

**Gas Industry Standards Board
Future Technology Task Force
Duke Energy, Houston, Texas
October 17, 1997 8:30am - 3:30pm
Meeting Minutes**

Attendees:

Susan Croley	Duke Energy
Jim Vander Noot	El Paso Energy
Leigh Spangler	Latitude Technologies
Joe Kardas	National Fuel Supply
Chris Phillips	Columbia
Andy Sicignano	Enron Capital and Trade
Steve Hinton (teleconference)	TransCapacity
Richard Hamilton	Williams

Susan Croley welcomed attendees. Due to her illness, she recommended that Jim Vander Noot chair the meeting as he would serve as a more reliable chair for the day. Jim took over as chair, read the antitrust guidelines and the meeting was brought to order. Susan was identified as secretary for minute-taking. Susan Croley introduced meeting participants by name and company.

The agenda was revised to table item 6 until another meeting due to John Tsucalas' absence. The list of items that Richard Hamilton brought to discuss were identified as implementation issues and fit better as a sub-topic of item 5. Transcapacity expressed concern as to whether it was appropriate for FTTF to discuss matters that fall under an existing request R97104 regarding testing procedures that had not been formally delegated to FTTF to work on. The other FTTF participants felt that the task force should review the list to see which specific items did and did not fall under the scope of the outstanding request as some items may be considered implementation issues, not testing procedures. At the request of National Fuel Supply, it was agreed that for the order of the agenda items, items 7-10 should be discussed before item 5 and items 5, 11, 12, 13, and 14 would follow.

Jim proceeded to review the results of the October 7th Internet "Look and Feel" Team (ILFT) meeting. Jim explained that we voted on the possibility of bifurcating visual from technical. It was concluded by the ILFT that the business needs of the request need to be agreed upon first, then technical standards should be developed to support the business requirements. It was also decided by the ILFT that the request for standards relating to the specifics of R97102, should be brought forth to the Executive Committee for approval as a total package including the "whats" and the "hows." Jim then reviewed the list of "whats" that were voted on and the outstanding "whats" remaining to be discussed at the net ILFT meeting. Joe asked if there was a timeframe for completion placed on request R97102. Jim said that, to date, no deadline had been imposed by the Executive Committee on this request for completion.

It was identified that, currently, there were no requests forwarded to FTTF by BPS. For education and awareness, Susan discussed a request that was being worked out in BPS that effects the definition of the Nomination Quick Response deadline, R97079. She explained that because members of FTTF are, for the most part, the same people that support the Internet EDM application at their respective companies, and that it is wise for FTTF to monitor changes in the standards that govern the use of Internet EDM/EDI by the industry. Susan also provided the status on two requests waiting to be processed by BPS, R97103 and R97104. These two requests are expected to be sent to FTTF for completion.

Richard Hamilton brought a list of items to discuss in regards to implementation issues. As the list was reviewed by FTTF, the items were grouped into three major categories.

The following list resulted:

Category 1 - Site Management / Procedures for Normal Operations

- DNS Management
- Interval between send retries
- Downtime coordination

Category 2 - Diagnostics and Troubleshooting

- Diagnostics and firewalls
- Site vs. Web
- EDM loopback test

Category 3 - Alternative Means of Electronic Communication and Notification of Problems

- Alternative means of electronic communication
- Notification for outages
- Notification for EDM errors

The following are notes from the FTTF discussion and action items:

Category 1

DNS Management

Richard explained the need for refreshing DNS cache every 24 hours as a regular practice. He felt that there was some research needed to explore viability, benefits, and possible problems from this proposed practice.

→Lyle Schenher was volunteered for this research.

Interval Between Send Retries

The need was identified to address a minimum interval so that retries are not arbitrary and allow enough time to allow bottlenecks to clear. Retry should be defined as a new HTTP connection opened, not within the same HTTP connection. After discussion of alternative intervals, a sense of the room was taken on whether participants felt more comfortable with 2 minutes or 5 minutes as the minimum interval between retries. The result favored 2 minutes.

→Susan Croley volunteered to draft the wording for this request.

Backup URL

Need a survey on what is currently set up at different sites. There is a difference recognized between disaster recovery URLs and alternative URLs for temporary failures.

→Jim Vander Noot will draft survey.

Downtime Coordination

Allowed downtime window for scheduled outages. What is the single timeframe out of a week for EDM sites that is typically used for scheduled maintenance, etc.? Should there be a generally used window for the industry to encourage more consistency?

→Leigh Spangler will draft a request for standard.

Category 2

Diagnostics / Firewalls

What tools have implementers typically used or tried in determining the cause of communication problems with another EDM site? Ping and traceroute are useful tools, but are limited in what they reveal. Various software marketed for this purpose were shared by participants. Also, there was a need identified for each site to designate a problem-determination URL or IP address to use with ping or traceroute besides the EDM URL since the EDM URL may be blocked by the firewall and prove unreliable as an address to use for ping or traceroute.

→It was decided that a subject would be placed out on the discussion group for comment and an agenda item will be reserved for discussion on this for the November meeting.

EDM Loopback

Steve Hinton raised the question as to whether an EDM loopback mechanism is an R97104 item which addresses EDM testing procedures. Richard explained that it wasn't because this would be used even in production as a means of verifying that all communication is working with a trading partner.

→It was decided that FTTF would wait for R97104 to be delegated to FTTF before working on the development of a loopback mechanism.

Category 3

Alternative Means of Communication

This is an issue that was raised by El Paso Energy in the June FTTF meeting and at that time El Paso, NGC, and ECT were going to draft a request for standard jointly regarding alternative means of electronic communication, varying scenarios and solutions. Now, the issue is more global for the industry with the use of Internet EDM and has become more appropriate for FTTF to initiate.

→Jim Vander Noot will research the draft, and an agenda item to review and discuss the draft will be placed on the November agenda.

Notification - Error Notification

Weaknesses in the EDM Standards Manual in the explanation of the use of error notification.

→Richard will draft the wording for the EDM Standards Manual to restate more clearly how error notification should be used - agenda item for review for November FTTF meeting.

Notification - Outages

Different methods of EDM outage notification were discussed.

→Leigh Spangler will research what is used at various EDM sites and compile a list of alternative methods that are available for EDM sites to meet this need.

Other Implementation Issues

A question came up about case-sensitivity of envelope tag names and values for envelope tags such as input-format, x12 vs. X12. We confirmed that the EDM Standards Manual specifically shows the envelope tag names as lower-case. However, for the values supplied for the text envelope tags, such as input-format, the general practice with EDM sites for these tag values has been to allow upper-case or lower-case.

Richard suggested a minimum timeframe be allowed for making EDM-related changes to accommodate a trading partner such a one business day.

→It was decided by FTTF that this was a site-specific service level issue.

EDM sites that do not have a test subsystem - if you are their trading partner, what's the best way to avoid pitfalls of the use of a single subsystem for test and production? Alternative scenarios of the use of envelope tags to get around the problem were discussed.

→It was decided that this issue falls under R97104.

Public Internet Reliability Issues

The incident occurring July 20th/21st on the root name servers and the consequences that it brought upon the EDM trading partner communication was discussed. Also the experiences with bottlenecks that sometimes occur between a pair of EDM trading partners on a router between the two sites that are out of their realm of control was covered. These topics emphasized the necessity for the fleshing out the previously discussed research/resolutions. FTTF identified a need to keep a scorecard on the problems we experience in our EDM communications associated with the public Internet (not site or ISP-specific problems) that have a widespread effect on our EDM sites.

→Andy Sicznano, John Tsucalas, and Steve Hinton volunteered or were volunteered to draft a system of score-keeping and reporting.

Standards Watch

Jim passed out a document on XML/EDI. This is an item to be reviewed the next meeting under Standards Watch.

Chris Phillips reported that a new version of the RTF specifications have been issued Microsoft.

Next FTTF Meeting

Will be held November 7th. Enron has offered to host. Transco would be the contingent host.

Meeting adjourned