

• Foster growth by increasing the value of postal products and services to our customers;
 • Improve operational efficiency; and
 • Enhance the performance-based culture.”

In their opening message Mr. Rider and Mr. Potter recognize their responsibility “to take definitive action to offer the citizens of America a clear and compelling view of current and planned actions and our vision of where we are headed. At the same time we want to encourage all our stakeholders to remain actively engaged in discussions about postal issues and the Postal Service’s future.”

It is in this spirit, as the Postal Service develops the 2004–2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan, that we ask stakeholders to once again share their views on its future.

Solicitation of Comments

The United States Postal Service solicits identification of and comment on the key factors external to the Postal Service and beyond its control which could significantly affect the achievement of its mission, vision, and goals. During development of the Transformation Plan and during subsequent Postal Service testimony before the President’s Commission on the Postal Service the following fundamental changes were identified as those reshaping the delivery services marketplace:

• *Changing customer needs.* With access to more information and options than ever before, customers have a broad range of choices for delivery of messages, money, and merchandise—our three businesses. Customer requirements for postal services and entrenched network structures and service patterns may be changing.
 • *Eroding mail volumes.* Electronic alternatives, particularly bill presentment and payment, pose a definite and substantial risk to First-Class Mail® volume and revenue within the next 5–10 years. This could, in turn, have a negative impact on First-Class Mail rates.

• *Rising costs.* Despite major gains in efficiency and productivity through letter mail automation, the costs of maintaining an ever-expanding postal network are rising faster than revenue, especially costs outside the direct control of the Postal Service, such as retirement and health benefit liabilities.

• *Fixed costs.* Universal service requires a significant infrastructure to deliver postal services. Almost half of current Postal Service costs are spent on these resources, and that level does not change when volume or productivity

increases or decreases. This makes cost containment challenging.

• *Merging of public and private operators into global networks.* Former national foreign postal services, some privatized, have entered the U.S. domestic market; giant private firms that dominate global parcel and express markets are entering an increasing portion of the postal value chain.

• *Increasing security concerns.* Rising security concerns will require expensive and sophisticated countermeasures.

Are these factors still relevant? Which ones are relevant and which are not? Are some more important than others? Is the rate of change for each factor increasing or decreasing? Are there other factors that warrant consideration? What are they? In developing the 2004–2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan, the Postal Service would like to receive stakeholders’ views and comments on these and other long-term external changes, issues, and trends.

Finally, stakeholders should include their comments that were made to the President’s Commission on the Postal Service regarding the United States Postal Service if reviewing such comments would help the Postal Service in developing its 2004–2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan.

The Postal Service also invites comment on its long-range organizational goals, or objectives, published most recently in the Preliminary Annual Performance Plan for 2004 as part of the FY 2002 Comprehensive Statement on Postal Operations. The Postal Service has employed long-range goals, or objectives, as part of a strategic planning process for over two decades, along with systematic performance assessments. The Postal Service has developed a disciplined process to establish the goals, objectives, indicators, and targets; assign resources to programs that support achievement of the targets; implement the programs; and review performance. Stakeholder input will support and enhance both the performance process and the new 2004–2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Specifically, the Postal Service solicits stakeholder comment on the following long-range organizational goals and objectives:

Goal	FY 2004 preliminary performance objective (sub-goals)
Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness and consistency. • Priority Mail® (Air) On Time. • Priority Mail (Surface) On Time.

Goal	FY 2004 preliminary performance objective (sub-goals)
Motivated, productive and inclusive workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express Mail® On Time. • Overnight First-Class Mail On Time. • Two-Day First-Class Mail On Time. • Three-Day First-Class Mail On Time. • Minimize impacts from accidents and absences.
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees committed to Postal Service success. • Improve productivity to control costs, improve contribution levels, and grow the business.

Any comments pertaining to the means by which the Postal Service can best achieve these goals are welcome. Comments on other aspects of strategic planning, goal-definition, and performance measurement are also welcome.

This request for comments initiates a formal process for the development of the 2004–2008 Five-Year Strategic Plan, and offers an opportunity for stakeholder comments to be given careful consideration in the development of the plan’s goals, targets, and strategies. While its July 18 deadline corresponds with a need and requirement for formality in the development of this plan, the strategic planning process itself is continuous and welcomes ongoing input from all stakeholders in the development of annual business environmental assessments, and annual performance plans and reports.

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