

Smart Grid Today

Top Tantalus executives report on Chattanooga AMI

May 21, 2015

 Printer-Friendly Format



15-minute reads offer municipal much data for apps



In the AMI program Chattanooga Electric Power Board (EPB) and Tantalus recently completed, the utility collected data from customers at 15-minute intervals over a fiber optic network connecting customers' smart meters to the grid, Tantalus CEO Peter Londa told us yesterday. The every quarter-hour backhaul capability at the meter level means 96 reads/day, Londa noted.

"This is unique in this industry," he added, suggesting the industry is accustomed to four-hour intervals or six reads/day. "We're just scratching the surface of how to leverage that data," Londa said. The Tennessee utility uses TUNet, Tantalus' AMI system, to access interval data and look at it from "a much more granular view" than the norm, he added.

The team is considering using meters for not only automated billing but also voltage and power quality, outage management and load management, Londa said. With a boatload of data at their fingertips, utilities deploying smart grid systems such as the Tantalus fiber optic-powered AMI system are scrambling to manage and act on that data – that Londa called "a transformational event unfolding in an industry that hasn't, for the most part, been at the forefront of technology adoption."

Utilities are making some good progress bridging the gap between IT and OT, he added. "Now there is a nexus between the IT and operations [departments] of utilities. It's far beyond what it looked like five or 10 years ago."

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The convergence of IT and OT has been a topic of interest in the smart grid space for some time as our coverage back in 2011 made clear (SGT, [2011-Oct-11](#)). Since then our news coverage has included [multiple firms](#) working on the issue.]

Some utilities buy the infrastructure, including databases, ahead of deploying smart meters, but some municipals and cooperatives instead ask Tantalus for support, Londa said. "EPB is at the forefront of thinking in that capacity," he added, referring to the utility's IT planning.

"We're not responsible for their IT infrastructure, but they're extremely well equipped and have allocated time and money to harness that data and collect it. Smaller utilities don't have the budget to do that, so they're looking for a technology partner like us to do it."

Tantalus started the project with EPB in 2009 (SGT, [2009-Aug-31](#)), when the utility wanted to take advantage of a high-speed internet rollout to use the fiber optic network for grid-related purposes, Tantalus Chief Marketing Officer Tammy Zucco reminded us yesterday. At the time, Tantalus had already deployed smart grid projects with over a dozen other utilities "in rural, hilly areas," Zucco said.

In addition to using the data to set up TOU pricing programs, EPB is trying to use it for "proactive and reactive decisions," especially with voltage data – to spot transformers that are about to blow, Zucco said. "They're trying to get a handle on getting all that data into a central repository" and after that will focus on how to automate some responses.

EPB's efforts to leverage its data mirrors what is going on more broadly among utilities, and though Tantalus can gather data at five-minute intervals through its AMI system, most utilities have not used that capability yet as they are still figuring out what to do with the data they have, she added.

"We have five-minute interval data at some of our C&I sites," Zucco said. "With residential, there hasn't been a need to do that yet because utilities haven't done true dynamic pricing with residential customers yet."

© 2015 Modern Markets Intelligence, Inc. (MMI) - All Rights Reserved.