

CARRIER OPTIMAL ROUTING (COR) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ's)

1. Q: What is COR?

A: COR is part of the delivery vision for the Headquarters Delivery & Retail department as outlined in the Five-Year Strategic Plan. This vision was developed by the Gateway Planning and Technology Development group (under Delivery & Retail) over a three-year period. It utilizes algorithms to create compact, contiguous, safe city carrier routes. It also utilizes volumes from sector/segment counts to create efficient travel paths for city carriers while reducing park points and relays.

2. Q: What happens during the Graphic Database development phase?

A: Census TIGER files are accessed and a zone database is created for a 5 Digit Zip Zone. Files are retrieved from AMS (CDS or DPF) and from the MDAS (NDSS) and are applied to the street database. Errors are corrected in address ranges and new streets are added. Duplicate records are eliminated and physical street verification of the data takes place. This process will be replaced when the DOIS/COR Interface, which is currently under development, is completed. These files will then be downloaded directly from DOIS.

3. Q: What happens during the Route Adjustment Phase?

A: Route Inspection Data is entered into the system. DCD data is preferred because the files can be directly transferred via diskette, but manual input is available. Algorithms create an optimal set of routes for review and changes can be made using a manual route transfer tool. After acceptance of the routes by unit management, a second set of algorithms is utilized to create optimal, safe carrier travel paths.

4. Q: Does COR follow the M-39 Rules?

A: Yes. The route examinations are conducted exactly as they would be for a manual, DOIS, or GeoLimited Route Adjustment according to Chapter 2 of the M-39. COR uses only the carrier's actual performance to make any territory assignment or routing of the Line of Travel (LOT) during the adjustment process.

5. Q: How much time and effort is involved in creating the Graphic Database for the Zone being adjusted and what is the cost?

A: There is no exact amount of time or number of hours. It depends on the number of routes in the Zone and the quality of the TIGER Files for the geographical area. (TIGER Files come from the Census Bureau and exist for every zone in the country.)

Generally speaking it takes about a day per route. This includes actual physical verification of the data on the street and could be done by a delivery supervisor during his regular street supervision duties. (Using 8 hours per route in a 20-route zone would mean about 160 hours.

However, if COR saves 10 hours per day in the zone, after the first 16 days you will have recovered your entire investment and you will continue to save hours daily from that point forward.) We are also presently exploring enhanced databases from database vendors, which would require less investment of time.

PRESENTLY COR DOES NOT INTERFACE DIRECTLY WITH DOIS. THE COR/DOIS INTERFACE IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN FEBRUARY 2004. UNTIL THAT TIME IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE SCHEME AND SEQUENCE CHANGES FOR THE ROUTE BE MADE DIRECTLY IN AMS AND BACKED INTO DOIS.

6. Q: Who builds the Graphic Databases?

A: In most of the Districts that are active with GeoLimited, the function of building the databases has been either within AMS or in Delivery. However, the choice is made at each individual District. We plan to conduct a comprehensive training program this Fall for District designees to become proficient at building the databases.

7. Q: Why do I need COR when my District already has qualified Route adjusters?

A: Many Districts are experiencing a shortage of Delivery Supervisors and Analysts who have a strong background in Delivery or in route adjustment procedures. The current ASP program has many candidates from the Plant side who are promoted into Delivery positions. Often they have not had the opportunity to learn delivery procedures or route examination and adjustment procedures.

In addition, many Districts now use a system that moves Delivery Supervisors around Stations and Branches on a rotating basis. These supervisors often do not know the delivery zone or territory well enough to complete a proficient route adjustment.

Additionally, even the best adjusters often miss excess park points and relays because they do not know the volumes for each relay. COR has specifically designed algorithms that optimize both routes and relays.

8. Q: What is the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC)'s position on COR?

A: The NALC has not articulated a position on COR. On May 28, 2003, Gateway provided a status update briefing on COR. The NALC and Headquarters Labor Relations attended the briefing. In addition, the Labor Relations Department notified the National Officers of the intention to use COR for city carrier route adjustments on August 27, 2003.

9. Q: What kind of savings can I expect to reap from COR?

A: Our data from the original Demonstration Sites showed a 5% decrease in hours and a 12% decrease in mileage. The Alpha sites showed savings as well. Savings will be greater at sites that have growth and/or fragmented routes. Sites that already have compact routes will show some savings, but less than those whose routes are inefficient due to growth or repeated Minor Adjustments.

10. Q: Why use COR adjustments rather than manual or GeoLimited?

A: In all other methods of route adjustment presently being utilized by the USPS, volumes for the sector/segments are not being considered to create park points and relays. This means inefficient adjustments. In COR, mail is counted by sector / segment and then is actually utilized to create the relays for the routes. This is the only efficient way to set up relays since volumes for each delivery, and consequently each relay, vary greatly. This is an approved method for counting volumes according to the M-39, Section 2.4.

COR provides visual displays to management and carriers during the route adjustment process and provides numerous visual map and data displays that are added to the carrier's route book

COR also provides the first line supervisor with data to have a daily dialogue with carriers on auxiliary assistance assignments.

11. Q: Can the routes and/or travel paths created by COR be changed?

A: Yes they can. COR has all the functionality of GeoLimited and contains a manual transfer tool. It also contains a manual travel path tool that allows the user to make changes to the optimal path suggested by COR.

12. Q: If I am already using GeoLimited, what will happen to the databases that I have spent time and resources creating?

A: You will be able to convert them to COR databases utilizing a functionality that we have already created in COR. GeoLimited users will be trained first in COR because they already have the initial knowledge to utilize the system.

13. Q: When will COR be available to the field?

A: Initial plans call for training in both Route Adjustment and Graphic Database creation from August 2003 to January 2004. Deployment of the software will take place directly after training.

14. Q: How are DOIS and COR going to interface?

A: An Interface is being developed that will allow COR to download the CDS or DPF files and the NDSS files directly from DOIS. The Interface will be an ODBC connection that allows the download of the files and then the upload of all COR changes.

15. Q: How can we get a sector/segment count for the DPS letters from automation, so we do not have to manually count the DPS letters?

A: First, Establish a Density Data collection for the DPS sort plan, must be done at the DBCS. The density file will automatically upload to NDSS when the run is concluded. The next day, use VDC program on NDSS to create a DPF report. For each ZIP+4, this report will list the route, address, and the number of pieces for the day. FTP the DPF report to ACE workstation. Parse into Excel. Sort the file by Route number, then ZIP+4.

16. Q: How do I reset the COR password?

A: Delete both of the files COR/System/password. One is a Jet Form, the other a text document. The next time you open COR, you will be prompted to enter a new password.

17. Q: Whom do I contact if I have questions about COR?

A: The program management group is the Gateway Planning & Technology Development group under HQs Delivery & Retail.

**Deborah Ferrara, Executive Program Director (202) 268-5616
Joyce Coombs, COR Program Manager (202) 268-6642**

Mark Osborn, COR FAQ Coordinator (202) 268-2098

Bob McLean, Team Member/Delivery (202) 268-7996 Delivery Policies & Program Liaison

COR Website http://blue.usps.gov/delivery/gate_cor.htm

Gateway Planning & Technology Development