



24 March 2003

To: NAESB Office

Re: Interpretation Request C03001

The subject Request for Clarification or Interpretation centers on the use of the HTTP HEAD command in NAESB EDM transmissions. Specifically, the Requester desires that its trading partners implement, in their EDM servers, the capability to response to the Requester's HEAD command. The Requester sees this as a valid requirement, since the Requester sees no verbiage in the NAESB EDM Manual excluding the use of the HEAD command. Moreover, the Requester, in a proposed Draft Interpretation dated 27 February 2003, poses that the NAESB EDM Manual is "silent" on the use of the HEAD command.

We would suggest otherwise. In fact, while we would agree that the HEAD command is not included in the EDM standards, we would argue that the crafters of the NAESB standards clearly foresaw the desire of parties to implement functionality not included in the NAESB standards and have made explicit provision for such situations.

Since its beginnings as GISB, NAESB has always maintained that all NAESB standards, including the Manuals, are "minimum standards." Any functions or features that may be offered by a trading partner that are not enumerated by the standards are defined as "options." According to the NAESB EDM Manual (V1.6, page 21) :

"The standards adopted for Internet EDM, as with all NAESB WGQ standards, should be adhered to by the trading parties as minimum standards. A trading party may offer additional functions or features as options..."

Plainly, since the HEAD command is not enumerated in the NAESB EDM Manual, using the HEAD command is an additional feature - an "option".

The EDM Manual then defines exactly how such "options" should be handled:

"A trading party may offer additional functions or features as options but should not require their use [emphasis added]. Such additional features or functions are termed 'mutually agreed to' in that if both trading partners agree on the inclusion, the additional feature requirements will be met."

The EDM Manual also speaks to the use of options if either trading partner disagrees:

"However, if either trading party does not agree to the inclusion of additional features, then the partners must allow for transmission and receipt of data using the minimum standards."

In other words, the Requester is free to propose the use of the HEAD command to its trading partners, but the Requester cannot insist upon its use. Moreover, the Requester must still provide for transmission and receipt, via the standards, to those trading partners that do not consent to the use of the HEAD command.

Note that nothing about our response should be construed as a technical argument either for, or against, the use of the HEAD command. The issue at hand here is not a technical debate. If the Requester feels that use of the HEAD command offers improvements to the NAESB EDM specifications, they are urged to submit a Request for Standard to the NAESB office, and the appropriate processes and forums for debate will be arranged.

In summary, we would propose the Interpretation Subcommittee adopt the following:

Interpretation for C03001:

The use of the HTTP HEAD command in NAESB EDM is an option, and as such it's implementation between trading partners is solely on a "mutually agreed to" basis, i.e. the Requester is free to propose the use of the HEAD command to its trading partners, but the Requester cannot insist upon its use. Moreover, the Requester must still provide for transmission and receipt, via the standards, to those trading partners that do not consent to the use of the HEAD command. If the Requester seeks the use of the HEAD command as an explicit requirement of NAESB EDM, they are directed to submit a Request for Standard to NAESB.