hearing can listen to and read captions of everything the other person on the call says.
- Hearing Carry Over (HCO): HCO allows a person who can hear clearly but who has very limited or no speech capability to make and receive phone calls.
- Hearing User: A hearing person may use a standard telephone or mobile phone to place a relay call and speak with a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.
- Spanish Relay: Spanish speaking persons with a hearing or speech disability can make relay calls.
- Speech-to-Speech (STS): STS allows a person who has difficulty speaking or being understood on the phone to communicate using his or her own voice or voice synthesizer.
- Text-Telephone (TTY): This service allows a person who is deaf, deafblind, or speech disabled to use a TTY to communicate with the other person on the call.
- Voice Carry Over (VCO): VCO allows a person with a hearing disability, but who wants to use his or her own voice, to speak directly to the other party.

711 Dialing Access

The Federal Communications Commission requires all common carriers, wireless providers, payphone vendors, and Private Branch Exchange vendors to provide 711 dialing access to relay services (see 47 CFR § 64.603; *Use of N11 Codes and Other Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements*, CC Docket No. 92-105, Second Report and Order, released August 9, 2000). Relay users are also able to access Minnesota Relay by dialing the appropriate 10-digit toll-free access numbers.

911 Dialing Access

Minnesota Relay automatically and immediately transfers emergency relay calls to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Point the caller would have reached by dialing 911 directly, or to a Public Safety Answering Point capable of dispatching emergency services in an expeditious manner.

Minnesota Relay Operations in 2025

Minnesota's Telecommunications Relay Services Contracts

Minnesota contracts with T-Mobile USA, Inc. (T-Mobile) for the provision of TTY-based (TTY, VCO, and HCO) and STS relay services. The contract is effective from April 1, 2024, through June 30, 2026. The contract rate is \$2.60 per conversation minute, plus a \$3,600 monthly recurring fee.

Commerce contracts with Hamilton Relay, Inc. (Hamilton) for the provision of analog-based CTS. The contract is effective from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The contract rate is \$2.00 per conversation minute, plus a \$3,100 monthly recurring fee.

T-Mobile TTY-Based and STS Relay

Platform, Product and System Enhancement/Updates

- Implemented a Voice Response Unit message on all Minnesota Relay TTY-based and STS telephone numbers in an attempt to reduce the number of misdialed calls. When someone dials a Minnesota Relay number they will hear the following message: "You have reached Minnesota Relay, a telephone service for people with hearing loss or a speech disability. Please remain on the line to provide the relay communications assistant with the phone number of the person you wish to call. Or if you're not trying to reach Minnesota Relay, please hang up and look for the correct number of the business you are attempting to call."
- Developed and deployed a secure, in-house Customer Contact Online Database platform designed for full accessibility compliance. Modernized the reporting system to ensure complete alignment with contract requirements.
- Modernized the Telecommunications Relay Services billing platform to automate invoice packages and reports. Updated the format and look of report data.
- Modernized the relay platform, transforming it into a 100 percent digital, software based, and flexible architecture.

- Implemented several measures to address and combat a spike in suspicious calls using relay services to perpetuate bad actions towards businesses and organizations, especially financial institutions. Put in place automated systems and regular reviews to quickly identify new suspicious calling patterns.

Communications Assistant Call Processing System Improvements and Enhancements

- New auto-expand words added to increase typing accuracy.
- Regularly scheduled training/quality focused communications related to TTY, STS, and Customer Service procedures, customer satisfaction, and Diversity Awareness.
- Monthly Quality Focus on call handling procedures and expectations, Diversity Awareness including communications assistant check for understanding exercise.
- Monthly Customer Service Initiatives on customer experience, best practices, communications assistant suggestions and call processing Q&A, state specific terms/knowledge, articles to drive commitment to accessibility and equitable experiences.
- Quarterly STS newsletter on specific call processing, customer experience, Diversity Awareness, and best practices.

Performance Management Focus

- Live call observation evaluations.
- Scripted live call simulation testing based on customer feedback and other inputs.
- Typing/accuracy testing.
- Spelling/grammar skills testing.
- Performance evaluation excellence consistency workshops with open dialogue and Q&A for coaches.
- Communications assistant performance expectation bootcamps.
- Ongoing action-focused approach to customer feedback ensuring insights lead directly to measurable improvements.

Hamilton CTS

Hamilton introduced an improved methodology for CTS proficiency testing in which the communications assistant caption quality statistic is determined through a monthly sample of word error rates from live and/or test captioned calls. To calculate this monthly word error rate, a broad range of calls are sampled, with total errors divided by total word count.

CTS proficiency testing requires that captions match the speed of the speaker's speech, maintaining an error rate of 2 percent or less and achieving 98 percent accuracy. CTS communications assistants receive ongoing training and monitoring each shift, and the system has reporting mechanisms and alarm systems to detect and record failures.

Minnesota Relay Call Volumes

In 2025, Minnesotans placed 24,804 outbound relay calls with 104,789 conversation minutes of use. Overall, Minnesota Relay experienced the following changes from 2024 to 2025:

		2024	2025	Change	Percent of Change
Captioned Telephone Service	Outbound Calls	27,657	14,579	(13,078)	-47%
	Conversation Minutes	79,483	48,972	(30,511)	-38%
TTY-Based	Outbound Calls	14,238	9,919	(4,319)	-30%
	Conversation Minutes	63,734	54,792	(8,942)	-14%
Speech-to-Speech	Outbound Calls	339	306	(33)	-10%
	Conversation Minutes	1,768	1,024	(744)	-42%

Over the years, many relay users have migrated away from TTY-based, STS, and CTS relay services to internet-based services such as Video Relay Service, Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service, and Internet Protocol Relay. Internet-based relay services are under the Federal Communications Commission’s jurisdiction and are paid for through a federal fund. Internet-based relay services are fully accessible to Minnesota consumers, free of charge, through many providers who offer these services nationwide.

Until all Minnesotans have access to high-speed internet, and at an affordable cost, many users have no option but to use the existing non-internet-based relay services. In addition, there is currently no internet-based STS relay service.

Appendix A includes the following Minnesota Relay call charts:

- 2025 Minnesota Relay Conversation Minutes by Type
- 2021–2025 Minnesota Relay Outbound Call Volumes

Minnesota Relay Predicted Future Operations

T-Mobile TTY-Based and STS Relay

Commerce, through the Department of Administration (Admin) contracts with T-Mobile for the provision of TTY-based and STS relay services. The contract expires June 30, 2026. Commerce and Admin are currently communicating with T-Mobile on a possible contract extension.

Hamilton CTS

Commerce's current contract with Hamilton for the provision of analog-based CTS expires June 30, 2026. Hamilton is the only analog-based CTS provider available. As such, Commerce negotiated a one-year contract extension with Hamilton effective July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. The contract rate will be \$1.95 per conversation minute, plus a \$3,000 monthly recurring fee.

Federal Communications Commission Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

On November 21, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) to initiate a proceeding to modernize analog Telecommunications Relay Services (*Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; Speech-to-Speech and Internet Protocol (IP) Speech-to-Speech Telecommunications Relay Services*; CG Docket Nos. 03-123, 08-15).

The FCC recognizes six forms of Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS): three analog relay services (TTY-based, STS, and CTS) and three internet-based relay services (Video Relay Service, Internet Protocol Relay, and Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service). Analog relay services are administered by state relay programs, and internet-based relay services are under the jurisdiction of the FCC. In the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking the FCC states:

As communications technologies have evolved, analog relay services have seen declining or minimal usage. This Notice seeks to ensure that relay services remain effective, accessible, and sustainable for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, or have speech disabilities, by proposing a series of reforms to transition users to Internet-based alternatives.

What the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Does:

- Seeks comment on terminating the mandatory status of TTY relay for state-based TRS programs to afford states the flexibility to adapt their programs to local needs and technological realities.
- Seeks comment on how TTY relay users can be transitioned to modern alternatives.
- Proposes to recognize Internet Protocol (IP) STS as a compensable form of TRS that would include video-assisted STS as an integrated or add-on component.
- Seeks comment on the application of certification, mandatory minimum standards, and other requirements to the provision of IP STS and effective STS outreach.
- Seeks comment on TRS users requiring additional assistance to transition to IP-based alternatives and how best to provide assistance where it may be needed.
- Seeks comment on how state programs may change as analog TRS services transition to IP-based services.
- Seeks comment on the need for and whether to establish a temporary national certification process for providers of TTY relay and STS.
- Seeks comment on applying user eligibility, registration, verification, and call detail records requirements to all forms of TRS.
- Proposes to delete or modify TRS rules that are obsolete, burdensome, or unnecessary.

- Seeks comment on closing CG Docket Nos. 08-15, Speech-to-Speech and Internet Protocol (IP) Speech-to-Speech Telecommunications Relay Services.

Commerce is monitoring the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Comments, and any resulting Order for possible impacts to Minnesota Relay users and the TAM fund.

Minnesota Access to Communication Technology

Minnesota Access to Communication Technology (MN ACT), formerly the Telephone Equipment Distribution Program, provides assistive telecommunications devices to enable persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, speech disabled, or physically disabled to access telecommunications services. Program participants must meet eligibility requirements, including income, disability, and residency. MN ACT is administered through an interagency agreement between DHS and Commerce.

MN ACT Services Provided

MN ACT is responsible for:

- Distributing assistive telecommunications devices and interconnectivity products to eligible Minnesotans.
- Conducting outreach to inform the public of services available through the program.
- Providing training for the use of distributed devices.
- Troubleshooting problems with distributed devices and replacing or repairing devices at no cost to the client.
- Assisting MN ACT applicants with applying for discounted telecommunications or internet services (when appropriate).
- Informing MN ACT clients about other assistive technology available in the industry.

MN ACT services are provided through four of DHS' Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing State Services Division regional offices: Dillworth, Duluth, St. Cloud, and St. Paul.

Telecommunications Devices Provided

The types of devices available through MN ACT include:

- Apple and Android tablets and smartphones with pre-installed accessible apps
- Amplified corded and cordless telephones (both hearing and voice output)
- Captioned telephones
- Basic cell phones and smartphones with hearing aid compatibility
- Smart displays
- Smart speakers
- Bluetooth streamers to be used with hearing aids
- Electrolarynx used with a landline or cell phone
- Wireless accessories (Bluetooth neckloop, cell phone amplifier, and headsets)

- Ring signaling devices (auditory, visual, and tactile)
- Text Telephones (TTYs)
- Non-standard devices (for multiple disabilities)

MN ACT Operations in 2025

MN ACT Changes from 2024 to 2025

Category	2024	2025	Increase/Decrease	Percent
New Program Clients	121	81	(40)	-33%
Repeat Program Clients*	320	297	(23)	-7%
Telecommunications Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients	299	276	(23)	-8%
Auxiliary Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients	33	36	3	9%

*Current clients often contact MN ACT to receive additional training, for repair/replacement of devices, or to exchange devices because their communication needs have changed (e.g., a person’s hearing deteriorates and the device they initially received no longer meets their needs).

New Client Population Served

New Clients - Age Range	Number of Clients	Percentage of New Clients
80+ Years Old	50	62%
50-79 Years Old	29	36%
26-49 Years Old	1	1%
0-25 Years Old	1	1%

New Clients - Disabilities Served	Number of Clients	Percentage of New Clients
Hard of Hearing	50	62%
Hard of Hearing with Vision Loss	12	15%
Deaf	10	12%
Other Disability (e.g., Deafblind or Speech Disability)	6	7%
Physical Disability	3	4%

Appendix B includes the following MN ACT charts:

- 2016-2025 New MN ACT Clients
- Types of Telecommunications Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients
- Types of Auxiliary Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients

MN ACT Predicted Future Operations

Client Surveys

MN ACT began sending surveys to program clients July 1, 2025, for the purpose of understanding the client's experience after receiving a device from the program. The survey asks if the client is currently using the device and if not, why, the ease of use of the device, and their knowledge on how to use the device. Other questions measure any changes to the client's quality of life and ask about enhancements to the program. At the end of fiscal year 2026, MN ACT will compile and analyze the responses to determine potential service improvements.

Expanding Device Options

Equipment manufacturers have been discontinuing production of some assistive telecommunications devices. It is challenging to find replacements because very few new products are being developed. MN ACT established an internal workgroup to research nationwide equipment distribution programs, state assistive technology programs, and other related services with the goal of expanding device options available to MN ACT clients.

Equity Analysis Toolkit

In 2025, MN ACT evaluated the program's application form utilizing DHS' equity analysis toolkit. The goal is to identify potential inequities with the design and layout of the form that are inhibiting consumers from applying. MN ACT will use the findings to make the form more inclusive for applicants to complete. Once this analysis is finalized, MN ACT will evaluate the application policies and procedures and will implement changes to improve services.

Minnesota Relay and MN ACT Outreach

The TAM administrator and MN ACT staff serve as points of contact for Minnesotans who have questions or need resources. Outreach efforts are tailored to target appropriate demographics, including consumers who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened, speech disabled, or have mobility limitations. Staff also educate hearing consumers and businesses.

Outreach activities primarily include:

- Staffing a booth at exhibitions, conferences, and fairs.
- Presenting at senior centers, health care facilities, and social service agencies.
- Mass mailings/emails.
- Advertising.

- Providing needs assessments and device training.
- Providing brochures, instruction sheets, informational videos, and referrals.
- Providing information and resources to consumers and businesses on communication accessibility outside the scope of Minnesota Relay, such as internet-based relay services, apps, built-in smartphone features, and state and federal programs.

In 2025, MN ACT staff provided outreach for both MN ACT and Minnesota Relay at 22 booths and 13 presentations with a total of 6,809 event attendees. In addition, six advertisements were placed in newspapers and other publications.

Telephone Directories, Bill Inserts, and Newsletters

Annually, the TAM administrator sends a letter to all telephone companies serving Minnesota consumers to remind them of their responsibility to ensure customers are aware of the availability and use of all forms of Telecommunications Relay Services. TAM provides carriers with a sample Annual Notice to Customers for carriers to use in their telephone directory, bill insert, and/or newsletter. Annual notice requirements and resources are available on Commerce's website (mn.gov/commerce/business/telecom/reporting/) so carriers have access to up-to-date information on Minnesota Relay and MN ACT services.

Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing State Services Division Regional Advisory Committee Meetings

The DHS Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing State Services Division has eight advisory committees throughout Minnesota. Each advisory committee meets twice per year and serves as a venue to provide information to, and gather information from, the community. Advisory committee meeting minutes are provided to the TAM and MN ACT administrators so issues, questions, and concerns regarding Minnesota Relay and MN ACT may be addressed. The TAM and MN ACT administrators attended many of the advisory committee meetings in 2025.

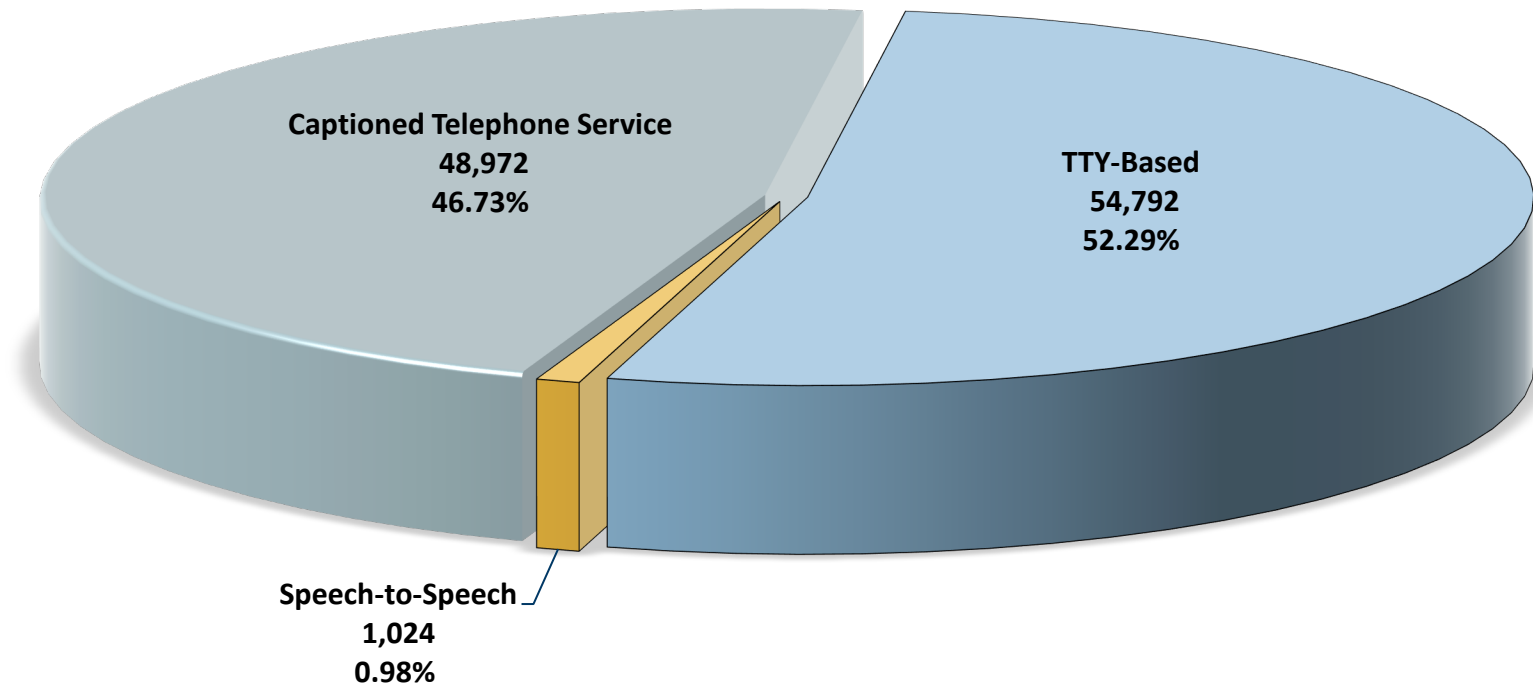
TAM Fund Revenues and Expenditures for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026

Revenue	FY 2025 Actuals	FY 2026 Budgeted
Per Wired and Post-Paid Wireless Customer Access Line (FY 2025= \$0.03; FY 2026=\$0.04)	\$ 2,389,220.02	\$ 3,069,010.47
Prepaid Wireless Retail Transactions	\$ 233,301.97	\$ 314,492.57
TAM Fund Interest	\$ 89,186.06	\$ 100,000.00
Total TAM Fund Revenue	\$ 2,711,708.05	\$ 3,483,503.04
Expenditures		
TAM Program Administration	\$ (160,510.07)	\$ (169,118.50)
Telecommunications Relay Services	\$ (295,082.08)	\$ (325,207.99)
DHS-MN ACT	\$ (1,130,939.41)	\$ (1,257,510.00)
DHS-Rural Real-Time Captioning	\$ (168,494.28)	\$ (182,185.00)
DEED-Accessible News for the Blind	\$ (75,000.00)	\$ (100,000.00)
MN Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing	\$ (1,178,228.43)	\$ (1,620,000.00)
MNIT Services (1)	\$ (290,000.00)	\$ (290,000.00)
MNIT Services (2)	\$ (50,000.00)	\$ (50,000.00)
Legislative Coordinating Commission	\$ (133,000.00)	\$ (133,000.00)
Total TAM Fund Expenditures	\$ (3,481,254.27)	\$ (4,127,021.49)
Statement of TAM Fund Balance		
TAM Fund Balance at Beginning of Fiscal Year	\$ 3,475,190.98	\$ 2,190,249.19
TAM Fund Revenue & Interest	\$ 2,711,708.05	\$ 3,483,503.04
TAM Fund Expenditures	\$ (3,481,254.27)	\$ (4,127,021.49)
TAM Fund Balance at Close of Fiscal Year	\$ 2,705,644.76	\$ 1,546,730.75

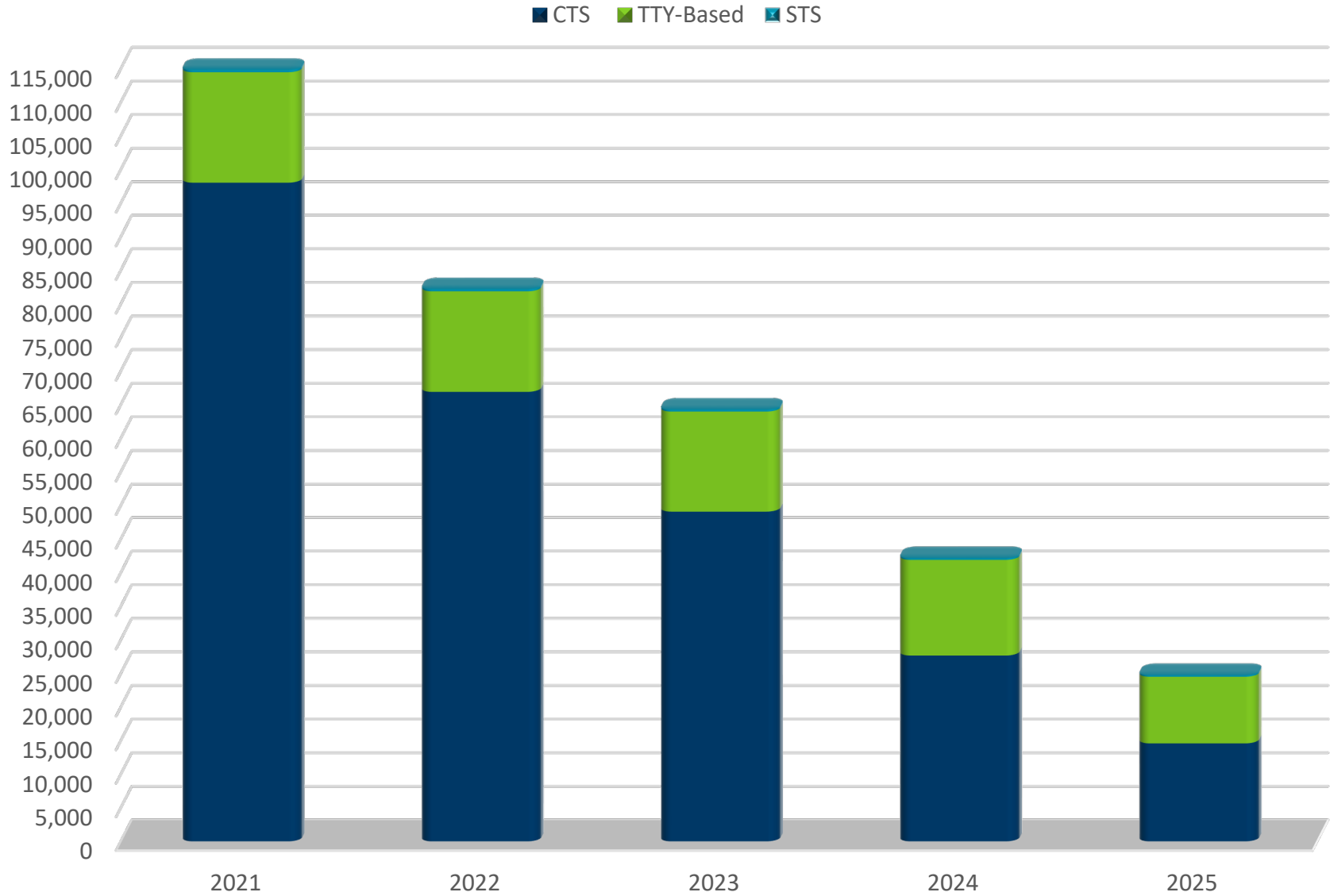
Appendices

Appendix A – Minnesota Relay Call Charts

2025 Minnesota Relay Conversation Minutes by Type

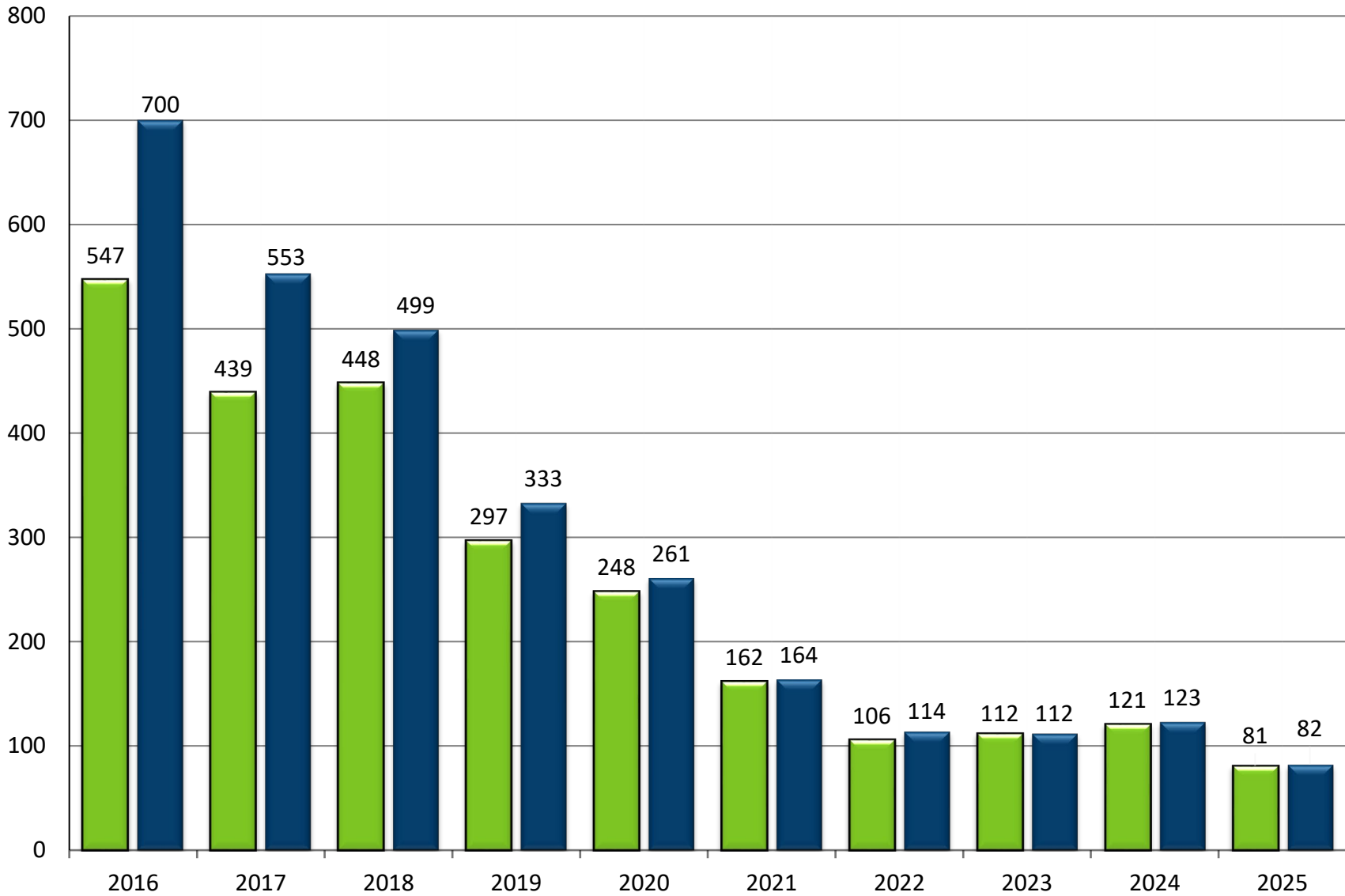


2021–2025 Minnesota Relay Outbound Calls



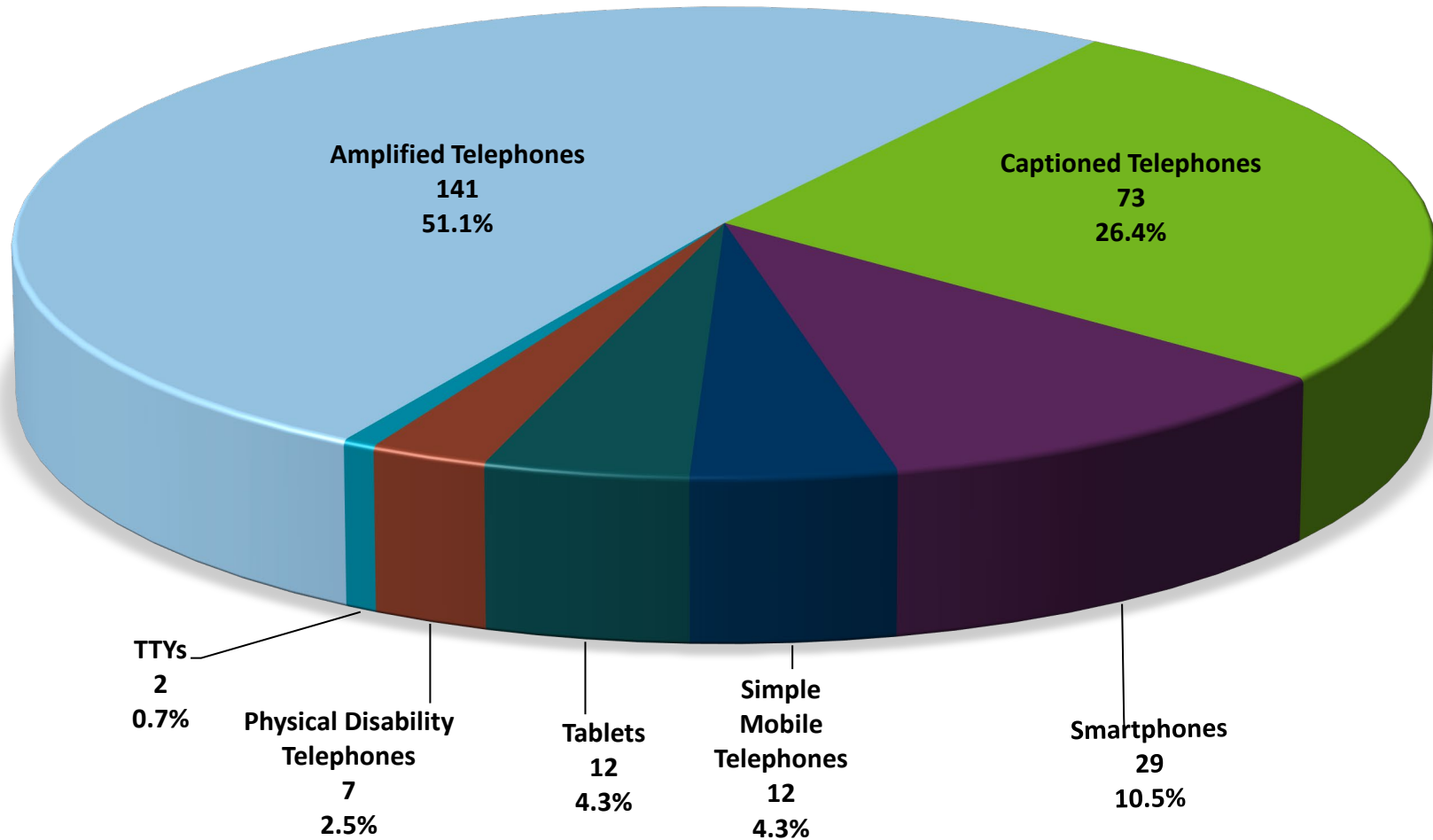
Appendix B – MN ACT Charts

2016 - 2025 New MN ACT Clients



MN ACT

Types of Telecommunications Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients in 2025



MN ACT

Types of Auxiliary Devices Distributed to New and Current Clients in 2025

