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Gas Industry Standards Board Task Force To Evaluate Convergence Of GISB Standards with Internet Engineering Task Force AS2 Standard

HOUSTON—The Gas Industry Standards Board (GISB) has formed a task force to determine whether some of its standards should be changed to bring about convergence with the AS2 Internet standards developed by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

The task force will evaluate what changes to the GISB standards are necessary to bring them into compliance with AS2—known as the EDIINT HTTP transport for secure EDI standard—and make a recommendation to the GISB Executive Committee on whether to proceed with convergence.

“From its inception, GISB’s goal has been the development of a seamless marketplace for natural gas,” said Executive Director Rae McQuade. “The new task force will determine whether this goal will be advanced by converging GISB’s HTTP electronic delivery mechanism standards with AS2.”

McQuade said the GISB task force effort was launched at the request of members and as an outgrowth of an Executive Committee discussion about confusion regarding the use of e-mail and other methods for transporting electronic data

interchange (EDI) documents.

"GISB is a continuous improvement organization, and we saw an opportunity to bring additional value to the industry by investigating the convergence of the two standards," McQuade said.

Carl Caldwell, chair of the GISB Electronic Delivery Mechanism Subcommittee and director of consulting services for CGI, noted that the natural gas industry has been using the Internet since 1996 to send EDI between trading partners.

"The GISB standards defined a method for packaging PGP-encrypted transaction sets in a MIME envelope and transporting them over the Internet via HTTP," Caldwell said. "The GISB standards were designed to meet the stringent requirements of the natural gas industry for security, performance and reliability.

"Being an early adopter of the use of the Internet, the natural gas industry has benefited from the reduced costs of using the Internet versus the traditional VAN [value-added network] connectivity, which was slow and expensive," Caldwell noted.

Dick Brooks, chief technical officer of Group 8760 and coauthor of the EDIINT AS2 specification, said, "GISB once again is demonstrating leadership in the evolution of electronic commerce standards. The IETF EDIINT work group has leveraged a large portion of GISB's EDM specifications during the development of AS2, resulting in a broader specification with application across multiple industry groups.

Companies interested in participating in the task force should contact McQuade at (713) 356-0060 or by e-mail at gisb@aol.com.

GISB was established in September 1994 as an independent and voluntary North American organization to develop and promote the use of business practices and related electronic communications standards designed to promote more competitive, efficient and reliable gas service. The organization has over 150 corporate members, a board of directors, an executive committee, an advisory committee and many other working committees and task forces.