

Billing Options

All of the VANs provide billing options that allow the cost of an EDI message to be split between the sender and receiver (i.e. sender pays, receiver pays, or both pay). What varies across the VANs is how the charges can be split with the billing option. For example, mailbox fees can always be split, but access time charges can not be split on some networks.

Interconnect

As shown earlier, all of the VANs, except **Immedia** and **SITA**, interconnect with other VANs. The majority of these interconnects use the No Logon method (see Chapter 3.2), which is not robust. Two VANs, **GEIS** and **Sterling Ordernet**, indicated plans to switch to the X12 Mailbag method during 1992.

Freight forwarders can protect themselves by:

- i) Insisting their VAN use X12 Mailbag or X.400 for interconnect.
- ii) Making stringent use of X12 Functional Acknowledgements (or TDCC Acknowledgement) if "No Logon" interconnects can not be avoided.
- iii) Avoiding the use of EDIFACT over "No Logon" interconnects as the EDIFACT acknowledgement has yet to be approved.

Availability

All of the VANs indicated round-the-clock, year-round operation. Some of the VANs indicated scheduled maintenance times as follows:

Immedia	Sunday morning
Sterling	Sunday morning

We recommend that each company using EDI decide what is critical for its own purposes, then ask the VAN whether their particular availability needs will be met.

Network-Based Services

There is a wide variety of network-based services provided by the VANs surveyed. However, all of the services are only of value to a freight forwarder if there is a specific need.

These services can be categorized as follows: