

PLANET/ACS Pilot

Introduction

This document provides a brief overview and outlines the preliminary requirements for participation in the PLANET/ACS Pilot. This effort will evaluate the feasibility and value to both mailers and the USPS of substituting the Address Change Service (ACS) participant code and keyline codes with a PLANET barcode.

Background

Mailers currently use a series of alphanumeric values to represent their participation in the USPS' Address Change Service (ACS) program. A mandatory value is the ACS Participant Code (#BYBBBBM) that denotes the participating mailer. An optional value is the ACS Keyline (#65DOE1232003#) that allows the mailer to print on the mail piece the code necessary to linkage the customer shown in the address back to the mailer's address files.

Mailer's Name	☹
Mailer's Address	
Mailer's City ST ZIP+4	
Address Service Requested	
	#BYBBBBM
	#65DOE12320035#
	JOHN DOE
	123 MAIN ST
	ANTOWN ST 98765-4321

In USPS processing, whenever a mail piece is Undeliverable-As-Addressed (UAA), the detection of the ACS code causes the mail piece to be sent to the Computerized Forwarding System unit where an operator manually enters the ACS information. Depending on the mail class, the ancillary service endorsement, and whether the mail piece is UAA due a customer change-of-address (COA) or other reason for non-delivery (Nixie), the mail piece is then either forwarded, returned to sender, or disposed. An electronic ACS notice is sent to the mailer that provides the moving customer's new mailing address or the reason why mail piece could not be delivered to the original address.

OneCode Vision

The USPS organization Intelligent Mail & Address Quality is proposing to mailers that a new standard be developed to represent via a barcode the many varied service requests that can appear on the face of a mail piece. This new standard, known as the OneCode Vision, proposes to replace alphanumeric values and the variety of barcode formats used with a single standard barcode that is capable of servicing the differing service needs. The first effort at adopting this new standard is the PLANET/ACS program.


Manual processing of ACS information is less than optimal. Manual data entry is costly and is subject to human error. The USPS is already undertaking an effort to automate the processing of UAA mail pieces in the Postal Automated Redirection System (PARS)

program. However, even where technology can be applied to processing of UAA mail pieces there still remains problems in the proper identification and interpretation of the multiple values that must be factored in every disposition decision. PARS cannot always read the ancillary service endorsement, the ACS participant code, the ACS keyline, and the mail class determination from each mail piece that is necessary prior to making a disposition decision. Consequently, even in a PARS-enabled environment the USPS must still expend manual effort on a significant portion of UAA mail to properly process the mail piece and provide the mailer-requested services.

Through the PLANET/ACS pilot, the USPS seeks to evaluate whether the use of a machine-readable barcode can improve the read rates of ACS mail. The plan is to replace alphanumeric values that are currently used to request ACS processing with a barcode that conveys the same information. To facilitate quicker testing of this idea without making infrastructure changes in USPS mail processing equipment, service programs, and delivery and distribution processes, a pilot is proposed that will allow USPS and mailers to evaluate the potential of using barcodes with minimum changes in our current operating environments.

PLANET/ACS Pilot

The idea in the PLANET/ACS pilot is to use the current PLANET Code used by CONFIRM Program participants as the vehicle for providing ACS-style notices of mailpieces that are undeliverable-as-addressed. Since the PLANET Code is already widely supported in USPS processing, it allows mailers to leverage their current participation in the CONFIRM Program to include obtaining value-added UAA notification services without changes to their mail creation systems. Example:

Mailer's Name 123 Main St Dulles VA 20000-0099	
Address Service Requested	
	 JOHN DOE 123 MAIN ST ANTOWN ST 98765-4321

Mailers participating in the PLANET/ACS pilot will be required to print a return address with a USPS-assigned ZIP Code that will be used to direct all returned UAA mail pieces to the pilot facility. A centralized processing location will initially be established for conducting the pilot. As the pilot proves the feasibility of this concept, additional processing centers may be established. Sort plans for individual plants would be modified locally to redirect the PLANET/ACS mail to the nearest processing center.

When a mail piece is identified by the postal carrier as being UAA, the carrier will provide the routine treatment and submit the mail piece for either forwarding or return-to-sender processing. Because the mail piece will not bear the ACS markings that would normally trigger sending the mail piece to CFS for processing, and because the USPS

does not want to implement policy changes for the sole purpose of conducting the pilot, it will be necessary that the return address of the PLANET/ACS processing facility be included in the return address. The use of the processing center return address will cause all UAA mail that would normally be returned to sender to be sent instead to the processing center. **For those UAA mail pieces that would normally be forwarded, the return address will cause the manual address correction form PS Form 3547 to be sent to the processing center from the CFS unit. (Need to revise in light of new approach)**

Dulles Processing Center

The PLANET/ACS processing will be initially performed at the Dulles P&DC. This site was selected because it has the required PARS equipment that will be used to perform the processing. At the Dulles mail processing center, the Combined Input-Output SubSystem (CIOSS) equipment will be used to process the UAA returned mail pieces. A process will be created for capturing the information contained in the PLANET and POSTNET barcodes and outputting this information into an electronic file. Where the PLANET Code is unreadable, an electronic image of the mailpiece will be created for transmission to the mailer. After compilation of the data the file will be sent via the NCSC to the participating mailer for analysis and incorporation into their mailing list administrative processes.

In the UAA returned mail there will be included two types of notices, mail pieces that are undeliverable due to a customer move and others that are undeliverable for a non-move related reason, or nixies. Depending on the UAA reason, forwarding vs. nixie, information will be captured from the mail piece to create a pseudo ACS record that will be provided to the mailer. Because the nixie mail will not be sorted by any reason code or originating office, the PLANET/ACS process will not return individual reasons why a specific mail piece was undeliverable. Instead, all nixie mail will be reported as having been UAA under one reason code.