Gas Industry Standards Board
Future Technology Task Force
Teleconference
August 17, 1998
Draft Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 CDT.

Susan Croley read the antitrust guidelines.

Richard Hamilton volunteered to take minutes.

The agenda was to review of Item 7 of the EC request: Minimum Technical Requirements for client workstation to access transactional Web site

Discussion on this requirement included the following:

George Heal of IBM postulated a design principal: Don't specify a requirement that precludes access from one PC to all pipelines.

It was a concern of the group that the greater number of software products/tools required on the client's system would increase the likelihood of conflicts between the tools. It was pointed out that even if the GISB list of required software products/tools was small to reduce compatibility problems, the client may have additional software for performing other non-GISB functions that could conflict.

If GISB's technical requirements are defined in a narrow and restrictive manner, then the chances for compatibility problems are reduced. This would help customers in acquiring and maintaining compatible systems for accessing all TSPs. This would necessarily reduce the tools available to developers to provide robust applications. Additionally, it would reduce the support requirements of developers because there would be a smaller subset of system configurations.

A broader list of software products/tools allowable would help the TSPs develop and deliver more sophisticated systems. Currently there are some systems that have both plain HTML and Java versions, and participants felt the plain HTML versions were inadequate. In contrast John Cohran of Altra mentioned problems delivering Java applications and indicated plain HTML would solve their support problems and would adequately serve their functional needs.

There were references to previous discussions about the difficulty of specifying software versions. Some of the issues include:

- If a maximum version is not specified, the client upgrading beyond a minimum version may cause compatibility problems. Conversely, if a maximum version is specified, GISB requirements would prevent clients from upgrading their systems. If maximum versions were specified, then clients acquiring new systems may also need to downgrade their software.
- If software was permitted by date, then the release date of a version is necessary, but hard to determine.
- A rolling version technique can prevent the necessity of frequent updates of version requirements.
- Some software products have several technologies incorporated in one release, which may be taken out in future releases. If software versions were used, then potentially all functions would need to be individually specified even when integrated in one package.

It appears there are four general choices for specifying technical requirements. These are:

1. Lowest technology possible / lowest common denominator

This was generally agreed to be standard HTML only. This could be the maximum requirement, or could be part of a dual standard. The dual standard could be all functions must be provided in plain HTML, and TSPs may provide the same function using other tools at the client's option.

2. Broad definition of requirements

This would be similar to the current recommendations for technical requirements for non-transactional systems. The minimum functional requirements would be defined, and examples of products that provided these functions would be cited.

3. Specific software products/tools and versions

This technique has been used for previous GISB requirements, but on a much more limited scale. The numerous products/tools for Web development would make this more complex than previous experiences. A starting point for this option would be to survey the TSPs for the software they use now and in the near future to provide access.

4. Software products/tools that are tested and certified.

This would require TSPs to submit their software to a testing agent so the compatibility issues could be empirically verified. By acclamation of the attendees, this option was eliminated from further consideration because of the large investment of time, money and effort required.

It was decided that these ideas needed some research before the Calgary meeting. Participants were invited to continue to develop these ideas and present their findings at the end of August.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 CDT.

Attendees:

Susan Croley	Duke Energy – Trunkline Gas
Andy Sicignano	Enron Capital & Trade Resources
Steve Hinton	TransCapacity
George Heal	IBM
Richard Hamilton	Williams Natural Gas
Terry Lehn	EDS
Ron Payne	Sonat
Leigh Spangler	Latitude Technologies
Michael Shahan	CNG
Stan Thomas	KN Energy
John Cohron	Altra
Sylvia Munson	Altra