

OCT 31 1996

**FINAL REPORT
TO THE
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**North Dakota League of Cities
City Communications Network
- NDLC City Link -**

October 31, 1996

The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) awarded a grant of \$24,999.00 to the North Dakota League of Cities (League) on November 4, 1994. The North Dakota League of Cities placed the grant award money in a separate account so that all expenditures under the grant could be easily tracked and reported.

The purpose of the grant was to assist the North Dakota League of Cities in establishing a communications network among the cities of North Dakota. A study by the Bureau of Governmental Affairs at the University of North Dakota had concluded that over 80 percent of the 311 cities responding to a survey favored the establishment of such a communications network.

League officials met with city and state officials, including representatives of the State Information Services Division, to determine how to proceed with the proposed project. It was determined that a relatively simple computer bulletin board system would be the most logical way to begin. This approach would allow the League to explore the possibilities and member acceptance of telecommunications before making a substantial resource commitment.

The League contracted with JMS Systems of Bismarck to assist in the development of the computer bulletin board system. JMS Systems developed the North Dakota League of Cities 'City Link' system as a city communications network. An important feature of the system is that 'generic' software can be used to access the system. Nearly any computer

with a modem and some type of communications software can use this type of bulletin board system.

In order to make the best use of funds available from the ACIR grant, the League decided to contract with JMS systems for operation of the system rather than spending more for salaries and benefits. Since JMS systems was involved in the development of the system, they were in the best position to assist with any difficulties that arose during the system's operation.

The 'City Link' communications system has a number of features to improve communication between cities. Among these features are 'E-Mail', which allows users to exchange electronic mail, discussion groups for on-line discussions of particular topics, updated information on such things as legislative hearings and meeting schedules, fax-back service for documents on the system, classified ads for all sorts of city needs, and a shareware library offering over 2,000 computer programs and files.

In order to introduce the 'City Link' system to city officials, the League made background sessions on the system a major part of its six regional meetings in April, 1995. City officials were able to take part in 'hands on' sessions in order to become acquainted with the system. This approach resulted in a great deal of interest in the system from those cities with computers and 'planted the seed' for those cities that were thinking of obtaining computers. The League had several articles in the League Bulletin (a magazine which is mailed to about 2,700 city and state officials ten times a year) which provided more information on the 'City Link' system. This information was followed up at the League's annual convention in September, 1995, with an exhibit booth on 'City Link' and presentations to League affiliate groups. A special session on computer communications was also held at the League's annual convention in September of 1996.

As of October 31, 1996, there were 75 individuals with their own passwords for the system allowing them to exchange electronic mail with anyone else on the system. Over 2,000 calls have been made to the system, and it is anticipated that these numbers will grow as others learn that the system is useful and 'user friendly'. Included with this report is a final summary of grant expenditures and matching funds from the North Dakota League of Cities.

City Communications Network - City Link - October 31, 1996

	Proposed:	Proposed:	Actual:	Actual:
	Grant	Match	Grant	Match
				thru 12/31/95
Salaries and benefits	\$20,000.00	\$18,624.00	\$21,880.12	\$19,448.00
Travel	\$2,000.00	\$400.00	\$928.00	\$663.00
Office expense		\$300.00		\$441.00
Telephone		\$1,200.00		\$1,169.00
Postage		\$200.00		\$231.00
Leased equipment	\$2,999.00	\$400.00	\$2,144.74	\$302.00
City Link direct line		\$0.00	\$687.45	\$0.00
Legal and audit		\$200.00		\$150.00
Insurance and bond		\$240.00		\$123.00
Publicity and promotion		\$2,530.00		\$3,538.00
Office space		\$2,500.00		\$2,484.00
Dues, subscriptions		\$400.00		\$467.00
Miscellaneous		\$200.00		\$0.00
TOTALS:	\$24,999.00	\$27,194.00	\$25,640.31	\$29,016.00
plus interest to date:	\$641.31			
available grant funds:	\$25,640.31			
less actual expenditures:	\$25,640.31			
Grant balance:	\$0.00			