

## Staff Briefing Papers

Meeting Date	September 16, 2021	Agenda Item 3**
Company	Local Exchange Carriers, Eligible Telecommunications Carriers	
Docket No.	<b>P999/PR-21-8</b>	
	<b>In the Matter of Annual Certification Related to Eligible Telecommunications Carriers' (ETCs) Use of the Federal Universal Service Support Required Pursuant to C.F.R. 54.313</b>	
Issues	Does the Commission have sufficient documentation through the filed FCC Form 481 to be assured that the high-cost funds received by each ETCs have been, and will be, used for their intended purpose, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.314?	
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### Relevant Documents

### Date

Annual Report/Compliance Filings Related to ETC (FCC Form 481)	May 21, 2021 through August 19, 2021
Northern Telephone Company Letter	August 9, 2021
Wilderness Valley Telephone Company Letter	August 9, 2021
Comments of the Office of the Attorney General – Residential Utilities Division	August 31, 2021
Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce	August 31, 2021
Comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce – Attachment I	August 31, 2021

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The attached materials are work papers of the Commission Staff. They are intended for use by the Public Utilities Commission and are based upon information already in the record unless noted otherwise.

## I. Statement of the Issues

1. Does the Commission have sufficient documentation through the filed FCC Form 481 to be assured that the high-cost funds received by each ETCs have been, and will be, used for their intended purpose, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.314?
2. In the event a high cost ETC has not filed an executed affidavit, should the Commission require an executed affidavit be filed as a replacement?
3. What action should the Commission take with respect to tribal outreach?
4. What action should the Commission take with respect to Federal Lifeline requirements and the Commission's July 20, 2021 Order and August 2, 2021 Notice in Docket 20-747 and 21-8?
5. Should the Commission certify the Companies whose Service Area Codes (SACs) are registered in a state other than Minnesota, but who have customers within Minnesota?

## II. Background

In this proceeding, the Commission is asked to certify 101 ETCs after review of each Company's FCC Form 481.

Under the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, telecommunications carriers must be designated "eligible telecommunication carriers" (ETCs) to qualify for subsidies from the federal Universal Service Fund for serving high-cost areas or low-income consumers. State regulatory commissions have primary responsibility for designating ETCs, although the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) acts on designation requests from carriers who are not subject to state commission jurisdiction. The Commission has an open comment period in Docket No. P999/CI-21-86 regarding the Commission's ongoing jurisdiction to oversee Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) compliance as set forth in sections 214(e)(2) and 254(f) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, the FCC's Universal Service rules, codified at 47 C.F.R. section 54, and the applicable FCC auction materials. P999/CI-21-86 does not impact the Commission's consideration of the current annual ETC recertifications.

State commissions must annually certify to the FCC that all high-cost support provided to state-designated ETCs was used in the preceding calendar year, and will be used in the coming year, only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended.

Each year, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) must certify that Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) receiving High-Cost Funds are using the funds received in the previous year (2020) and will use the funds in the coming year (2022), only for the

provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended.

Since 2001 States have filed annual certification of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 481 compliance filings by Eligible Telecommunication Carriers (ETCs) regarding high-cost program support from the Universal Service Fund (USF). All companies filing FCC Form 481 under 47 C.F.R. 54.313 are normally certified via the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) electronic certification roster and by being sent hardcopy to the FCC by USPS as per federal practice. The Commission does this under authority delegated in 47 C.F.R. 54.314. Wireless companies filing FCC Form 481 under 47 C.F.R. 54.422 do so for the Commission's information only. Those wireless companies are appropriately not listed on the USAC verification system and not certified by the Commission to the FCC.

In 2020, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) distributed **\$248,056,604** to Minnesota ETCs to mitigate high costs in the provision of voice and broadband services. Under several of the high-cost schemes, companies must build out to several locations in given census blocks. Each year, through the required filing of FCC Form 481, companies receiving high-cost funds report certain information, including an affidavit that the company meets certain FCC requirements. The Minnesota Commission requires each company seeking certification to include a separate affidavit from a company officer confirming that funds are used appropriately.

### III. Parties' Comments

- 1. Does the Commission have sufficient documentation through the filed FCC Form 481 to be assured that the high-cost funds received by each ETCs have been, and will be, used for their intended purpose, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.314? and 2. In the event a high cost ETC has not filed an executed affidavit, should the Commission require an executed affidavit be filed as a replacement?**

#### Department

With approximately 60 days available from the time companies submit their Form 481 filings to the time the Department's comments and recommendations are due, it is a challenge to investigate and provide the Commission with assurance that high-cost funds have been, and will be, used for their intended purpose. That said, the Department has found no reason to deny recertification for any ETC.<sup>1</sup>

This year, the list of companies generated by USAC that are eligible for recertification to receive high-cost funds, includes several carriers that are wireless Lifeline only carriers, not needing recertification. There are also two carriers: Lake County and T-Mobile Central, that have relinquished their ETC status, and should not be recertified. For a complete list, please see Table 3 of Attachment A of this document for a complete list.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see August 31, 2021 Department Comments at page 8.

The Department indicated that it communicated with USAC concerning the list of companies eligible for recertification and USAC has indicated that the correction cannot be made in the system for this round of recertification. There are also several companies that filed 481 forms that did not receive high-cost funds in 2020 but are due to receive RDOF funds in 2021 and beyond. These companies are not on the USAC list, and although 481 forms were filed, the Department does not believe that these companies require recertification. However, if any company not on USAC list seeks recertification, or if the Commission otherwise chooses to recertify any company not on the USAC list, the PUC can send a letter to USAC, as it did last year for Farmers Cooperative.

All companies on USAC's list as eligible for recertification to receive high-cost funds (as of August 23, 2021) are shown in Appendix A of the Department's August 31, 2021 comments, along with the Department's recommendations on whether the Commission should recertify the company for receipt of high-cost funds.<sup>2</sup> If the recommendation is to not recertify, the reason is provided, such as the company is not a high-cost fund recipient.<sup>3</sup>

## **OAG**

All the High Cost ETCs listed in Table 1 of OAG Attachment A and Table 1 of Attachment A of this document filed the Commission-required affidavit. The OAG identified one High Cost ETC that filed an unexecuted affidavit but was otherwise compliant with federal and state High-Cost Program requirements. The Commission could require the ETC to file a replacement affidavit within thirty (30) days of the Commission's 2021 ETC recertification order. In the alternative, the Commission could accept the unexecuted affidavit but direct all High Cost ETCs to file executed affidavits with their Minnesota FCC Form 481 filings in the future.<sup>4,5</sup>

In the Table 4 of Attachment A of the OAG's August 31, 2021 comments and Table 4 of Attachment A of this document, the OAG identified five carriers which were not included on Minnesota's recertification list but filed information in the current docket (Commission Docket No. 21-8). The presumption made by the OAG was that filings were made because these carriers were winning bidders in the recent Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction. The OAG recommends no action be taken on these items.

## **3. What Action should the Commission take with respect to tribal outreach?**

### **Department**

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<sup>2</sup> The Department's Appendix A of the Department's August 31, 2021 comments and Attachment A of the OAG's August 31, 2021 are consistent with each other. Staff has attached the OAG's Attachment A to this document and has identified it as Attachment A of this document.

<sup>3</sup> Please see August 31, 2021 Department Comments at pages 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Please August 31, 2021 comments of the Office of the Attorney General-Residential Utilities Division at page 8.

<sup>5</sup> The carrier was subsequently identified as LTD Broadband.

The Department provided a list of eight companies which serve Tribal land. The list and a short description of efforts made are provided below:

**1. Scott Rice—Integra (SAC 361479)**

Scott Rice Telephone Company serves the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC). Scott Rice is the only ETC that responded specifically to each of the requirements listed in 47 C.F.R. 54.313 (a)(5). Scott-Rice and the SMSC entered into a fiber agreement in 2015 to provide fiber, Internet, video, and voice services to all community members. The parties are in the process of renegotiating the agreement. Scott Rice states it is in regular contact with the Tribe's leadership, including their Business Council.

SMSC provided feedback to the Department's Tribal Liaison, stating that the Tribe and Scott Rice are in constant communication regarding the Fiber to The Home project.

**2. Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative (SACs 361451, 366132, and 366133)**

Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative (PBRTC) serves Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) and the Red Lake Nation. For LLBO, PBRTC provided a narrative explaining its customized IT training curriculum and work with tribal education staff as well as area Leech Lake high schools. For the Red Lake Nation, PBRTC describes meeting with tribal leaders as well as the Blandin Foundation to discuss leveraging potential grants with PBRTC's expertise. PBRTC also included a letter to the editor from Kenneth Perrault, District Technology Coordinator for Red Lake Schools, thanking PBRTC for placing wireless access outside all major buildings and some community centers.

**3. Arrowhead Communications Corporation (SAC 361374), East Otter Tail Telephone Company (SAC 361385), Callaway Telephone Company (SAC 361365), Twin Valley-Ulen Telephone Company (SAC 361491), and Peoples Telephone Company (SAC 361453)**

Arrowhead Communications Corporation and East Otter Tail Telephone Company are both subsidiaries of Arvig, serving the LLBO. Callaway and Twin Valley-Ulen Telephone Companies are also subsidiaries of Arvig, serving the White Earth Band of Ojibwe (White Earth). The Peoples Telephone Company, another subsidiary of Arvig, serves Bois Forte Band of Chippewa (Bois Forte). Although off to a slow start, Arvig appears to have made progress with its engagement by meeting in April and May of 2021 with tribal representatives to discuss mapping and drafting broadband grant partnership agreements. More work is anticipated between Arvig and the Department's Tribal Liaison to establish meetings with the White Earth and Bois Forte Tribes. Arvig provided a public service announcement (PSA) on the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP) that included information on Tribal eligibility.

**4. Johnson Telephone Company (SAC 361410)**

Johnson Telephone Company serves Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO). Johnson filed a summary of its discussions with the LLBO and has plans to work with the Sugar Point Local Indian Council in 2021, which is within the LLBO Tribal lands.

**5. Wikstrom Telephone Company (SAC 361505)**

Wikstrom serves the Red Lake Nation with phone and internet services. According to Wikstrom, the two parties had conversations in 2020 regarding ongoing telecommunications service needs and priorities. Wikstrom also sent the Red Lake Indian Reservation a letter dated December 17, 2020, memorializing discussions and meetings over the years.

**6. Garden Valley Telephone Company (SACs 361395 and 369039)**

Garden Valley serves Red Lake Nation and the White Earth Band of Ojibwe. According to their filings, Garden Valley has had multiple interactions with White Earth. However, outreach with the Red Lake Nation appears to be sparse – apart from a letter to the Tribal Chair of Red Lake Nation, Garden Valley provided no information about their interactions with Red Lake.

**7. Citizens and Frontier Minnesota (SACs 361123, 367123, 361367)**

Citizens and Frontier serve Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Fond du Lac), and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (Mille Lacs). Frontier sent an annual letter to Tribal contacts in each Tribe. Although the letter cordially offered an invitation to talk, the letter elicited no response. Frontier sent a follow up email in April of 2021. Frontier heard back only from Fond du Lac, which is its own ETC, and is engaged in building its own fiber broadband network that is expected to reach about 95 percent of its member locations by end of 2021. Fond du Lac also responded to the Department's request for feedback and reports several conversations between the Tribe and Frontier. Fond du Lac as its own ETC, has not sought additional engagement with Frontier. Based on their filing, Frontier has not established a connection with Bois Forte or Mille Lacs Tribes. Frontier offered no plans for additional outreach efforts for 2021 for Bois Forte and Mille Lacs.

**8. CenturyTel of Minnesota (SAC 361445), Embarq Minnesota (SAC 361456), Qwest Corporation (SAC 365142), collectively, CenturyLink.**

CenturyLink, through its various companies serves the vast majority of Tribal land in Minnesota, compared to the other companies filing 481s. CenturyTel of Minnesota serves Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and White Earth Band of Ojibwe. Embarq serves Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Prairie Island Indian Community, and the Upper Sioux Community. Qwest serves Lower Sioux Indian Community, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, White Earth Band of Ojibwe, Prairie Island Indian Community, Red Lake Nation and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

According to CenturyLink's cover letters for its 481 filings, CenturyLink had discussions with various tribes. CenturyLink's narratives, however, state that the CenturyLink entities did not

receive a response to the outreach letters sent in 2020 except for a note that there were several conversations with the LLBO. No additional plans for 2021 were offered. CenturyLink sent an email letter to each Tribe in June of 2020 and a follow up in December of 2020. Each letter bore an appropriate email address for the tribal contact. The letter itself was generic and put the burden of setting up meetings on the Tribe by stating “[t]o request a meeting, please respond to this e-mail with proposed topics, dates and times” The signature block bore only “CenturyLink Tribal Outreach” and a phone number.

Although a representative from CenturyLink participated in the April 6, 2021 meeting between the Commission, the Department, and the ETCs serving Tribal lands, there has been little to no follow up with the Tribes, with the possible exception of the LLBO, despite outreach to CenturyLink by the Department’s Tribal Liaison.<sup>6</sup>

### **Department Recommendation**

The Department indicated that almost none of the ETCs reported on the specific federal requirements related to Tribal engagement, although some companies clearly are either in dialogue or working with Tribes on specific matters. The Department recognizes that proper Tribal engagement takes time and concerted effort, but the lack of information provided by ETCs on future planned efforts is concerning. Further, the lack of transparency of what companies have done for Tribal engagement in the previous calendar year, until information for recertification is submitted on July 1st of the following year, fails to correct for unsatisfactory Tribal engagement for the past as it is after the fact, and places reliance on company promises for better behavior going forward. To ensure that Tribal engagement occurs, in service to meeting the FCC requirements for ETCs, the Department recommends that the Commission order each ETC to:

- 1) Provide a detailed plan on how, in 2021, it will meaningfully and appropriately engage with all the Tribes it serves during the remainder of 2021 and the first half of 2022, within 30 days of the Commission’s Order in this matter. The plan should include the company’s plan to address the individual reporting requirements in Form 481, provide the name, position, and contact information of the person primarily responsible for Tribal engagement, and identify the ongoing duties that person will have with respect to Tribal engagement.
- 2) Provide quarterly reports to memorialize the ongoing efforts of each of the companies that serve Tribal lands. Since the ETC recertification filings are due on July 1, there may be no need for a separate quarterly report on July 1, if the ETC includes information on the ongoing efforts in its filing. Other quarterly reports may be filed on January 1, April 1, and October 1. The Department notes that this should not be considered an additional burden being placed on the ETCs since Tribal engagement is to be ongoing, but rather documentation of what has transpired, which can then be used by the ETC in the annual recertification process.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Please see August 31, 2021 Department Comments at pages 10-12.

<sup>7</sup> Please see August 31, 2021 Department Comments at pages 12-13.



## **OAG**

The OAG defers to the Department regarding whether the Minnesota High Cost ETCs listed in Table 1 of OAG Attachment A met their Tribal engagement obligations in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

### **4. What action should the Commission take with respect to Federal Lifeline requirements and the Commission's July 20, 2021 Order and August 2, 2021 Notice in Docket 20-747 and 21-8?**

## **Department**

The Department believes that the Lifeline references on the websites of Broadband Corporation, Jaguar Communications, Inc., and LTD Broadband comply with the requirements of the applicable federal law. The Department will continue to monitor these carriers' compliance with the requirements of the Commission's August 2, 2021 "Notice of Lifeline Outreach Filing Requirements."

With respect to Northern and Wilderness Valley Telephone Companies, the Department indicated that given the explanation provided in both company's August 9, 2021 responses, the Department recommends that, at the present time, the Commission take no action regarding the website issue as it relates to these two carriers.

### **Carriers with Miscellaneous Lifeline Reporting Issues**

The following carriers left Line 1220 blank on their most recent 481 forms and, thereby, failed to report the links to their website references to the Lifeline program: Ace Telephone Association, Clara City Telephone Exchange, Hills Telephone Company, Inc., Lismore Cooperative Telephone Company, Mid State Telephone Company dba KMP, Minnesota Valley Telephone Company, Roseau Electric Cooperative, Inc., Sacred Heart Telephone Company, Starbuck Telephone Company, Wikstrom Telephone Company, Winthrop Telephone Company, Woodstock Telephone Company, Zumbrota Telephone Company.

The Department has reviewed the websites of all high cost ETCs and has verified that the websites of these carriers reference the Lifeline program. Therefore, the Department is not taking issue with the inadvertent failure of these companies to reference their website links to the Lifeline program on line 1220 of their most recent 481 forms. The Department believes that the Lifeline references on the websites of the carriers complies with the requirements of the applicable federal law. The Department will continue to monitor the compliance, of these carriers, with the requirements of the Commission's August 2, 2021 "Notice of Lifeline Outreach Filing Requirements."

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<sup>8</sup> Please August 31, 2021 comments of the Office of the Attorney General-Residential Utilities Division at page 7.



As part of its investigation into the annual certification of ETCs, the Department found that the Lifeline references on the websites of several carriers need updates. These instances are noted in Attachment 1 of the Department's August 31, 2021 comments. As the Department pointed out, the spreadsheet was current as of August 25, 2021. The Department acknowledged that companies have been correcting their websites and will follow up as required.

The Department recommends that all high cost ETCs be directed to file their Lifeline Outreach Plans, in compliance with the requirements of the Commission's August 2, 2021 Notice of Lifeline Outreach Filing Requirements, if they have not yet done so.<sup>9</sup>

#### **OAG**

The OAG indicated that there is no Commission follow-up required for this item.<sup>10</sup>

### **5. Should the Commission certify the Companies whose SACs are registered in a state other than Minnesota, but who have customers within Minnesota?**

#### **Department**

The following SACs serve Minnesota customers, but are registered in other states and will be certified in those states. The SACs include: 391405 Alliance Comm Coop - Hills Tel Coop (South Dakota), 391657 Alliance Comm Coop - Splitrock (South Dakota), 351126 CenturyTel of Chester (Iowa), 330950 CenturyTel of NW Wisconsin (Wisconsin) 381630 Polar Comm Mutual Aid Corp (North Dakota), 381614 Polar Telecomm (North Dakota), and 381631 Red River Rural (North Dakota).

The Department has confirmed with the Commission Staff in North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin, that the above-listed companies will be certified by the Commissions in those states. In the past, the Minnesota Commission has certified these companies and no harm has come from it. The Department recommends not certifying these companies, as provided in Appendix A of the Department's August 31, 2021 comments and Table 2 of Attachment A of this document, but no harm will occur if the Commission chooses to certify these ETCs.

#### **OAG**

The OAG indicated that as with last year, the Department confirmed that all the above-listed High Cost ETCs will be recertified by the other states in which they operate. If those other states fail to recertify the ETCs by October 1, 2021, however, the ETCs' High-Cost support for Minnesota could be reduced. In past years, the Commission has recertified the High Cost ETCs that primarily operate in other states without incident. Because the Department confirmed that the other states intend to recertify these ETCs, the Commission could also recertify them to reduce the potential for an inadvertent funding reduction due to late certification.

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<sup>9</sup> Please see Department August 31, 2021 comments at pages 13-16.

<sup>10</sup> Please see OAG's August 31, 2021 comments at pages 10-14.

#### IV. Staff Analysis

For Minnesota High-Cost Program ETCs to be eligible for support, the Commission must file an annual certification with the FCC and USAC by October 1 of each year certifying that High-Cost Program funds were used in the previous year, and will be used in the coming year, only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended. If the Commission submits its certification after October 1 of the applicable calendar year, the Minnesota High-Cost Program ETCs may incur funding reductions.

In so far as this annual review is a ministerial duty delegated to the Commission by the FCC, Staff concurs that each of the 101 companies requesting certification appear to have met the filing requirements. Please see Table 1 of Attachment A of the OAG's August 31, 2021 comments and as indicated on Appendix A of the Department's August 31, 2021 comments or Table 1 of Attachment A of this document for the list of ETCs requiring Commission certification.

With respect to Lifeline and Tribal engagement, Staff agrees with the Department's proposed reporting for Tribal engagement and Lifeline compliance. Those filing proposals are reasonable.

Finally, Staff believes that certification of carriers with service area codes (SAC) in neighboring states which includes Minnesota customers should be left to those states.<sup>11</sup> Those states are responsible for the certifications in their states and will certify these ETCs in a timely manner as indicated by the Department.

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<sup>11</sup> Those neighboring states include Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

## V. Decision Options

1. **Does the Commission have sufficient documentation through the filed FCC Form 481 to be assured that the high-cost funds received by each ETCs have been, and will be, used for their intended purpose, pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.314?**
  - a. Recertify all companies as indicated in Table 1 of Attachment a of this document (*Department, OAG, ETCs*).
  - b. Do not recertify some or all the ETCs listed.
2. **In the event a high cost ETC has not filed an executed affidavit, should the Commission require an executed affidavit be filed as a replacement?**
  - a. Require that all high-cost ETCs to file executed affidavits with their Minnesota FCC Form 481 filings in future years (*OAG*).
  - b. Require the ETC to file a replacement affidavit within thirty (30) days of the Commission's 2021 ETC recertification order (*OAG*).
3. **What action shall the Commission take with respect to tribal outreach?**
  - a. Provide a detailed plan on how, in 2021, it will meaningfully and appropriately engage with all the Tribes it serves during the remainder of 2021 and the first half of 2022, within 30 days of the Commission's Order in this matter. The plan should include (*Department*):
    - i. the company's plan to address the individual reporting requirements in Form 481;
    - ii. the name, position, and contact information of the person primarily responsible for Tribal engagement, and
    - iii. the ongoing duties that person will have with respect to Tribal engagement.
  - b. Provide quarterly reports to memorialize the ongoing efforts of each of the companies that serve Tribal lands. The quarterly reports are on the following dates each year (*Department*):
    - i. January 1;
    - ii. April 1;

- iii. July 1 (as part of an ETCs annual 481 filing); and
    - iv. October 1.
  - c. Take no action regarding Tribal engagement.
- 4. **What action should the Commission take with respect to Federal Lifeline requirements and the Commission's July 20, 2021 Order and August 2, 2021 Notice in Docket 20-747 and 21-8?**
  - a. Direct all high cost ETCs to file their Lifeline Outreach Plans, in compliance with the requirements of the Commission's August 2, 2021 Notice of Lifeline Outreach Filing Requirements, if they have not yet done so (*Department*).
  - b. Take no action regarding Lifeline.
  - c. Other action the Commission deems appropriate.
- 5. **Should the Commission certify the Companies whose SACs are registered in a state other than Minnesota, but who have customers within Minnesota?**
  - a. Do not certify the Companies whose SACs are registered in a state other than Minnesota, but who have customers within Minnesota (*Department*).
  - b. Certify the Companies whose SACs are registered in a state other than Minnesota, but who have customers within Minnesota (*OAG*).
  - c. Take no action on this issue.

#### **VI. Staff Recommendations**

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt: 1a, 2a or 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, and 5a.

**Attachement A**

**OAG Attachment A**

**2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for  
Recertification by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission**

<b><u>Table 1</u></b> <b>Minnesota High Cost ETCs that the Commission Should Recertify</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>Study Area Code ("SAC")</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Carrier Type</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
27	361387	EMILY COOP TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
28	361389	FARMERS MUTUAL TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
29	361390	FEDERATED TEL COOP	MN	ILEC	Y
30	366130	Federated Telephone Cooperative	MN	CETC	Y
31	361403	FEDERATED UTILITIES	MN	ILEC	Y
32	361393	FELTON TEL CO. INC.	MN	ILEC	Y
33	361367	FRONTIER-MINNESOTA	MN	ILEC	Y
34	361395	GARDEN VALLEY TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
35	369039	Garden Valley Telephone Company	MN	CETC	Y
36	361396	GARDONVILLE COOP TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
37	361399	GRANADA TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
38	361401	HALSTAD TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
39	369007	TEKSTAR COMMUNICATIONS, INC.	MN	CETC	Y
40	369020	Farmers Mutual Telephone Company	MN	CETC	Y
41	369040	Halstad Telephone Company	MN	CETC	Y
42	361404	HARMONY TEL. CO.	MN	ILEC	Y
43	361405	HILLS TEL CO, INC	MN	ILEC	Y
44	361408	HOME TEL CO – MN	MN	ILEC	Y
45	361409	HUTCHINSON TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
46	361654	INTERSTATE TELECOMM.	MN	ILEC	Y
47	369041	Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.	MN	CETC	Y
48	369038	Jaguar Communication, Inc	MN	CETC	Y
49	361410	JOHNSON TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
50	361412	KASSON & MANTORVILLE	MN	ILEC	Y
51	361419	LISMORE COOP TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
52	361422	LONSDALE TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
53	361443	LORETEL SYSTEMS, INC	MN	ILEC	Y
54	369047	LTD Broadband LLC	MN	CETC	Y
55	361424	MABEL COOP TEL - MN	MN	ILEC	Y
56	361426	MANCHESTER-HARTLAND	MN	ILEC	Y
57	361427	MANKATO-HICKORYTECH	MN	ILEC	Y
58	361430	MELROSE TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
59	361375	MID-COMM-HICKORYTECH	MN	ILEC	Y
60	369015	Midcontinent Communications	MN	CETC	Y
61	361413	MID STATE DBA KMP	MN	ILEC	Y

**OAG Attachment A**

**2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for Recertification  
by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission**

<b><u>Table 1</u></b> <b>Minnesota High Cost ETCs that the Commission Should Recertify</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>Study Area Code ("SAC")</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Carrier Type</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
62	361433	MID STATE TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
63	361431	MIDWEST TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
64	361439	MINNESOTA VALLEY TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
65	361442	NEW ULM TELECOM, INC	MN	ILEC	Y
66	361500	NORTHERN TEL CO – MN	MN	ILEC	Y
67	361448	OSAKIS TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
68	361450	PARK REGION MUTUAL	MN	ILEC	Y
69	361451	PAUL BUNYAN RURAL	MN	ILEC	Y
70	366132	Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative	MN	CETC	Y
71	366133	Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative	MN	CETC	Y
72	361453	PEOPLES TEL CO – MN	MN	ILEC	Y
73	361454	PINE ISLAND TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
74	365142	QWEST CORP-MN	MN	ILEC	Y
75	361472	REDWOOD COUNTY TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
76	369045	Roseau Electric Cooperative, Inc.	MN	CETC	Y
77	361474	ROTHSAY TEL CO, INC	MN	ILEC	Y
78	361475	RUNESTONE TEL ASSN	MN	ILEC	Y
79	361423	Runestone Telephone Association	MN	ILEC	Y
80	361476	SACRED HEART TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
81	361479	SCOTT RICE – INTEGRA	MN	ILEC	Y
82	361483	SLEEPY EYE TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
83	361485	SPRING GROVE COOP	MN	ILEC	Y
84	361487	STARBUCK TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
85	361491	TWIN VALLEY-ULEN TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
86	361494	UPSALA COOP TEL ASSN	MN	ILEC	Y
87	361495	VALLEY TEL CO – MN	MN	ILEC	Y
88	361501	WEST CENTRAL TEL	MN	ILEC	Y
89	369042	West Central Telephone Association	MN	CETC	Y
90	361502	WESTERN TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
91	361505	WIKSTROM TEL CO, INC	MN	ILEC	Y
92	369046	Wikstrom Telephone Company	MN	CETC	Y
93	361348	WILDERNESS VALLEY	MN	ILEC	Y
94	361414	Windstream Communications, Inc.	MN	ILEC	Y
95	361482	Windstream Communications, Inc.	MN	ILEC	Y
96	361337	WINNEBAGO COOP ASSN	MN	ILEC	Y

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### 2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for Recertification by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

<b><u>Table 1</u></b> <b>Minnesota High Cost ETCs that the Commission Should Recertify</b>					
No.	Study Area Code ("SAC")	Carrier Name	State	Carrier Type	2021 Certification (Y/N)
97	361507	WINSTED TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
98	361508	WINTHROP TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
99	361512	WOLVERTON TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
100	361510	WOODSTOCK TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y
101	361515	ZUMBROTA TEL CO	MN	ILEC	Y

#### **II. HIGH COST ETCs THAT WILL BE CERTIFIED BY OTHER STATES BUT COULD ALSO BE CERTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION**

The High Cost ETCs listed below are included on Minnesota's recertification list but the Minnesota Department of Commerce ("Department") has confirmed that the ETCs will be recertified by other states. To ensure no reduction in these ETCs' High Cost Program support for Minnesota, the Commission could recertify them even though they will also be recertified by other states.

CenturyTel NW WI (SAC 330950), CenturyTel-Chester (SAC 351126), Red River Rural Telephone (SAC 381631), and Hills Tel Co-SD (SAC 391405) filed FCC Forms 481 in Commission Docket No. 21-8. The OAG reviewed those filings and does not have any concerns about the recertification of these High Cost ETCs.

Polar Telecomm. (SAC 381614), Polar Comm Mut Aid (SAC 381630), and Splitrock Telecom Cooperative Inc. (SAC 391657) did not file information in Commission Docket No. 21-8 so the OAG was not able to assess their High Cost Program compliance. In past years, however, the Commission has recertified High Cost ETCs that primarily operate in other states without incident. Even though the Department confirmed that other states intend to recertify these ETCs, the Commission could also recertify them to reduce the potential for an inadvertent funding reduction due to late certification.

*The Commission has the option of recertifying some or all of these High Cost ETCs.*

<b><u>Table 2</u></b> <b>High Cost ETCs that Will be Certified by Other States but Could Also be Certified by the Commission</b>					
No.	SAC	Carrier Name	Certifying State	Carrier Type	2021 Certification (Y/N)
1	330950	CenturyTel NW WI	WI	ILEC	Optional
2	351126	CENTURYTEL-CHESTER	IA	ILEC	Optional



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### 2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for Recertification by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

<b>Table 2</b> <b>High Cost ETCs that Will be Certified by Other States but Could Also be Certified by the Commission</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>SAC</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>Certifying State</b>	<b>Carrier Type</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
3	381614	POLAR TELECOMM.	ND	ILEC	Optional
4	381630	POLAR COMM MUT AID	ND	ILEC	Optional
5	381631	Red River Rural Telephone	ND	ILEC	Optional
6	391405	HILLS TEL CO-SD	SD	ILEC	Optional
7	391657	SPLITROCK TELECOM COOPERATIVE INC.	SD	ILEC	Optional

### III. ETCs THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD NOT RECERTIFY.

The ETCs listed below are included on Minnesota's recertification list but did not file any information in Commission Docket No. 21-8 either because their SACs are no longer active or they are Lifeline-only providers. *The Commission should not recertify these ETCs.*

<b>Table 3</b> <b>ETCs that the Commission Should Not Recertify</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>SAC</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>Certifying State</b>	<b>Carrier Type</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
1	361357	BLACKDUCK TEL CO	MN	ILEC	N
2	361437	MINNESOTA LAKE TEL	MN	ILEC	N
3	366110	Lake County d/b/a Lake Connections <sup>1</sup>	MN	CETC	N
4	369001	WESTERN WIRELESS	MN	CETC	N
5	369002	MIDWEST WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS	MN	CETC	N
6	369003	HOMETOWN SOLUTIONS	MN	CETC	N
7	369004	RCC MINNESOTA	MN	CETC	N
8	369005	WIRELESS ALLIANCE, LLC	MN	CETC	N
9	369008	NPCR, INC.	MN	CETC	N

<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission granted Lake County's petition to relinquish its ETC status effective June 3, 2019. See *In the Matter of the Petition of Lake County for Relinquishment of ETC Designation*, Docket No. P-6944/RL-19-195, Order at 1 (July 21, 2020). The FCC rescinded Lake County's ETC status effective December 18, 2019. See *In the Matter of the Petition of Lake County Minnesota for Relinquishment of its Status as a Rural Broadband Experiments Support Recipient and for a Section 1.3 Waiver of the Deployment Schedule*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90 and 14-259, Order, DA 19-1295, para. 20 (Dec. 18, 2019). Although Lake County did not receive federal Universal Service High Cost Program funds in calendar year 2020, the company still appears on the Commission's 2021 High Cost Program ETC recertification list. The Universal Service Administrative Company has confirmed that it will remove Lake County from future Minnesota recertification lists but is unable to do so for the current recertification list.

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### 2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for Recertification by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

<b>Table 3</b> <b>ETCs that the Commission Should Not Recertify</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>SAC</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>Certifying State</b>	<b>Carrier Type</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
10	369009	RCC Minnesota, Inc. (SMN)	MN	CETC	N
11	369012	Alltel Communications, LLC	MN	CETC	N
12	369013	Alltel Communications, LLC	MN	CETC	N
13	369014	T-Mobile Central LLC <sup>2</sup>	MN	CETC	N
14	369032	Tracfone Wireless Inc.	MN	CETC	N
15	369909	AMERICAN CELLULAR CORPORATION	MN	CETC	N
16	369911	CELLULAR MOBILE SYSTEMS OF MN	MN	CETC	N

#### **IV. HIGH COST ETCs FOR WHICH THE COMMISSION HAS NO ACTION ITEM (RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND WINNING BIDDERS)**

The High Cost ETCs listed below are *not* included on Minnesota's recertification list but filed information in Commission Docket No. 21-8, presumably because they are winning bidders in the FCC's recent Rural Digital Opportunity Fund ("RDOF") auction. The OAG appreciates the information provided by these filers.

*There is no action item for the Commission with respect to these ETCs.*

<b>Table 4</b> <b>Minnesota High Cost ETCs for which the Commission has no Action Item (i.e., Informational Only)</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>SAC</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>Certifying State</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
1	369021	Federated Telephone Cooperative	N/A	N/A
2	369029	Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association	N/A	N/A
3	369049	Paul Bunyan Rural Telephone Cooperative	N/A	N/A
4	369050	Garden Valley Telephone Company	N/A	N/A
5	369914	C-I Communications	N/A	N/A

<sup>2</sup> The Commission approved T-Mobile's request to relinquish its High Cost Program ETC status effective December 31, 2020. *In the Matter of the Petition of T-Mobile Central LLC for Relinquishment of its High Cost Status as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC)*, P-6856/M-20-894, ORDER at 1 (Feb. 23, 2021).

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### 2021 Eligible Telecommunications Carriers for Recertification by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

#### V. ETCs FOR WHICH THE COMMISSION HAS NO ACTION ITEM (LIFELINE-ONLY SUPPORT RECIPIENTS)

The ETCs listed below are *not* included on Minnesota's recertification list but filed information in Commission Docket No. 21-8, presumably because they are (or considered being) federal Universal Service Lifeline-only support recipients. The OAG appreciates the information provided by these filers.

*There is no action item for the Commission with respect to these ETCs.*

<b>Table 5</b> <b>ETCs for which the Commission</b> <b>has no Action Item (i.e., Informational Only)</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>SAC</b>	<b>Carrier Name</b>	<b>Certifying State</b>	<b>2021 Certification (Y/N)</b>
1	369016	Telrite Corporation DBA Life Wireless	N/A	N/A
2	369022	Global Connection of America dba Stand Up Wireless	N/A	N/A
3	369023	I-Wireless	N/A	N/A
4	369024	Q Link Wireless	N/A	N/A
5	369025	Boomerang Wireless	N/A	N/A
6	369028	Tag Mobile, LLC	N/A	N/A
7	369033	Tempo Telecom, LLC	N/A	N/A
8	369034	Sage Telecom Communications, LLC	N/A	N/A
9	N/A	Assist Wireless, LLC <sup>3</sup>	N/A	N/A

<sup>3</sup> Assist Wireless filed a letter with the Commission on June 20, 2021 explaining that the company is not operational and has not been assigned a SAC. Accordingly, it has no FCC Form 481 to file with the Commission. *In the Matter of the Annual Certification Related to Eligible Telecommunications Carriers' (ETCs) Use of Federal Universal Service Support Required Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.313*, P-999/PR-21-8, Assist Wireless Carrier Annual Reporting Letter (June 20, 2021). See also *In the Matter of Assist Wireless's Petition for ETC Designation in Minnesota*, P-6978/M-17-213, ORDER GRANTING PETITION FOR ETC DESIGNATION WITH CONDITIONS at 1 (Nov. 15, 2017) (explaining that Assist sought an ETC designation to provide Lifeline-only service to qualified customers).