

# DIVIDER

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
SFN 2053 (4-2002)

PU-1692-02-54

Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application

Filed 2/7/2002

Closed 5/2/2002

02

## DESCRIPTION

**Scott, Sandi L.**

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**From:** Fortney, Kathy M.  
**Sent:** Friday, April 26, 2002 2:32 PM  
**To:** Comm; PUD; Legal  
**Subject:** Customer Input

Frontier/Citizens buy/sell to Dickey Rural Access, Inc.(Case No.'s PU-2653-02-57 and PU-2653-02-58); Polar Telecommunications, Inc.(Case No.'s PU-1727-01-55 and PU-1727-02-56); and Red River Telecom, Inc.(Case No.'s PU-1692-02-53 and PU-1692-02-54)

Paul Trom 701-474-5760 from Fairmount, ND, is upset with the Commission because he has contacted us many times as far back as the 80's requesting assistance obtaining EAS to reach Hankinson only 9 miles away. He can call towns much further away without LD charges but not the town closest. They have tried petitions a number of times and failed. I explained our lack of authority but encouraged him to make an new effort with the new company if the sale is approved. The Commission has no authority over this issue with the new company.



506 Broadway • P.O. Box 136  
Abercrombie, ND 58001

November 1, 2002

North Dakota Public Service Commission  
Illona Jeffcoat-Sacco  
State Capitol  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480



RE: Completion of Acquisition

Dear Ms Jeffcoat-Sacco:

This letter is to notify your Department and the North Dakota Public Service Commission that the purchase of the Fairmount and Wyndmere telephone exchanges from Citizens Communications is complete and, as of November 1, 2002, Red River Telecom, Inc. is the new local service provider.

Community meetings are scheduled for the week of November 11 as an opportunity for local subscribers to become familiar with our company and the scope of services we offer.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the completed acquisition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ardon M. Doran', written over a large, stylized oval flourish.

Ardon M. Doran  
General Manager

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Pages 1

Notification of purchase of Fairmount &  
Wyndmere telephone exchanges  
by Red River Telecom, Inc.

11/05/2002

CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

**"For All Your Telecommunications Needs"**

Phone 701/553-8309 • FAX 701/553-8396



LAW OFFICES OF

**PRINGLE & HERIGSTAD, P.C.**

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THOMAS A. WENTZ

November 1, 2002



Jon H. Mielke, Executive Secretary  
Public Service Commission  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 408  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480

**CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACQUISITIONS**

- Dickey Rural Access, Inc./DEC PC&N - PU-2653-02-57**
- Dickey Rural Access, Inc./Local Exch PC&N - PU-2653-02-58**
- Polar Telecommunications, Inc./DEC PC&N - PU-1727-02-55**
- Polar Telecommunications, Inc./Local Exch PC&N - PU-1727-02-56**
- Red River Telecom, Inc./DEC App - PU-1692-02-54**
- Red River Telecom, Inc./Local Exch PC&N - PU-1692-02-53**

This letter is to advise you that the closing of these acquisitions of exchanges of Citizens Telecommunications was conducted on October 31, 2002. The transactions closed as anticipated. Also enclosed is an Order from the FCC granting a waiver of the boundary area freeze.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Don Negaard

jt

Enclosure

cc/enc: Dave Dunning  
Ardon M. Doran  
Darren Moser

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Ltr re closing of acquisitions & copy of  
FCC order granting waiver of boundary  
by Red River Telecom, Inc. by Don Negaard, Attorney  
11/05/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative, Dickey	)	
Rural Access, Inc., Polar Telecommunications,	)	
Inc., Red River Rural Telephone Association, Red	)	
River Telecom, Inc.	)	
	)	
And	)	
	)	
Citizens Telecommunications Company of North	)	CC Docket No. 96-45
Dakota	)	
	)	
Joint Petition for Waiver of the Definition of	)	
"Study Area" Contained in the Part 36, Appendix-	)	
Glossary of the Commission's Rules	)	
	)	
Petition for Waiver of Sections 61.41(c) and (d),	)	
69.3(e)(11) and 69.605(c)	)	

**ORDER**

**Adopted: September 12, 2002**

**Released: September 13, 2002**

By the Deputy Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau:

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In this Order, we grant a request from Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc. (Dickey Rural), Polar Telecommunications, Inc. (Polar), Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River Telecom, Inc. (Red River) (collectively, Acquiring Companies), and Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota (Citizens) for a waiver of the study area boundary freeze codified in the Appendix-Glossary of Part 36 of the Commission's rules.<sup>1</sup> This waiver will permit Citizens to remove five exchanges comprising approximately 4,155 access lines from its North Dakota study area. This waiver also will permit Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative (the parent company of Dickey Rural Access, Inc.), Polar and Red River Rural Telephone Association (the parent company of Red River Telecom, Inc.) to add approximately 2,492 access lines, 635 access lines, and 1,028 access

<sup>1</sup> See Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota, Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River Telecom, Inc., Polar Telecommunications, Inc. and Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc. Joint Petition for Waiver of the Definition of "Study Area" Contained in Part 36, Appendix—Glossary of the Commission's Rules, Petition for Waiver of Section 61.41(c) and (d), Section 69.3(e)(11) and 69.605(c) of the Commission's Rules (filed April 5, 2002) (*Petition*). See also Letter from Mary J. Sisak, Attorney for Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative, Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Red River Rural Telephone Association, Red River Telecom, Inc. and Polar Telecommunications, Inc. to Marlene H. Dortch, FCC (May 13, 2002) (*Petition Supplement*).

lines, respectively, to their existing North Dakota study areas.<sup>2</sup>

2. We also grant the request of Dickey Rural for a waiver of the Commission's price cap "all-or-nothing" rule in section 61.41(c) of the Commission's rules to permit Dickey Rural to operate under rate-of-return regulation after acquiring exchanges from Citizens that are subject to price-cap regulation. In addition, we grant the request of Polar and Red River for a waiver of section 69.605(c) of the Commission's rules to allow Polar and Red River to continue operating as average schedule companies after the acquisitions from Citizens. Finally, we grant the Acquiring Companies' request for a waiver of section 69.3(e)(11) of the Commission's rules so that the Acquiring Companies can include the exchanges they acquire from Citizens in the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) common line tariff upon acquisition of the exchanges.

## II. STUDY AREA WAIVER

### A. Background

3. Study Area Boundaries. A study area is a geographic segment of an incumbent local exchange carrier's (LEC's) telephone operations. Generally, a study area corresponds to an incumbent LEC's entire service territory within a state. Thus, incumbent LECs operating in more than one state typically have one study area for each state. The Commission froze all study area boundaries effective November 15, 1984, and an incumbent LEC must apply to the Commission for a waiver of the study area boundary freeze if it wishes to sell or purchase additional exchanges.<sup>3</sup>

4. Transfer of Universal Service Support. Section 54.305(a) of the Commission's rules provides that a carrier acquiring exchanges from an unaffiliated carrier shall receive the same per-line levels of high-cost universal service support for which the acquired exchanges were eligible prior to their transfer.<sup>4</sup> This limitation applies to high-cost loop support, local switching support and long term support (LTS). Section 54.305(a) is meant to discourage carriers from transferring exchanges merely to increase their share of high-cost universal service support.<sup>5</sup> For example, if a rural carrier purchases an exchange from a non-rural carrier that receives support based on the Commission's high-cost support mechanism for non-rural carriers, the loops of the acquired exchange shall receive the same per-line support as calculated under the non-rural mechanism, regardless of the support the rural carrier purchasing the

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<sup>2</sup> Dickey Rural is acquiring the Gwinner and Lisbon exchanges, Polar is acquiring the Pembina exchange, and Red River is acquiring the Lisbon and Fairmount exchanges. A small number of customers located in Minnesota are served out of the Fairmount exchange being acquired by Red River and the Pembina exchange being acquired by Polar.

<sup>3</sup> See *MTS and WATS Market Structure, Amendment of Part 67 of the Commission's Rules and Establishment of a Joint Board*, CC Docket Nos. 78-72, 80-286, Recommended Decision and Order, 49 Fed. Reg. 48325 (1984); Decision and Order, 50 Fed. Reg. 939 (1985); see also *Amendment of Part 36 of the Commission's Rules and Establishment of a Joint Board*, CC Docket No. 80-286, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 5 FCC Rcd 5974 (1990). See also 47 C.F.R. § 36 app.

<sup>4</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 54.305.

<sup>5</sup> See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 8776, 8942-43 (1997) (*First Report and Order*), as corrected by *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, Errata, CC Docket No. 96-45, FCC 97-157 (rel. June 4, 1997), *affirmed in part, reversed in part and remanded in part sub nom. Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel v. FCC*, 183 F.3d 393 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1999).

exchange may receive for any of its other exchanges.<sup>6</sup>

5. Notwithstanding the limitations provided in section 54.305(a), there are two circumstances under which rural carriers may receive additional high-cost support for acquired lines. First, the Commission recently amended section 54.305 to provide that a rural carrier may be eligible to receive additional high-cost loop support for new investments in acquired exchanges under the Commission's "safety valve" mechanism.<sup>7</sup> The total safety valve support available to all eligible carriers is limited to no more than five percent of rural incumbent LEC support available from the annual high-cost loop fund. Second, when the Commission established interstate common line support (ICLS) for rate-of-return carriers, it concluded that the limitations set forth in section 54.305(a) would not apply to such support.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, an acquiring carrier is not limited to the amount of ICLS support that the selling carrier received.

6. *The Petition for Waivers.* On April 2, 2002, Citizens and the Acquiring Companies filed a joint petition for a waiver of the study area boundary freeze and other related waivers. On May 6, 2002, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) released a public notice seeking comment on the petition for waivers.<sup>9</sup>

7. A study area waiver would permit Citizens to alter the boundaries of its existing study area by removing five exchanges that it is transferring to the Acquiring Companies. The waiver would also permit the purchased exchanges to be added to the study areas of Dickey Rural (acquiring

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<sup>6</sup> Rural carriers receive high-cost loop support based on the extent to which their reported average cost per loop exceeds 115 percent of the nationwide average cost per loop. See 47 C.F.R. §§ 36.601-36.631. The mechanism for non-rural carriers directs support to carriers based on the forward-looking economic cost of operating a given exchange. See 47 C.F.R. § 54.309.

<sup>7</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.305(b)-(f). See also *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Multi-Association Group (MAG) Plan for Regulation of Interstate Services of Non-Price Cap Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers and Interexchange Carriers*, Fourteenth Report and Order, Twenty-Second Order on Reconsideration, and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in CC Docket No. 96-45, and Report and Order in CC Docket No. 00-256, 16 FCC Rcd 11244 at 11276-84 (2001) (*RTF Order*), as corrected by Errata, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 00-256 (Acc. Pol. Div. rel. Jun. 1, 2001). The "safety valve" mechanism enables rural carriers acquiring access lines to receive additional high-cost loop support over a period of five years reflecting post-transaction investments made to enhance the infrastructure of and improve the service in acquired exchanges. Safety valve support provides up to 50 percent of any positive difference between a rural carrier's index year high-cost loop support expense adjustment for the acquired exchanges and subsequent year expense adjustments.

<sup>8</sup> See also *Multi-Association Group (MAG) Plan for Regulation of Interstate Services of Non-Price Cap Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers and Interexchange Carriers in CC Docket No. 00-256, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service in CC Docket No. 96-45, Access Charge Reform for Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers Subject to Rate-of-Return Regulation in CC Docket No. 98-77, Prescribing the Authorized Rate of Return From Interstate Services of Local Exchange Carriers in CC Docket No. 98-166*, Second Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Fifteenth Report and Order, Report and Order and, Report and Order, 16 FCC Rcd 19613, 19667-69 paras. 155-157 (2001) (*MAG Order/NPRM*), recon. pending.

<sup>9</sup> See *Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative, Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Polar Telecommunications, Inc., Red River Rural Telephone Association, Red River Telecom, Inc., and Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota Seek a Waiver of the Definition of "Study Area" Contained in Part 36 and Sections 61.41(c) and (d), 69.3(e)(11) and 69.605(c) of the Commission's Rules*, Public Notice, DA 02-1034 (rel. May 6, 2002) (*Notice*). Comments in support of the petition were filed by NECA and the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA). See NECA Comments at 1. See NTCA Comments at 3.

approximately 2,492 access lines),<sup>10</sup> Polar (acquiring approximately 635 access lines),<sup>11</sup> and Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River (acquiring approximately 1,028 access lines).<sup>12</sup>

8. The Acquiring Companies also submitted an *ex parte* letter on June 11, 2002 addressing, in part, its estimates of the initial ICLS that would be available to the Acquiring Companies as a result of acquiring lines from Citizens.<sup>13</sup> The *June 11 ex parte* states that, based on projected annual ICLS and access lines as of September 9, 2001, the initial ICLS support available to the Acquiring Companies is estimated as follows: (1) Dickey Rural will be eligible to receive annual ICLS of \$150,056; (2) Polar Telecommunications, Inc. will be eligible to receive annual ICLS of \$53,845; and (3) Red River Rural Telephone Association will be eligible to receive annual ICLS of \$74,970.<sup>14</sup> According to the Acquiring Companies, the projected annual amounts reflect the ICLS impact if the companies were to be eligible for ICLS beginning July 1, 2002.<sup>15</sup> The Acquiring Companies also state that “the actual amounts received will be dispersed on a monthly basis and are dependent on the timing of the grant of the waiver request, closing of the acquisitions, and submission of updated line counts by the [A]cquiring [C]ompanies.”<sup>16</sup>

9. Standards for Waiver. Generally, the Commission’s rules may be waived for good cause shown.<sup>17</sup> As noted by the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, however, agency rules are presumed valid.<sup>18</sup> The Commission may exercise its discretion to waive a rule where the particular facts make strict compliance inconsistent with the public interest.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the Commission may take into account considerations of hardship, equity, or more effective implementation of overall policy on an individual

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<sup>10</sup> Dickey Rural was created to purchase and operate Citizens’ Gwinner and Lisbon exchanges. Dickey Rural will be added to the existing Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative study area currently comprised of approximately 8800 access lines in North Dakota. See Petition at 2-4.

<sup>11</sup> Citizens’ Pembina exchange will be added to Polar’s study area. Polar’s current study area is comprised of approximately 1,614 access lines in North Dakota. Polar is a wholly owned subsidiary of Polar Communications Mutual Aid Corporation d/b/a Polar Communications which has a separate study area. See Petition at 2, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Citizens’ Wyndmere and Fairmount exchanges will be acquired by Red River. Red River, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Red River Rural Telephone Association, will add the exchanges to the approximate 1,745 lines it already serves within Red River Rural Telephone Association’s North Dakota study area. The Red River Rural Telephone Association presently serves four exchanges in North Dakota and three exchanges in Minnesota out of its North Dakota study area. See Petition at 2,4.

<sup>13</sup> See Letter from Mary J. Sisak, Counsel for Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative, Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Red River Rural Telephone Association, Red River Telecom, Inc., and Polar Telecommunications, Inc. to Marlene H. Dortch, FCC, dated June 11, 2002 at 2 (*June 11 ex parte*).

<sup>14</sup> This estimate is based on data provided by NECA to the Universal Service Administrative Company on April 18, 2002 and copied to NECA common line pool members. *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 1.3.

<sup>18</sup> *WAIT Radio v. FCC*, 418 F.2d 1153, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1969), *cert. denied*, 409 U.S. 1027 (1972).

<sup>19</sup> *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990).

basis.<sup>20</sup> Waiver of the Commission's rules is therefore appropriate only if special circumstances warrant a deviation from the general rule, and such deviation will serve the public interest. In evaluating petitions seeking a waiver of the rule freezing study area boundaries, the Commission traditionally has applied a three-prong standard: (1) the change in study area boundaries must not adversely affect the universal service fund; (2) no state commission having regulatory authority over the transferred exchanges opposes the transfer; and (3) the transfer must be in the public interest.<sup>21</sup>

10. In evaluating whether a study area boundary change will have an adverse impact on the universal service fund, we analyze whether a study area waiver will result in an annual aggregate shift in high-cost loop support in an amount equal to or greater than one percent of the total high-cost loop support fund for the year 2002.<sup>22</sup> The Commission began applying the one-percent guideline in 1995 to limit the potential adverse impact of exchange sales on the overall fund, also recognizing that, because of the indexed cap, an increase in the draw of any fund recipient necessarily reduces the amounts that other LECs receive from the fund.<sup>23</sup> After adoption of section 54.305(a) of the Commission's rules, however, the one-percent guideline, was not, in practice, a limitation because section 54.305(a) provides that a carrier purchasing exchanges from an unaffiliated carrier is permitted to receive only the same level of per-line high-cost support that the selling company was receiving for the exchanges prior to the transfer.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, by definition, section 54.305(a) ensured that there would be no adverse impact on the universal service fund. Consistent with past precedent, we now apply the one-percent guideline to determine the impact on the universal service fund, in light of the adoption of "safety valve" support, which allows an acquiring carrier to receive support for new investments in acquired lines, and ICLS, which does not limit the amount of such support that a carrier can receive for acquired lines.<sup>25</sup>

## B. Discussion

11. We find that good cause exists to waive the study area boundary freeze codified in the Appendix-Glossary of Part 36 of the Commission's rules to permit Citizens to alter the boundaries of its existing North Dakota study area to remove five exchanges that it is transferring to the Acquiring Companies. We also find that good cause exists to permit the Acquiring Companies to add these exchanges to their North Dakota study areas. For the reasons discussed below, we conclude that petitioners have satisfied the three-prong standard the Commission has applied to determine whether a waiver is warranted.

12. Because the proposed study area waiver will not result in a shift in high-cost support in

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<sup>20</sup> *WAIT Radio*, 418 F.2d at 1159; *Northeast Cellular*, 897 F.2d at 1166.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., *US WEST Communications, Inc., and Eagle Telecommunications, Inc., Joint Petition for Waiver of the Definition of "Study Area" Contained in Part 36, Appendix-Glossary of the Commission's Rules*, AAD 94-27, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 10 FCC Rcd 1771, 1772 (1995) (*PTI/Eagle Order*).

<sup>22</sup> See *PTI/Eagle Order* at 1774, paras. 14-17. See *US WEST Communications, Inc., and Eagle Telecommunications, Inc., Joint Petition for Waiver of "Study Area" Contained in Part 36, Appendix-Glossary of the Commission's Rules, and Petition for Waiver of Section 61.41(c) of the Commission's Rules*, AAD 94-27, Memorandum Opinion and Order on Reconsideration, 12 FCC Rcd 4644 (1997).

<sup>23</sup> See *PTI/Eagle Order* at 1773, para. 13.

<sup>24</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.305(a).

<sup>25</sup> See *supra* para. 5 (discussing "safety valve" support and ICLS).

an amount equal to or greater than one-percent of the total high-cost support fund, we conclude that the universal service fund will not be adversely affected. High cost loop support, local switching support, and LTS are limited by section 54.305(a) of the Commission's rules.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, the Acquiring Companies are limited to the same per-line levels of support that Citizens was receiving prior to the transfer. In this instance, Citizens has not been eligible for high-cost support, and therefore the Acquiring Companies will not receive such support on the lines they acquire from Citizens.<sup>27</sup> Although the Acquiring Companies may be eligible for safety valve support for investments in the acquired lines, we have no reason to believe that this amount would realistically exceed one percent of the total high-cost support fund. In reaching this conclusion, we note that the proposed study area waiver involves the transfer of only approximately 4,155 access lines. Moreover, an individual rural carrier's safety valve support is capped at 50 percent of any positive difference between the amount of high-cost loop support that the rural carrier would qualify for in the index year for the acquired access lines and the support amounts that the carrier would qualify for in subsequent years.<sup>28</sup> The total amount of safety valve support available to rural carriers is also capped at five percent of annual high-cost loop support available to rural carriers in any particular year, thereby providing an additional limitation on the amount of safety valve support available to carriers.<sup>29</sup>

13. Likewise, we find that providing ICLS support to the Acquiring Companies will not result in more than a one-percent change in the total high-cost fund.<sup>30</sup> Dickey Rural, Polar and Red River estimate that they may be eligible to receive annual ICLS in the amounts of \$150,056, \$53,845 and \$74,970, respectively, totaling \$278,871.<sup>31</sup> The total high-cost fund for the year 2002 is projected to be \$5.9 billion dollars, one percent of which would be \$59 million dollars. We therefore conclude that the combined total amount of \$278,871 that the Acquiring Companies estimate they will receive in ICLS, in addition to any amounts the Acquiring Companies may be eligible to receive in safety valve support, will not have an adverse impact on the universal service fund.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.305(a).

<sup>27</sup> See Universal Service Administrative Company, Federal Universal Service Support Mechanisms Fund Size Projections for the Fourth Quarter 2002 (rel. August 2, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.305(d). See *supra* note 7. The term "rural carrier" refers to an incumbent local exchange carrier that meets the definition of "rural telephone company" in section 3(37) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended. See 47 U.S.C. § 153(37). Because each of the Acquiring Companies provide telephone exchange service to local exchange study areas with fewer than 100,000 access lines, they all meet the definition of "rural telephone company" in the Act.

<sup>29</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.305(e).

<sup>30</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 54.902.

<sup>31</sup> See *June 11 ex parte* at 2.

<sup>32</sup> We acknowledge in applying the one-percent rule to past study area waiver requests, we considered how much an acquiring company's universal service fund draw would increase as a result of a transaction. See generally *Eagle Order*. In the case of the Acquiring Companies, however, this analysis would not be useful. Because section 54.305 applies to high cost loop support, local switching support, and LTS, the Acquiring Companies are limited to the same per-line levels of support Citizens is receiving, and we have acknowledged that Citizens is not receiving support. As for safety valve support, we cannot predict or estimate how it will impact the Acquiring Companies' draw on the fund because safety valve support will not be calculable unless and until post-transaction investments are made. Similarly, while we have estimates for ICLS support, this is a new type of support which (continued....)

14. Second, the state commissions with regulatory authority over the transferred exchanges do not oppose the transfer. The North Dakota Public Service Commission issued a letter approving the transfer of the affected exchanges and indicating that it does not object to a grant of the study area waiver.<sup>33</sup> The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission issued orders approving the transfer of the Fairmount and Pembina exchanges to Red River and Polar, respectively, and indicating that it does not object to a grant of the study area waiver.<sup>34</sup>

15. Third, we conclude that the public interest is served by a waiver of the study area freeze rule to permit Citizens to remove the Gwinner, Lisbon, Pembina, Wyndmere and Fairmount exchanges from its North Dakota study area and to permit the Acquiring Companies to include the acquired exchanges in their North Dakota study areas. In the Petition, the Acquiring Companies indicate their desire to expand their operations by acquiring Citizens' exchanges. The Acquiring Companies state that, once acquired, the exchanges will be under local ownership and management enabling the Acquiring Companies to offer enhanced customer response time and service.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, as part of Citizens, the affected exchanges are not under local ownership and management.<sup>36</sup>

16. All three of the companies plan to offer advanced services, such as DSL, as well as an expanded list of vertical services. Red River, for example, noted its plan to offer voice mail, caller ID and selective call acceptance or rejection. Red River also stated its intention to expand its local calling area to include calls between Red River's existing Hankinson exchange and the Fairmount exchange.<sup>37</sup> Polar noted its intention to offer enhanced data services including frame relay and ATM, voice mail, call trace, preferred call forwarding, auto recall and callback, and selective call acceptance and rejection.<sup>38</sup> Finally, Dickey Rural stated that it will offer new services as supported by customer demand.<sup>39</sup> Based on these representations, we conclude that the Acquiring Companies have demonstrated that grant of this waiver request will serve the public interest.<sup>40</sup>

(Continued from previous page)

has never been included in the universal service support fund. Thus, a showing of the before and after impact of the Acquiring Companies' potential draw of ICLS would have no significance.

<sup>33</sup> See Petition Supplement at 2 (Letter from Public Service Commission, State of North Dakota to Katherine Schroder, Chief, Telecommunications Access Policy Division (May 1, 2002)).

<sup>34</sup> See Petition Supplement at 2 (Minnesota Public Service Commission, *Request for Approval of the Transfer of the Minnesota Portion of the Fairmount Exchange from Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota to Red River Telecom, Inc.*, Order, Docket No. P-6100/PA-02-393 (May 2, 2002); Minnesota Public Service Commission, *Request for Approval of the Transfer of the Minnesota Portion of the Pembina Exchange from Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota to Polar Telecommunication, Inc.*, Order, Docket No. P-6101/PA-02-396 (May 2, 2002)).

<sup>35</sup> See Petition at 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> Currently, calls between the Hankinson and Fairmount exchanges are long distance. *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> Pending Commission review of a study area waiver request and consistent with Part 36 of the Commission's rules, parties involved in the transfer of access lines are reminded to continue filing combined cost data for the (continued...)

17. We note that, as a result of this transaction, access lines in Dickey Rural's pre-acquisition study area boundary will be eligible for different amounts of high-cost support than the access lines being transferred from Citizens' study area. We therefore direct Dickey Rural, as part of its annual universal service data submissions, to file a schedule showing its methodology for excluding the costs associated with the acquired access lines from the costs associated with its pre-acquisition study areas.<sup>41</sup>

18. Finally, on May 11, 2001, the Commission adopted a Report and Order requiring incumbent LECs to freeze, on an interim basis, the Part 36 jurisdictional rules beginning July 1, 2001.<sup>42</sup> In the *Separations Freeze Order*, the Commission addressed how an incumbent LEC acquiring exchanges from another incumbent LEC shall recalculate their frozen separations factors.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, Dickey Rural is required to recalculate its jurisdictional separations factors pursuant to the *Separations Freeze Order* and Commission rules.

### III. PRICE CAP WAIVER

#### A. Background

19. Section 61.41(c)(2) of the Commission's rules provides that a non-price cap carrier that acquires access lines from a price cap carrier shall become subject to price cap regulation and must file price cap tariffs within a year.<sup>44</sup> Section 61.41(c)(3) of the Commission's rules provides that an average schedule company that acquires exchanges from a price cap company is permitted to retain its average schedule status.<sup>45</sup> Also, section 61.41(d) of the Commission's rules provides that LECs that become subject to price cap regulation are not permitted to withdraw from such regulation.<sup>46</sup>

20. In the *LEC Price Cap Reconsideration Order*, the Commission explained that section 61.41(c), the "all-or-nothing" rule, is intended to address two concerns regarding mergers and acquisitions involving price cap companies.<sup>47</sup> The first concern was that, in the absence of the rule, a LEC might  
(Continued from previous page) \_\_\_\_\_  
subject study area with NECA. See 47 C.F.R. §§ 36.601-36.631. Such cost data is used by NECA to determine carrier eligibility for high-cost universal service support.

<sup>41</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 36.611.

<sup>42</sup> See generally *Jurisdictional Separations and Referral to the Federal-State Joint Board*, Report and Order, CC Docket No. 80-286, 16 FCC Rcd 11382 (2001) (*Separations Freeze Order*). See also 47 C.F.R. § 36.3(c) and (d).

<sup>43</sup> See *Separations Freeze Order*, paras. 48-53.

<sup>44</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(c)(2). See *Policy and Rules Concerning Rates for Dominant Carriers*, CC Docket No. 87-313, Second Report and Order, 5 FCC Rcd 6786 (*LEC Price Cap Order*), Erratum, 5 FCC Rcd 7664 (Com. Car. Bur. 1990), *modified on recon.*, Order on Reconsideration, 6 FCC Rcd 2637 (1991) (*LEC Price Cap Reconsideration Order*), *aff'd sub nom. National Rural Telecom Ass'n v. FCC*, 988 F.2d 174 (D.C. Cir. 1993), *petitions for further recon. dismissed*, 6 FCC Rcd 7482 (1991), *further modification on recon.*, *Amendments of Part 69 of the Commission's Rules Relating to the Creation of Access Charge Supplements for Open Network Architecture, Policy and Rules Concerning Rates for Dominant Carriers*, Report and Order and Order on Further Reconsideration and Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 6 FCC Rcd 4524 (1991), *further recon.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order of Second Further Reconsideration, 7 FCC Rcd. 5235 (1992).

<sup>45</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(c)(3).

<sup>46</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(d).

<sup>47</sup> See *LEC Price Cap Reconsideration Order*, 6 FCC Rcd at 2706.

attempt to shift costs from its price cap affiliate to its non-price cap affiliate, allowing the non-price cap affiliate to charge higher rates to recover its increased revenue requirement, while increasing the earnings of the price cap affiliate. The second concern was that, absent the rule, a LEC might attempt to game the system by switching back and forth between rate-of-return regulation and price cap regulation.<sup>48</sup>

21. The Commission nonetheless recognized in the *LEC Price Cap Reconsideration Order* that narrow waivers of the price cap “all-or-nothing” rule might be justified if efficiencies created by the purchase and sale of exchanges outweigh the threat that the system might be subject to gaming.<sup>49</sup> The Commission stated that waivers of section 61.41(c) will be granted conditioned on the selling price cap company’s downward adjustment to its price cap indices to reflect the sale of exchanges.<sup>50</sup> In addition, waivers of the all-or-nothing rule have been granted subject to the condition that the acquiring carrier obtains prior Commission approval if it seeks to elect price cap regulation.<sup>51</sup>

22. Dickey Rural seeks a waiver of section 61.41(c) because it desires to operate under rate-of-return regulation after Dickey Rural acquires price cap exchanges from Citizens.<sup>52</sup> Dickey Rural operates under rate-of-return regulation, while Citizens is subject to price cap regulation.<sup>53</sup> Absent a waiver of the all-or-nothing price cap rules, Dickey Rural would be subject to price cap regulation no later

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<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 2706, n. 207.

<sup>50</sup> See *Price Cap Performance Review for Local Exchange Carriers*, CC Docket No. 94-1, First Report and Order, 10 FCC Rcd 8961, 9104-06 (1995) (*LEC Price Cap Review Order*). The Price Cap Indices, which are the upper bounds for rates that comply with price cap regulation, are calculated pursuant to a formula specified in the Commission’s rules for price cap carriers. See 47 C.F.R. § 61.45. The Commission explained that such an adjustment is needed to remove the effects of transferred exchanges from rates that have been based, in whole or in part, upon the inclusion of those exchanges in a carrier’s price cap indices. See *LEC Price Cap Review Order*, 10 FCC Rcd at 9105-9106.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., *Rye Telephone Company, Inc. and US WEST Communications, Inc., Joint Petition for Waiver of Definition of “Study Area” Contained in the Part 36 Appendix-Glossary of the Commission’s Rules and Petition for Waiver of Section 61.41(c)(2) of the Commission’s Rules*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Order, 15 FCC Rcd 18738, para. 17 (Acc. Pol. Div. 2000); *ALLTEL Corp. Petition for Waiver of Section 61.41 of the Commission’s Rules and Application for Transfer of Control*, CCB/CPD No. 99-1, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 14 FCC Rcd. 14191, 14202 (1999) (*ALLTEL/Aliant Merger Order*).

<sup>52</sup> We note that Dickey Rural has also requested a waiver of section 61.41(d) of the Commission’s rules, which provides that LECs that become subject to price cap regulation are not permitted to withdraw from such regulation. 47 C.F.R. §§ 61.41(d). Because Dickey Rural will not become subject to price cap regulation as a result of the instant transaction, a waiver of section 61.41(d) is unnecessary.

<sup>53</sup> See Petition at 4. The other Acquiring Companies, Polar and Red River, receive settlements from NECA on an average schedule basis and are therefore not subject to section 61.41(c) of the Commission’s rules unless they later choose to become subject to price cap regulation. See Petition at 4-5. See 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(c)(3); see also *All West Communications, Inc., Carbon/Emery Telecom, Inc., Central Utah Telephone, Inc., Hanksville Telecom, Inc., Manti Telephone Co., Skyline Telecom, UBET Telecom, Inc., and Qwest Corp. Joint Petition for Waiver of the Definition of “Study Area” Contained in the Part 36 Appendix-Glossary of the Commission’s Rules, Petition for Waiver of Sections 61.41(c), 61.41(d), and 69.3(e)(11)*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Order, 16 FCC Rcd 4697, 4705, para. 18 n.51 (Com. Car. Bur. 2001).

than one year after acquiring Citizens' price cap exchanges.<sup>54</sup> Dickey Rural claims that it is neither attempting to shift costs between price cap and non-price cap affiliates nor is it attempting to establish a large rate base by switching back and forth between rate-of-return regulation and price cap regulation.<sup>55</sup> NTCA and NECA support this waiver request.

## B. Discussion

23. For the reasons discussed below, we find that good cause exists for us to waive section 61.41(c)(2) of the Commission's rules, and that it would be in the public interest to grant the waiver request of Dickey Rural.<sup>56</sup> As discussed previously, the courts have interpreted the Commission's rules to require a petitioner seeking a waiver of a Commission rule to demonstrate that special circumstances warrant a deviation from the general rule, and that such a deviation will serve the public interest.<sup>57</sup>

24. Because Dickey Rural is significantly smaller than any of the carriers subject to mandatory price caps, we find that special circumstances warrant a waiver of section 61.41(c)(2). In evaluating requests for waiver of section 61.41(c), the Bureau has taken into account the requesting company's preferences and, in particular, the preferences of small carriers.<sup>58</sup> In fact, the Commission traditionally has been sensitive to the unique administrative burdens imposed on small telephone companies by the application of its rules.<sup>59</sup> In the *LEC Price Cap Order*, the Commission decided that small telephone companies would not be required to operate under a regulatory regime that was designed largely on the basis of the historical performance of the largest LECs.<sup>60</sup> The Commission explained that small and mid-size LECs may have fewer opportunities than large companies to achieve cost savings and efficiencies and may be less productive than the Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOCs) and GTE.<sup>61</sup> The Commission, therefore, limited the mandatory application of price cap regulation to the then-existing eight largest LECs – the seven RBOCs and GTE.

25. Dickey Rural is a small telephone company that has expressed a preference for operating

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<sup>54</sup> See Petition at 5. See also 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(c)(2). A Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is pending which, in part, seeks comment on a proposal from the Multi-Association Group (MAG) to remove the "all-or-nothing" rule. See *MAG Order/NPRM* at 19717-24.

<sup>55</sup> See Petition at 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> Although Dickey Rural seeks a waiver of section 61.41(c) in its entirety, we find that it is only necessary to grant a waiver of section 61.41(c)(2) of the Commission's rules which, absent a waiver, would require that Dickey Rural become subject to price cap regulation no later than one year after acquiring Citizens' price cap exchanges. Section 61.41(c)(1) applies to carriers that are subject to price cap regulation prior to an acquisition or merger and section 61.41(c)(3) applies to average schedule companies.

<sup>57</sup> See *supra* para. 9.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., *ALLTEL/Aliant Merger Order*, 14 FCC Rcd at 14204-05.

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., *ALLTEL/Aliant Merger Order*, 14 FCC Rcd at 14204; *In the Matter of Minburn Telecommunications, Inc., Petition for Waiver of Sections 61.41(c) and (d) of the Commission's Rules*, CCB/CPD No. 99-16, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 14 FCC Rcd 14184, 14187 (Com. Car. Bur. 1999).

<sup>60</sup> See *LEC Price Cap Order*, 5 FCC Rcd at 6799-6801, 6818-19.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

under rate-of-return regulation.<sup>62</sup> This operation will be smaller than other carriers that have been granted waivers of the Commission's price cap rules.<sup>63</sup> Further, Dickey Rural is the type of small carrier that the Commission has previously found to be an inappropriate candidate for price cap regulation.<sup>64</sup> For these reasons, we find that Dickey has presented special circumstances to support its waiver request.

26. We also find that a waiver of section 61.41(c)(2) serves the public interest. We agree with Dickey Rural that cost-shifting between affiliates and gaming the system – the Commission's two primary concerns regarding price cap waivers – are not present with regard to Dickey Rural's acquisition of Citizens' exchanges.<sup>65</sup> The first concern, cost-shifting between affiliates, does not appear to be applicable here because the Dickey Rural affiliates are non-price cap affiliates and are not seeking to maintain separate affiliates under different systems of regulation.<sup>66</sup> Because the Dickey Rural affiliates will be rate-of-return affiliates, Dickey Rural will not have the opportunity to shift costs between price cap and rate-of-return affiliates. Second, to safeguard against possible gaming that could result from attempts to elect price-cap regulation at a later time, we will require Dickey Rural (and any of its affiliates) to seek prior Commission approval if it seeks to elect price cap regulation. At that time, we can make a determination if the transaction raises the concerns that we seek to address in section 61.41(c). We believe that requiring Dickey Rural to seek Commission approval before electing price cap regulation is sufficient to deter gaming in the future.

27. Finally, section 61.45 grants us discretion to require price cap carriers to make adjustments to their price cap indices to reflect cost changes resulting from rule waivers.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, we will require Citizens to adjust its price cap indices to reflect the removal of the transferred access lines from its North Dakota study area.

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<sup>62</sup> See Petition at 6-8. After the proposed transaction, Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative will serve approximately 11,292 access lines which is inclusive of the access lines of its subsidiaries Dickey Rural and Dickey Rural Communications. See Petition at 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., *CenturyTel of Northwest Arkansas, LLC et al., Joint Petition for Waiver of Definition of "Study Area" Contained in the Part 36 Appendix-Glossary of the Commission's Rules, Petition for Waiver of Sections 61.41(c) and 69.3(g)(2) of the Commission's Rules*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 15 FCC Rcd 25437 (Acc. Pol. Div. 2000) (approving the conversion of 214,270 access lines from price cap to rate-of-return regulation); *ALLTEL/Aliant Merger Order* (approving the conversion of approximately 300,000 access lines from price cap to rate-of-return regulation); *In the Matter of ALLTEL Service Corporation, Petition for Waiver of Section 61.41 of the Commission's Rules*, Order, 8 FCC Rcd 7054 (Com. Car. Bur. 1993) (approving the conversion of approximately 285,000 access lines from price cap to rate-of-return regulation).

<sup>64</sup> See *LEC Price Cap Order*, para. 6 (limiting mandatory price cap participation to the eight largest LECs at that time – the seven Bell Operating Companies and GTE).

<sup>65</sup> See Petition at 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>67</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 61.45(d).

#### IV. AVERAGE SCHEDULE WAIVER

##### A. Background

28. Incumbent LECs that participate in NECA pools collect access charges from interexchange carriers at the rates contained in the tariffs filed by NECA.<sup>68</sup> Each pool participant receives settlements from the pools to recover the cost of providing service plus a pro-rata share of the pool's earnings.<sup>69</sup> NECA pool participants' interstate access charge settlements are determined either on the basis of cost studies or average schedule formulas. Cost companies are LECs that receive compensation for interstate telecommunications services based on their actual interstate investment and expenses, calculated from detailed cost studies. Average schedule companies are those incumbent LECs that receive compensation for use of their interstate common carrier services on the basis of formulas that are designed to simulate the disbursements that would be received by a cost company that is representative of average schedule companies.<sup>70</sup> In electing average schedule status, average schedule companies are able to avoid the administrative and financial burdens of performing interstate cost studies.

29. Section 69.605(c) of the Commission's rules provides, in pertinent part, that "a telephone company that was participating in average schedule settlements on December 1, 1982, shall be deemed to be an average schedule company."<sup>71</sup> The definition of "average schedule company" includes existing average schedule incumbent LECs, but does not allow the creation of new average schedule companies or the conversion of cost-based carriers to average schedule status without a waiver of the Commission's rules.<sup>72</sup> The definition was designed to limit the use of average schedule formulas to companies that operated as average schedule companies prior to adoption of the rule or that are able to demonstrate compelling circumstances sufficient to warrant a special exception.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, absent a waiver of section 69.605(c), an average schedule company acquiring additional lines would be required to convert to operation as a cost-based company.<sup>74</sup> Our actions on Polar's and Red River's request, therefore, are guided by the principle that incumbent LECs settle on a cost basis whenever possible without undue hardship.

30. The Bureau, however, has granted waivers to certain small carriers that lacked the resources to operate on a cost-study basis.<sup>75</sup> Polar and Red River have requested a waiver of section

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<sup>68</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 69.601.

<sup>69</sup> See 47 C.F.R. §§ 69.601-69.612.

<sup>70</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 69.606(a).

<sup>71</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 69.605(c).

<sup>72</sup> An incumbent LEC may convert from an average schedule company to a cost company, but a carrier must obtain a waiver of section 69.605(c) to change from a cost company to an average schedule company. See 47 C.F.R. § 69.605(c).

<sup>73</sup> See *Petition of Waiver Filed by Heartland Telecommunications Company of Iowa and Hickory Tech Corporation*, AAD No. 96-94, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 14 FCC Rcd 13661 at 13662, para. 3 (1999).

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* para. 7.

<sup>75</sup> See *BPS Telephone Co. Petition for Waiver of Section 69.605(c) of the Commission's Rules*, AAD No. 95-67, Memorandum Opinion and Order on Reconsideration, 12 FCC Rcd 13820, 13824 (Acc. Aud. Div. 1997) (*BPS*). See, e.g., *Dumont Telephone Company, Inc. and Universal Communications, Inc., Request for Extraordinary* (continued....)

69.605(c) of the Commission's rules in order to continue operating as average schedule companies following the proposed transaction.<sup>76</sup> Polar and Red River argue that a waiver permitting them to retain their average schedule status is justified due to their small size and the saved time, effort and funds that will be realized by their not having to perform cost studies.<sup>77</sup> Polar and Red River also argue that an average schedule waiver will not result in unintended effects on interstate revenue requirements or in administrative burdens on the Commission or NECA.<sup>78</sup> NTCA and NECA support this waiver request.

## B. Discussion

31. We are persuaded that good cause exists for us to grant Polar's and Red River's request for a waiver of section 69.605(c). The Commission has permitted smaller carriers to elect to receive interstate compensation from average schedules as a way to avoid imposing the burdens and costs associated with performing cost separations studies needed to determine access charges. The high cost of completing cost studies relative to the small size of Polar and Red River, establishes the special circumstances that warrant granting their request for a waiver of section 69.605(c) of the Commission's rules. We have previously granted waivers of section 69.605(c) to similarly sized carriers.<sup>79</sup> We agree with Polar and Red River that they fall within the range of other average schedule companies that the Bureau has found did not have sufficient resources or expertise to justify conversion of their average schedule status to cost-based settlements.<sup>80</sup> We therefore find that Polar's and Red River's requested waiver of section 69.605(c) of the Commission rules is in the public interest and should be granted.

## V. WAIVER OF SECTION 69.3(E)(11)

### A. Background

32. Under section 69.3 of the Commission's rules, annual access tariffs, including the tariffs filed by NECA on behalf of companies that participate in NECA's access tariffs, go into effect on July 1

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*Relief*, AAD 96-94, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 13 FCC Rcd 17821 (Acc. Saf. Div. 1998) (waiver granted to Dumont Telephone Company, Inc. and Universal Communications, Inc., which had approximately 1,544 access lines); *Petitions for Waiver Filed by Accent Communications, et al.*, AAD No. 95-124, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 11 FCC Rcd 11,513 (Acc. Aud. Div. 1996) (waiver granted to Mobridge Telecommunications Company, which had approximately 2,400 access lines); *National Utilities, Inc. and Bettles Telephone Co., Inc. Petition for Waiver of Section 69.605(c) of the Commission's Rules*, Report and Order, 8 FCC Rcd 8723 (Comm. Car. Bur. 1993) (waiver granted for National Utilities, which had 2,350 access lines, and Bettles, which had 50 access lines); *Newcastle Telephone Co. Petition for Waiver of Section 69.605(c)*, AAD No. 90-18, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 7 FCC Rcd 2081 (Com. Car. Bur. 1992) (waiver granted for small company with 1550 access lines, two exchanges).

<sup>76</sup> See Petition at 9.

<sup>77</sup> See generally Petition at 10-13.

<sup>78</sup> See Petition at 12.

<sup>79</sup> See *BPS*, 12 FCC Rcd at 13824. See *supra* note 75. Polar is adding approximately 635 access lines to its existing 1,614 access lines. Red River is adding approximately 1,028 access lines to its existing 1,745 access lines.

<sup>80</sup> See Petition at 12.

of each year.<sup>81</sup> To minimize the complexity of administering NECA's common line pool and Long Term and Transitional Support (LTS) program, any change in NECA common line tariff participation and LTS resulting from a merger or acquisition of telephone properties is effective on the next annual access tariff filing effective date following the merger or acquisition.<sup>82</sup> Because the next annual access tariff filing effective date is not until July 1, 2003,<sup>83</sup> the Acquiring Companies would be required to file their own interstate tariffs for the acquired access lines until July 1, 2003. In order to avoid the burdens associated with filing their own tariffs, the Acquiring Companies have requested a waiver of section 69.3(e)(11) of the Commission's rules to enable the acquired access lines to participate in the NECA carrier common line tariff upon the date of the closing of the transaction.<sup>84</sup> The Acquiring Companies also indicate that the inclusion of the small number of access lines they are acquiring from Citizens in the NECA carrier common line tariffs would represent a minimal increase in NECA common line pool participation and would not unduly increase the complexity of administering the LTS program.<sup>85</sup> NECA, in its comments, "affirms that the proposed addition of lines to the common line pool will not significantly impact common line pool revenue requirements and will not impose any undue administrative burdens on NECA."<sup>86</sup> NTCA also supports this waiver request.

## B. Discussion

33. We find that the Acquiring Companies have demonstrated that special circumstances warrant a deviation from section 69.3(e)(11) of our rules and that it would be in the public interest to grant the Acquiring Companies' waiver request. According to NECA, "the proposed addition of lines to the common line pool will not significantly impact common line pool revenue requirements and will not impose any undue administrative burdens on NECA."<sup>87</sup> Based on NECA's representation in its comments, we conclude that the inclusion of the acquired access lines in the NECA carrier common line tariff represent a minimal increase in NECA common line pool participation. Also, we believe that it would be administratively burdensome for the Acquiring Companies to develop and file their own interstate tariffs until July 1, 2003 for a relatively small number of access lines. Consequently, we find that the Acquiring Companies present special circumstances to justify a waiver of section 69.3(e)(11). Moreover, we believe that a waiver of section 69.3(e)(11) will be in the public interest because the Acquiring Companies will be able to devote additional resources to providing improved telecommunications services to the affected rural areas that, absent the waiver, may otherwise be utilized on tariff filings. We, therefore, conclude that good cause exists to grant a waiver of section 69.3(e)(11) to the Acquiring Companies.

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<sup>81</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 69.3(a).

<sup>82</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 69.3(e)(11). See *Amendment of Part 69 of the Commission's Rules Relating to the Common Line Pool Status of Local Exchange Carriers Involved in Mergers or Acquisitions*, CC Docket No. 89-2, Report and Order, 5 FCC Rcd 231, 248 (1989).

<sup>83</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 69.3(a).

<sup>84</sup> See Petition at 13-14.

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* at 13-14.

<sup>86</sup> See NECA Comments to Notice at 4, filed June 5, 2002.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

**VI. ORDERING CLAUSES**

34. Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, 202 and 254 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, 202, and 254 and sections 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3, that the petition for waiver of the study area boundary freeze as codified in Part 36, Appendix-Glossary, of the Commission's rules, filed by Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Polar Telecommunications, Inc., Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River Telecom, Inc. and Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota on April 5, 2002, IS GRANTED, as described herein.

35. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, and 202 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, and 202, and sections 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3, that the petition for waiver of section 61.41(c) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 61.41(c), filed by Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc., IS GRANTED, to the extent described herein.

36. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, and 202 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, and 202, and sections 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3, that the petition for waiver of section 69.605(c) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 69.605(c), filed by Polar Telecommunications, Inc. and Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River Telecom, Inc., IS GRANTED, as described herein.

37. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, and 202 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, and 202, and sections 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3, that the petition for waiver of section 69.3(e)(11) of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. § 69.3(e)(11), filed by Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Polar Telecommunications, Inc., and Red River Rural Telephone Association and Red River Telecom, Inc., IS GRANTED, as described herein.

38. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, and 202 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, and 202, and sections 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, and 1.3, that Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative and Dickey Rural Access, Inc., SHALL SUBMIT, as part of their annual universal service data submissions to the fund administrator, a schedule showing the methodology for excluding costs associated with the acquired access lines from costs associated with their pre-acquisition study areas.

39. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to sections 1, 4(i), 5(c), 201, and 202 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. §§ 151, 154(i), 155(c), 201, and 202, and sections 0.91, 0.291, 1.3, and 61.43 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, 1.3, and 61.43, that Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota SHALL ADJUST its price cap indices in its annual price cap filing to reflect cost changes resulting from this transaction, consistent with this Order.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Carol E. Matthey  
Deputy Chief  
Wireline Competition Bureau

**APPROVED**

DATE: 5-8-02  
KMF

MOTION

May 8, 2002

Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application

Case No. PU-1692-02-54

I move the Commission bill Red River Telecom, Inc. for costs incurred to date in Case No. PU-1692-02-54, Red River Telecom, Inc., Designated Eligible Carrier, Application.



**Public Service Commission**  
State of North Dakota

COMMISSIONERS

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Leo M. Reinbold  
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Executive Secretary  
Jon H. Mielke

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TDD 800-366-6888  
Fax 701-328-2410  
Phone 701-328-2400

May 8, 2002

Ardon Doran  
Red River Telecom Inc  
PO Box 136  
Abercrombie ND 58001-0136

RE: Case No. PU-1692-02-54  
Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application

Enclosed is a copy of the statement approved at the May 8, 2002 Public Service Commission meeting for the expenses incurred to date in Case No. PU-1692-02-54.

Under N.D.C.C. 49-21-01.7, these expenses are billed through the Valuation Fund and must be paid for by the telecommunications company involved.

Please make your check payable to the *Public Service Commission*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gloria Geiger".

Gloria Geiger  
Admin Staff Officer  
701-328-2401

Enc.

c: Michael Bosh  
Pringle & Herigstad  
PO Box 1000  
Minot ND 58702-1000

# Billing Statement

May 8, 2002

Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application

Case No. PU-1692-02-54

## Bill To:

Red River Telecom, Inc.....\$67.23\*

\* 1/6 of total \$403.41

## Expenses Incurred to Date:

Advertising Costs \$67.23

## Send Payment and a Copy of this Statement To:

Public Service Commission  
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 408  
Bismarck ND 58505-0480

**Federal Tax ID 45-0309764**

**MOTION**

**May 1, 2002**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-54**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application**

**Case No. PU-1727-02-55**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application**

**Case No. PU-2653-02-57**

I move the Commission send a letter to the Federal Communications Commission stating that the Commission does not object to the granting of study area waivers necessary for the transfer of exchanges purchased from the study area of Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota to the study areas of the captioned companies.

JRL/sdh



Public Service Commission  
State of North Dakota

COMMISSIONERS

Susan E. Wefald, President  
Leo M. Reinbold  
Anthony T. Clark

Executive Secretary  
Jon H. Mielke

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May 1, 2002

Katherine Schroder  
Chief, Telecommunications Access Policy Division  
Wireline Competition Bureau  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20554

Re: Request for Waivers in Connection with the Sale of Certain Exchanges from Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota to Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Red River Telecom, Inc., and Polar Telecommunications, Inc.


Dear Ms. Schroder:


On May 1, 2002, the North Dakota Public Service Commission (Commission) approved the applications for certificates of public convenience and necessity filed by Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Red River Telecom, Inc., and Polar Telecommunications, Inc. in connection with their purchase of certain exchanges in the State of North Dakota from Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota. It is the Commission's understanding that on April 5, 2002, the above-referenced companies also filed a Joint Petition for Expedited Waivers at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requesting a waiver of certain FCC rules, including the FCC's study area rule, in connection with the purchase and sale of these exchanges.

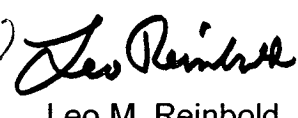
The North Dakota Public Service Commission hereby affirmatively states that it does not object to the request for waiver of the FCC's study area rule for the exchanges to be transferred from Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota to Dickey Rural Access, Inc., Red River Telecom, Inc., and Polar Telecommunications, Inc.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Jerry Lein at 701 328-1035.

Sincerely,

  
Anthony T. Clark  
Commissioner

  
Susan E. Wefald  
President

  
Leo M. Reinbold  
Commissioner

12 PU-1692-02-54

Pages: 1

Letter to FCC

by Public Service Commission

05/01/2002

CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity

Case No. PU-1692-02-53

Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application

Case No. PU-1692-02-54

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE BY CERTIFIED AND ORDINARY MAIL

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
COUNTY OF BURLEIGH

Sharon Helbling deposes and says that:

she is over the age of 18 years and not a party to this action and, on the **2nd day of May, 2002**, she deposited in the United States Mail, Bismarck, North Dakota, **two** envelopes with certified postage, return receipt requested, fully prepaid, securely sealed and each containing a photocopy of:

Order

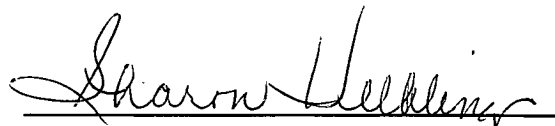

The envelopes were addressed as follows:

Michael Bosh  
Pringle & Herigstad  
P O Box 1000  
Minot ND 58702-1000  
Cert. No. 7001 2510 0005 8654 8990

Ardon Doran  
Red River Telecom Inc  
P O Box 136  
Abercrombie ND 58001  
Cert. No. 7001 2510 0005 8654 8983

Each address shown is the respective addressee's last reasonably ascertainable post office address.

Subscribed and sworn to before me  
this **2nd day of May, 2002**.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

SEAL

**SANDRA L. SCOTT**  
Notary Public, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
My Commission Expires JUNE 11, 2004

**MOTION**

**May 1, 2002**

**APPROVED**

DATE: 5-1-02  
KMF

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-53**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-54**

I move the Commission adopt the Order and issue certificates of public convenience and necessity to Red River Telecom, Inc. to provide incumbent local exchange telecommunications service and be designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchange areas of North Dakota, Case Nos. PU-1692-02-53 and PU-1692-02-54.

JRL/sdh

**STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**  
**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.**  
**Local Exchange**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-53**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.**  
**Designated Eligible Carrier**  
**Application**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-54**

**ORDER**

**May 1, 2002**

On February 7, 2002, Red River Telecom, Inc. (RRTI) of Abercrombie, North Dakota, filed an application for certificates of public convenience and necessity to provide facilities-based incumbent local exchange telecommunications services in the exchanges of Fairmount and Wyndmere, North Dakota, Case No. PU-1692-02-53. Incumbent local exchange service in these areas is currently provided by Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota (Citizens). The application further requests that RRTI's designated geographic service area for purposes of determining universal service obligations be expanded to include the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, Case No. PU-1692-02-54.

On February 14, 2002, the Commission issued a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing, which provided until March 19, 2002 for receiving written comments or hearing requests. No requests for hearing were received. The notice identified the following issues to be considered:

1. Fitness and ability of each applicant to provide service.
2. Adequacy of the proposed service.
3. The technical, financial and managerial ability of each applicant to provide service.
4. Qualification of each applicant under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Section 214(e) for designation as an ETC eligible to receive federal universal service funding.
5. What ETC universal service support area should be designated for each applicant.

N.D.C.C. section 49-03.1-04 includes two issues not indicated above. They are need for service and the effect on other public utilities providing similar service. N.D. Admin. Code section 69-09-05-11(3) provides:

*"In order to implement North Dakota Century Code chapter 49-03.1 consistent with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, issues to be considered in an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity for a facilities-based provider of telecommunications services are:*

- a. Fitness and ability of the applicant to provide service.*
- b. Adequacy of the proposed service.*
- c. The technical, financial, and managerial ability of the applicant to provide service."*

On April 10, 2001 the Commission discussed the application at an informal hearing. It was agreed that individual customer notices under N.D. Admin. Code section 69-02-04-01 would be sent notifying each affected customer of a second informal hearing to be held May 1, 2001. A second informal hearing was conducted as scheduled.

Also on April 10, 2002, the Public Service Commission's Director of Accounting filed a memorandum indicating that RRTI has the financial ability to provide telecommunications service in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

RRTI reports that on December 18, 2001, it entered into an agreement with Citizens for the purchase of assets relating to the provision of telecommunications services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. Upon closing, Citizens intends to cease providing service and RRTI intends to begin providing service in these exchanges.

All subscribers currently served by Citizens in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges will be served by RRTI on the effective date of the transaction. Citizens presently serves approximately 404 lines in the Fairmount exchange and approximately 689 lines in the Wyndmere exchange. Citizens intends to relinquish its ETC designation and certificates of public convenience and necessity for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges as of the effective date of the transaction.

RRTI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Red River Rural Telephone Association, which provides incumbent local exchange service for approximately 2,036 access lines in the Abercrombie, Barnesville (rural), Colfax, Great Bend, Kent, Mooreton and Rollag exchange areas of Minnesota and North Dakota. RRTI has provided incumbent local and exchange access services in the Hankinson and Lidgerwood exchanges for several years and presently serves approximately 1,740 access lines in these exchanges.

RRTI states it has no plans to change any local exchange rates or services at this time. RRTI intends to increase exchange access rates in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges to charge the same access rates that are currently charged in RRTI's Hankinson and Lidgerwood exchanges.

The exchanges that are the subject of this sale are currently part of Citizens' study area for purposes of determining universal service obligations. Both Citizens and RRTI request that the Commission notify the FCC that the Commission does not object

to the study area changes necessary to remove these exchanges from Citizens' study area and add them to RRTI's study area.

To be designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier, a carrier must: (1) offer the services that are supported by federal universal service support mechanisms, and offer the services designated by the FCC for such federal support mechanisms for schools, libraries, and health care providers; and (2) advertise the availability of such services and the charges therefore using media of general distribution.

For telecommunications customers, the services designated by the FCC for support by Universal service support mechanisms include voice grade access to the public switched network, local usage, dual tone multi-frequency signaling or its functional equivalent, single-party service or its functional equivalent, access to emergency services, access to operator services, access to interexchange service, access to directory assistance and toll limitation for qualifying low-income consumers.

For schools and libraries, the services designated by the FCC for support by universal service support mechanisms include all telecommunications services, internal connections including installation and maintenance, basic conduit access to the Internet including information services that consist of the transmission of information as a common carrier, the transmission of information as part of a gateway to an information service when that transmission does not involve the generation or alteration of the content of information, and electronic mail services. For health care providers, the services supported by universal service support mechanisms include any telecommunications service of a bandwidth up to and including 1.544 Mbps.

RRTI affirms it will offer all services that are supported by the federal universal service support mechanisms and will advertise the availability of and charges for those services using media of general distribution throughout all of the Hankinson, Lidgerwood, Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

RRTI's Lifeline and Link Up offerings will continue to meet the requirements established by the FCC and the North Dakota Lifeline Plan and Link Up Plan in Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

The Commission finds RRTI is fit, able, and has the technical, financial and managerial ability to provide service.

The Commission finds that RRTI's proposed service is adequate.

The Commission finds RRTI meets the federal requirements for designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchange areas.

## **Order**

The Commission Orders:

1. The application of Red River Telecom, Inc. for certificates of public convenience and necessity to provide incumbent local exchange telecommunications services in the Fairmount and Wynmere exchange areas is approved, effective with the date that the asset acquisition transaction is complete. Certificates of public convenience and

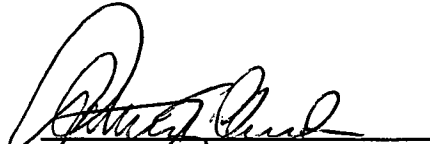
necessity will be issued upon notification by the applicants that the transaction is complete.

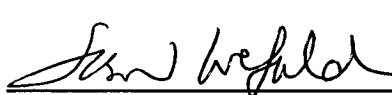
2. Red River Telecom, Inc.'s application to expand its designated eligible carrier status is granted, and RRTI is designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier in the Fairmount and Wynmere exchange areas, effective with issuance of certificates of public convenience and necessity and receipt of any required Part 36 study area waivers from the FCC.

3. Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota's certificates of public convenience and necessity for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges shall be relinquished and cancelled effective with the issuance to RRTI of new certificates of public convenience and necessity for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

4. Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota will no longer be designated as an ETC for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges effective upon Citizens relinquishing its certificates of public convenience and necessity for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges and receipt of any required Part 36 study area waivers from the FCC.

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Anthony T. Clark**  
Commissioner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Susan E. Wefald**  
President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Leo M. Reinbold**  
Commissioner



# INFORMAL AGENDA

**April 10, 2002**

- |                  |  |   |                  |  |
|------------------|--|---|------------------|--|
|                  | <p>PU-1264-02-112</p>  | <p>North Dakota Telephone Company<br/>Custom Calling Services<br/>Tariff</p>                  |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU-1692-02-53</p>   | <p>Red River Telecom, Inc.<br/>Local Exchange<br/>Public Convenience and Necessity</p>        |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU-1692-02-54</p>   | <p>Red River Telecom, Inc.<br/>Designated Eligible Carrier<br/>Application</p>                |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU-1727-02-55</p>   | <p>Polar Telecommunications, Inc.<br/>Designated Eligible Carrier<br/>Application</p>         |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU- 1727-02-56</p>  | <p>Polar Telecommunications, Inc.<br/>Local Exchange<br/>Public Convenience and Necessity</p> |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU-2653-02-57</p>   | <p>Dickey Rural Access, Inc.<br/>Designated Eligible Carrier<br/>Application</p>              |                  |  |
|                  | <p>PU-2653-02-58</p>   | <p>Dickey Rural Access, Inc.<br/>Local Exchange<br/>Public Convenience</p>                    | <p><b>7</b></p>  | <p><b>PU-1727-02-55</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)</p>       |
| <p><b>4</b></p>  | <p><b>PU-1264-02-112</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal Ilona Pat .</p>  |   | <p><b>10</b></p> | <p><b>PU-1727-02-56</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .</p> |
| <p><b>10</b></p> | <p><b>PU-1692-02-53</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .</p> |   | <p><b>7</b></p>  | <p><b>PU-2653-02-57</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)</p>       |
| <p><b>7</b></p>  | <p><b>PU-1692-02-54</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)</p>       |   | <p><b>12</b></p> | <p><b>PU-2653-02-58</b>                      Pages: 1</p> <p>Informal hearing held<br/>by Public Service Commission<br/>04/10/2002                      CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .</p> |

# Affidavit of Publication

State of North Dakota )  
County of Burleigh )

MAR 13

Laurie Thiel

, being duly sworn, state as follows:

- I am the designated agent, under the provisions and for the purposes of, Section 31-04-06, NDCC, for the newspapers listed on the attached exhibits.
- The newspapers listed on the exhibits published the advertisement of:  
Red River Telecom, 1 time(s)  
as required by law or ordinance.
- All of the listed newspapers are legal newspapers in the State of North Dakota and, under the provisions of Section 46-05-01, NDCC, are qualified to publish any public notice or any matter required by law or ordinance to be printed or published in a newspaper in North Dakota.

Signed: Laurie Thiel

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of March A.D. 2002

Laurie Schaffer

LAURIE SCHAFFER  
 Notary Public, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
 My Commission Expires DEC. 1, 2005

- 6 **PU-1727-02-55** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)
- 6 **PU-1727-02-56** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .
- 6 **PU-2653-02-57** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)
- 9 **PU-2653-02-58** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .

- 7 **PU-1692-02-53** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
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- 6 **PU-1692-02-54** Pages: 1  
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by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

# North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.

1435 Interstate Loop • Bismarck, ND 58501-0567 • PHONE (701) 223-6397 • FAX (701) 223-8185 • www.ndna.com

## INVOICE

Date: 03/07/2002

Page: 1

To:

MAR 13

JON H. MIELKE  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
STATE CAPITOL  
BISMARCK ND 58505

Client: Public Service Commission

Order: 02024PP0

Newspaper	Date	Inches	Page#	Rate	Amount
Cavalier Chronicle	Red River 02/20/2002	1.00	[Special]	71.82	71.82
Fargo, The Forum	Red River 02/25/2002	1.00	[Special]	78.00	78.00
Grand Forks Herald	Red River 02/19/2002	1.00	[Special]	65.88	65.88
Lisbon Ransom County Gazette	Red River 02/25/2002	1.00	[Special]	61.65	61.65
Milnor The Teller	Red River 02/22/2002	1.00	[Special]	61.20	61.20
Wahpeton Daily News	Red River 02/19/2002	1.00	[Special]	64.86	64.86
*** ADVERTISING TOTAL					403.41
*** TOTAL DUE					403.41

**7 PU-1692-02-53** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .

**6 PU-1727-02-56** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .

**6 PU-1692-02-54** Pages: 1  
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**6 PU-2653-02-57** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

**6 PU-1727-02-55** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

**9 PU-2653-02-58** Pages: 1  
Affidavit of Publication  
by North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.  
03/13/2002 CC: Comm Legal Ilona Jerry .

This invoice is due and payable upon receipt. Unpaid items over 30 days from invoice date are subject to a finance charge. The finance charge is computed by a periodic rate of 1 3/4 percent per month (or a minimum charge of 50 cents for balances of under \$50), which is an annual percentage rate of 21 percent.  
Total unpaid balance may be paid at any time.

Please pay from this invoice — No statement will be sent. Return duplicate with remittance to North Dakota Advertising Service, Inc.

**STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity** **Case No. PU-1692-02-53**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application** **Case No. PU-1692-02-54**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Public Convenience and Necessity** **Case No. PU-1727-02-55**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity** **Case No. PU-1727-02-56**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Public Convenience and Necessity** **Case No. PU-2653-02-57**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity** **Case No. PU-2653-02-58**

**AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE BY CERTIFIED AND ORDINARY MAIL**

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
COUNTY OF BURLEIGH

**Sharon Helbling** deposes and says that:

she is over the age of 18 years and not a party to this action and, on the **15th day of February, 2002**, she deposited in the United States Mail, Bismarck, North Dakota, **one** envelopes with certified postage, return receipt requested, fully prepaid, securely sealed and each containing a photocopy of:

**Notice of Opportunity for Hearing**

The envelopes were addressed as follows:

Michael Bosh  
Pringle & Herigstad  
P O Box 1000  
Minot ND 58702-1000  
**Cert. No. 7099 3220 0002 8483 1563**

Ardon Doran  
Red River Telecom Inc  
P O Box 136  
Abercrombie ND 58001  
**Cert. No. 7099 3220 0002 8483 1570**

David Dunning  
Polar Telecommunications Inc  
P O Box T  
Park River ND 58270

**Cert. No. 7099 3220 0002 8483 1587**

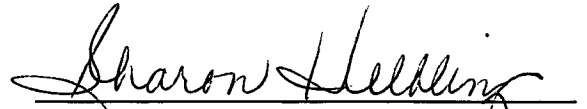

Darren Moser  
Dickey Rural Access Inc  
P O Box 69  
Ellendale ND 58436-0069

**Cert. No. 7099 3220 0002 8483 1594**

Each address shown is the respective addressee's last reasonably ascertainable post office address.

Subscribed and sworn to before me  
this **15th day of February, 2002.**

SEAL

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

**SANDRA L. SCOTT**  
Notary Public, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
My Commission Expires JUNE 11, 2004

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Red River Telecom, Inc. Local Exchange Public Convenience and Necessity	Case No. PU-1692-02-53
Red River Telecom, Inc. Designated Eligible Carrier Application	Case No. PU-1692-02-54
Polar Telecommunications, Inc. Designated Eligible Carrier Public Convenience and Necessity	Case No. PU-1727-02-55
Polar Telecommunications, Inc. Local Exchange Public Convenience and Necessity	Case No. PU-1727-02-56
Dickey Rural Access, Inc. Designated Eligible Carrier Public Convenience and Necessity	Case No. PU-2653-02-57
Dickey Rural Access, Inc. Local Exchange Public Convenience and Necessity	Case No. PU-2653-02-58

**AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE BY ORDINARY AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
COUNTY OF BURLEIGH

**Sharon Helbling** deposes and says that:

she is over the age of 18 years and not a party to this action and, on the **15th day of February, 2002**, she deposited in the United States Mail, Bismarck, North Dakota, envelopes by first class mail, fully prepaid, securely sealed, each containing a photocopy of:

**Notice of Opportunity for Hearing**

The envelopes were addressed as follows:

***See Attached List***

Each address shown is the respective addressee's last reasonably ascertainable post office address.

Subscribed and sworn to before me  
this **15th day of February, 2002.**

Sharon Helling

Sandra L. Scott

Notary Public

SEAL

**SANDRA L. SCOTT**  
Notary Public, STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
My Commission Expires **JUNE 11, 2004**

wbrudvik@ohnstadlaw.com  
William Brudvik

ruth.holder@igent.com  
Ruth Holder

donlee@martin-associates.com  
Don Lee

jlchapman@acomminc.com  
Jerry Chapman  
Acomm Inc  
510 1st Ave N Ste 203  
Minneapolis MN 55403-0343

Advanced Telcom Inc  
110 Stony Point Rd Ste 200  
Santa Rosa CA 95401

jbrowne@lga.att.com  
Janet Browne  
AT&T  
1875 Lawrence St 14th Fl  
Denver CO 80202

smassey@bepc.com  
Sheryl Massey  
Basin Electric Power Coop  
1717 E Interstate Ave  
Bismarck ND 58501-0564

jtmgr@bektel.com  
Jerome Tishmack  
BEK Communications Cooperative  
PO Box 230  
Steele ND 58482-0230

jtmgr@bektel.com  
Jerome Tishmack  
BEK Communications I Inc  
PO Box 230  
Steele ND 58482-0230

C12 Inc  
200 Galleria Pkwy Ste 1200  
Atlanta GA 30339

laurie.sims@connect.com  
Laurie Sims  
CCCND Inc  
124 W Capitol Ave Ste 250  
Little Rock AR 72201

Citizens Telecomm Co of Minnesota  
3 High Ridge Park  
Stamford CT 06905

Citizens Telecomm Co of ND  
3 High Ridge Pk  
Stamford CT 06905

ltade@czn.com  
Lance Tade  
Citizens Telecomm of ND

Daniel L Barth  
Comm South Companies Inc  
2909 N Buckner Blvd Ste 800  
Dallas TX 75228

Computer Integrated Communications Inc  
8502 Bells Mill Rd  
Potomac MD 20854-4071

mannawiz@pacbell.net  
Larry Manna  
Compuwiz  
1012 Industrial Blvd  
South Lake Tahoe CA 96150

paul@consolidatedtelcom.com  
Paul Schuetzler  
Consolidated Telcom  
PO Box 1077  
Dickinson ND 58601-1077

Contact Communications  
937 W Main St  
Riverton WY 82501

Dave Dircks  
DCN LLC  
P O Box 180  
Devils Lake ND 58301-0180

drtc@drtel.net  
Darren Moser  
Dickey Rural Telephone Cooperative  
PO Box 69  
Ellendale ND 58436-0069

jkirby@excel.com  
Jerry Kirby  
eMeritus Communications Inc  
8750 N Central Expswy Ste 2000  
Dallas TX 75231

Essex Communications Inc  
543 Main St  
New Rochelle NY 10801-7214

eVulkan Inc  
1 River Ct Apt 1408  
Jersey City NJ 07310-2006

Consolidated Telcom  
PO Box 1077  
Dickinson ND 58601-1077

ken@consolidatedtelcom.com  
L Dan Wilhelmson  
Consolidated Telcom  
PO Box 1077  
Dickinson ND 58601-1077

Robert Hill  
Daktel Communications LLC  
P O Box 299  
Carrington ND 58421-0299

Dickey Rural Services Inc  
P O Box 69  
Ellendale ND 58436

DIECA Communications Inc  
2330 Central Expswy  
Santa Clara CA 95050

Essential.com Inc  
1 Burlington Woods  
Burlington MA 01803-4503

Evercom Systems Inc  
P O Box 167707  
Irving TX 75016-7707

jkirby@excel.com  
Jerry Kirby  
Excel Telecommunications Inc  
8750 N Central Expswy Ste 2000  
Dallas TX 75231

Dave Waters  
Fairpoint Communications Solutions  
17 Columbia Cir  
Albany NY 12203-5156

glenn.richards@shawpittman.com  
Glenn Richards  
Glenn Richards  
ShawPittman  
2300 N St NW

Global Telelink Services Inc  
1455 Old Alabama Rd Ste 100  
Roswell GA 30076-2134

rlaqua@rrv.net  
Ronald Laqua  
Halstad Telephone Company  
PO Box 55  
Halstad MN 56548-0055

HTC Services Inc  
P O Box 55  
Halstad MN 56548

carl.billek@corp.idt.net  
Carl Billek  
IDT America, Corp.  
520 Broad St 7th Fl  
Newark NJ 07102

karen.johnson@integratelecom.com  
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**Helbling, Sharon D.**

---

**From:** Helbling, Sharon D.  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2002 11:34 AM  
**To:** ndna (E-mail)  
**Subject:** Attached Notice of Opportunity for Hearing

**Colleen  
North Dakota Newspaper Association**

**Earlier this morning I sent you an e-mail to publish several notices in the ten North Dakota daily newspapers. All are OK, except the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing listing six different cases. That notice should be published as a legal publication in the following official county and daily newspapers, and run it as a "News Item Only" article as well:**

**Richland County  
Pembina County  
Sargent County  
Ransom County  
Fargo Forum  
Grand Forks Herald  
Wahpeton Daily News**

**Please send the bill to the Public Service Commission, along with a tear sheet for billing purposes. If you have any questions, please call me at 328-4076.**

**Thank you. Sorry for my error.**

**Sharon Helbling  
Public Utilities Division**



3.doc

**Helbling, Sharon D.**

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**From:** Helbling, Sharon D.  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2002 8:14 AM  
**To:** ndna (E-mail)  
**Subject:** Attached Notice of Opportunity for Hearing, and Notice of Opportunity to File Written Comments

**Colleen  
North Dakota Newspaper Association**

Colleen,

**Would you please have the attached Notice of Opportunity for Hearing and the Notice of Opportunity to File Written Comments published as legal publications in the next issue of the ten North Dakota daily newspapers, and run them as "News Item Only" articles as well.**

**Please send the bill to the Public Service Commission, along with a tear sheet for billing purposes.**

**If you have any questions, call me at 701-328-4076.**

Thank you.

**Sharon Helbling  
Public Utilities Division**



1.doc



1.doc

**APPROVED**

**MOTION**

DATE: 2-14-02 **February 14, 2002**  
KMF

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-53**

**Red River Telecom, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Application**

**Case No. PU-1692-02-54**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-1727-02-55**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-1727-02-56**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc.  
Designated Eligible Carrier  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-2653-02-57**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc.  
Local Exchange  
Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Case No. PU-2653-02-58**

I move the Commission issue a Notice of Opportunity for Hearing in the captioned applications for certificates of public convenience and necessity to provide incumbent local exchange telecommunications service and for designation as eligible telecommunications carriers as follows: Red River Telecom Inc. for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges; Polar Telecommunications, Inc. for the Pembina exchange; and Dickey Rural Access, Inc. for the Gwinner and Lisbon exchanges.

JRL/sdh

**STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**  
**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**Red River Telecom, Inc. Case No. PU-1692-02-53**  
**Local Exchange**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Red River Telecom, Inc. Case No. PU-1692-02-54**  
**Designated Eligible Carrier**  
**Application**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc. Case No. PU-1727-02-55**  
**Designated Eligible Carrier**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Polar Telecommunications, Inc. Case No. PU-1727-02-56**  
**Local Exchange**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc. Case No. PU-2653-02-57**  
**Designated Eligible Carrier**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**Dickey Rural Access, Inc. Case No. PU-2653-02-58**  
**Local Exchange**  
**Public Convenience and Necessity**

**NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING**

**February 14, 2002**

On February 7, 2002, Red River Telecom, Inc. of Abercrombie, North Dakota, filed an application for certificates of public convenience and necessity to provide facilities-based incumbent local exchange telecommunications services in the exchanges of Fairmount and Wyndmere, North Dakota, Case No. PU-1692-02-53. Red River Telecom, Inc. also requests designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) for receiving federal universal service support for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, Case No. PU-1692-02-54.

On February 7, 2002, Polar Telecommunications, Inc. of Park River, North Dakota filed an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity to provide facilities-based incumbent local exchange telecommunications services in the exchange of Pembina, North Dakota, Case No. PU-1727-02-56. Polar Telecommunications, Inc. also requests ETC designation for the Pembina exchange, Case No. PU-1727-02-55.

Also on February 7, 2002, Dickey Rural Access, Inc. of Ellendale, North Dakota filed an application for certificates of public convenience and necessity to provide facilities-based incumbent local exchange telecommunications services in the exchanges of Gwinner and Lisbon, North Dakota, Case No. PU-2653-02-58. Dickey Rural Access, Inc. also requests ETC designation for the Gwinner and Lisbon exchanges, Case No. PU-2653-02-57.

Each applicant reports entering into an agreement for the purchase of assets of Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota (CTC) relating to the provision of telecommunications services in the respective exchanges for which each applicant requests authority. The applicants state that as of the closing date of the transactions CTC intends to cease providing service in these exchanges and each applicant intends to begin providing service in each respective exchange.


The issues to be considered in these matters are:

1. Fitness and ability of each applicant to provide service.
2. Adequacy of the proposed service.
3. The technical, financial and managerial ability of each applicant to provide service.
4. Qualification of each applicant under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Section 214(e) for designation as an ETC eligible to receive federal universal service funding.
5. What ETC universal service support area should be designated for each applicant.

Those interested are invited to comment on the applications in writing. Persons desiring a hearing must file a written request identifying their interest in the proceeding(s) and the reasons for requesting a hearing. Comments and requests for hearings must be received by **March 19, 2002**. If deemed appropriate, the Commission can determine these matters without hearings.

For more information contact the Public Service Commission, State Capitol, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505, 701-328-2400; or Relay North Dakota 1-800-366-6888 TTY. If you require any auxiliary aids or services, such as readers, signers, or Braille materials please notify Jon Mielke, Executive Secretary.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

  
**Anthony T. Clark**  
Commissioner

  
**Susan E. Wefald**  
President

"ABSENT"  

---

**Leo M. Reinbold**  
Commissioner



LAW OFFICES OF

**PRINGLE & HERIGSTAD, P.C.**

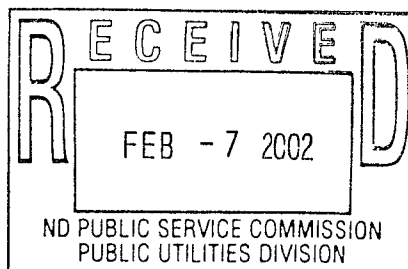
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February 6, 2002

Jon H. Mielke, Executive Secretary  
Public Service Commission  
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 408  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480



**RED RIVER TELECOM, INC.**

Please find enclosed for filing the original and seven copies of the Application of Red River Telecom, Inc. for a certificate of public convenience and necessity and expansion of its eligible telecommunications carrier designated geographical service area. Also enclosed is a Certificate of Good Standing issued by the North Dakota Secretary of State's Office.

In conjunction with the enclosed Application, we expect to file an evidentiary Affidavit in the next few days.

If you have any questions, please call.

Very truly yours,

Michael A. Bosh  
Pringle & Herigstad, P.C.

jb

encs.

cc/encs: Ardon M. Doran  
Kevin Saville  
Aloa Stevens  
Jim Howard

1

**PU-1692-02-54**

Pages: 6

Designated Eligible Carrier application  
by Red River Telecom, Inc. by Michael A Bosh, Attorney  
02/07/2002 CC: Comm Legal PUD (3)

**STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA**

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**Application of Red River Telecom, Inc.  
for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity  
and Expansion of Red River Telecom, Inc.'s  
Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Designated  
Geographical Service Area**

**Case No. PU-\_\_\_\_\_**

**APPLICATION**

**I.**

Red River Telecom, Inc. (hereinafter, "RRTI"), a North Dakota business corporation, under Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the North Dakota Public Service Commission (hereinafter, the "Commission"), is engaged in the business of providing local exchange telecommunications service, exchange access and other telecommunications activities in the following exchanges, which shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as the "RRTI Service Area:" Hankinson and Lidgerwood. RRTI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Red River Rural Telephone Association.

**II.**

Citizens Telecommunications Company of North Dakota (hereinafter, "CTC"), a Delaware corporation, under a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Commission, is engaged in the business of providing local exchange telecommunications service, exchange access, and other telecommunications services in the following exchanges: Fairmount (PC&N No. 4596) and Wyndmere (PC&N No. 4602). CTC has approximately 404 North Dakota access lines in the Fairmount exchange and approximately 689 access lines in the Wyndmere exchange.

**III.**

On December 18, 2001, CTC and RRTI entered into a purchase agreement for the purchase and sale of CTC's current assets and facilities relating to the provision of local exchange telecommunications service, exchange access, and other telecommunications services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. As of the closing date of said transaction (anticipated for the spring of 2002) (hereinafter, the "Closing Date"), CTC intends to cease doing business as a provider of local exchange telecommunications service and exchange access in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. In addition, as of the Closing Date, RRTI intends to engage in the business of providing local exchange

telecommunications service, exchange access, and other telecommunications activities in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

IV.

CTC wishes to relinquish its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity No. 4596 for the Fairmount exchange and No. 4602 for the Wyndmere exchange, effective as of the Closing Date.

V.

RRTI has been designated by the Commission as an eligible telecommunications carrier to receive universal service support under §§ 214 and 254 of the federal Communications act of 1934, as amended by the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (hereinafter, the "1996 Act"). RRTI's eligible telecommunications carrier designated geographical service area for the purpose of determining universal service obligations and support mechanisms under the 1996 Act is currently the RRTI Service Area. Effective as of the Closing Date, CTC wishes to contract its designated geographical service area to no longer include the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, and RRTI wishes to expand its designated geographical service area to include the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, for purposes of determining universal service obligations and support mechanisms under the 1996 Act.

VI.

All subscribers served by CTC in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges prior to the Closing Date will be served by RRTI beginning on the Closing Date. RRTI intends to charge the same rates for basic local service in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges as Citizens is currently charging its subscribers in said exchanges.

VII.

There is a clear need for continuing quality telecommunications services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. The relinquishment of CTC's Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity will have no effect on other public utilities providing similar services, as there are no other public utilities providing similar services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. RRTI, having served the exchanges of Hankinson and Lidgerwood for many years, has demonstrated that it has the technical, financial, and managerial fitness and ability to provide adequate essential and nonessential telecommunications services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. The technical fitness and ability of RRTI to provide services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges will be enhanced and facilitated by RRTI's purchase of the assets that CTC is currently using to provide such services in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges. The provision

of adequate essential and nonessential telecommunications service in the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges will be facilitated and supported by the full current technical and financial capabilities of RRTI, and by the full current technical and financial capabilities of RRTI's parent, Red River Rural Telephone Association.

VIII.

Beginning on the Closing Date, RRTI will offer all services that are supported by federal universal service support mechanisms under § 254(c) of the 1996 Act and 47 C.F.R. §§ 54.101 and 54.401, using a combination of its own facilities and resale of other carriers' services, and will advertise the availability of such services and the charges therefore using media of general distribution, throughout all of the following exchanges: Hankinson, Lidgerwood, Fairmount and Wyndmere.

IX.

The Commission has: (1) authority under N.D.C.C. § 49-21-01.7(7) to act upon applications dealing with certificates of public convenience and necessity; and (2) authority under N.D.C.C. § 49-21-01.7(13) to designate geographic service areas for designated eligible telecommunications carriers for the purpose of determining universal service obligations and support mechanisms under the 1996 Act.

X.

WHEREFORE, CTC hereby applies to: (1) contract its designated geographical service area to no longer include the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, pursuant to N.D.C.C. § 49-21-01.7(13), effective as of the Closing Date; and (2) relinquish its Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity No. 4596 and No. 4602, effective as of the Closing Date, pursuant to N.D.A.C. § 69-09-05-11(6).

XI.

WHEREFORE, RRTI hereby applies to the Commission, pursuant to N.D.C.C. Ch. 49-03.1 and N.D.A.C. § 69-09-05-11, for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity for the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges, effective as of the Closing Date.

XII.

WHEREFORE, RRTI hereby applies to the Commission for expansion of its designated geographic service area for the purpose of determining universal service obligations and support mechanisms under the 1996 Act, effective as of the Closing Date, to also include the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

XIII.

WHEREFORE, RRTI and CTC hereby request a letter indicating to the Federal Communications Commission this Commission's approval (or non-opposition) to a waiver/modification of the Part 36 study area for North Dakota to reflect RRTI's acquisition of the Fairmount and Wyndmere exchanges.

XIV.

WHEREFORE, pursuant to N.D.C.C. § 49-03.1-05, Applicants request that the Commission grant the above-requested relief without a hearing, if no interested party has requested a hearing on this application after receiving at least twenty (20) days notice of opportunity to request such a hearing.

Dated this 6th day of February, 2002.

PRINGLE & HERIGSTAD, P.C.

By Michael A. Bosh  
Michael A. Bosh #5313  
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P.O. Box 1000  
Minot, ND 58702-1000

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA    )  
  ) ss.  
COUNTY OF WARD            )

On this 6th day of February, 2002, before me, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, personally appeared MICHAEL A. BOSH, known to me to be the person who is described in and who executed the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

Judith A. Tossett  
Judith A. Tossett, Notary Public  
For the State of North Dakota  
My commission expires: 01-08-04

COMPANY

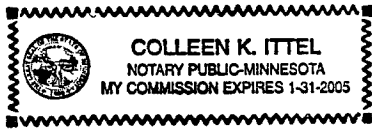
CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
OF NORTH DAKOTA

By Kevin Saville

Kevin Saville  
Its Associate General Counsel

STATE OF MINNESOTA     )  
  ) ss.  
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN    )

On this 5<sup>TH</sup> day of February, 2002, before me, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, personally appeared KEVIN SAVILLE, known to me to be the Associate General Counsel of CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY OF NORTH DAKOTA, the corporation that is described in and that executed the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that such corporation executed the same.



Colleen K. Ittel, Notary Public

For the State of Minnesota  
My commission expires: 1/31/05

# *State of North Dakota*

## SECRETARY OF STATE



### CERTIFICATE OF GOOD STANDING

OF

RED RIVER TELECOM, INC.

The undersigned, as Secretary of State of the State of North Dakota, hereby certifies that RED RIVER TELECOM, INC., a North Dakota BUSINESS CORPORATION, was incorporated in this office on February 1, 1995 and, according to the records of this office as of this date, has paid all fees due this office as required by North Dakota statutes governing a North Dakota BUSINESS CORPORATION.

ACCORDINGLY the undersigned, as such Secretary of State, and by virtue of the authority vested in him by law, hereby issues this Certificate of Good Standing to

RED RIVER TELECOM, INC.

Issued: February 5, 2002

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Alvin A. Jaeger".

Alvin A. Jaeger  
Secretary of State

DU-1692-02-54; PU-1727-02-55; PU-2453-02-57

SENDER: COMPLETE THIS SECTION	COMPLETE THIS SECTION ON DELIVERY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete items 1, 2, and 3. Also complete item 4 if Restricted Delivery is desired.</li> <li>Print your name and address on the reverse so that we can return the card to you.</li> <li>Attach this card to the back of the mailpiece, or on the front if space permits.</li> </ul>	<p>A. Signature <input type="checkbox"/> Agent  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addressee</p> <p>B. Received by (Printed Name) C. Date of Delivery</p>
<p>1. Article Addressed to:</p> <p><i>Katherine Schrader</i>  <i>Illermm Access Policy Division</i>  <i>Whitman Competition Bureau</i>  <i>1445 12th St SW</i>  <i>Washington DC 20554</i></p>	<p>D. Is delivery address different from item 1? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No          If YES, enter delivery address below:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>RECEIVED &amp; INSPECTED</b></p> <p><b>MAY 1 2002</b></p> </div> <p>3. Service Type  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certified Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Express Mail  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Registered Mail <input type="checkbox"/> Return Receipt for Merchandise  <input type="checkbox"/> Insured Mail <input type="checkbox"/> O.G.D.</p> <p>4. Restricted Delivery? (Extra Fee) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p>
<p>2. Article Number          (Transfer from service label)</p>	<p>7001 2510 0005 8654 8761</p>
<p>PS Form 3811, August 2001 Domestic Return Receipt 102595-01-M-2509</p>	