DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO:COMMISSIONER HANSEN

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WORKING FILE

FROM:DON HOWELL

DATE:NOVEMBER 21, 1997

RE:BLACKFOOT TELEPHONE COOPERATIVES AND GEM STATE UTILITIES’ PETITIONS TO BE DESIGNATED AS ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS, CASE NOS. BTC-T-97-1 AND GEM-T-97-1

On November 21, 1997, Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative and Gem State Utilities Corporation individually filed Petitions requesting that the Commission designate them as eligible telecommunications carriers.

1.  Blackfoot Telephone.  Blackfoot is a telephone cooperative serving approximately 19 business lines and 23 residential lines in Powell, Idaho.  Although located in Idaho, this service area is part of Blackfoot’s Montana study area and is associated with the Montana 648 LATA.  Petition at 1.  Blackfoot certifies that it is a rural telephone company and that it currently offers all (with one exception) the services required for ETC designation.  Although Blackfoot does not currently have any Lifeline customers in Idaho, the Company will provide Lifeline services to all eligible customers.

Like all the other telephone companies serving Idaho, Blackfoot has requested a “toll control” waiver from the requirement that it offer toll limitation services.  Blackfoot maintains that it offers toll blocking and pre-paid calling cards.  The Company declares that the combination of these two services should adequately address the toll limitation concerns contained in the FCC’s Universal Service Order.  The Company requests that the Commission grant it a toll control waiver for five years.  Petition at 2.

2.  Gem State.  Gem State also certifies that it meets the definition “of a rural telephone company” as defined by Idaho and federal statutes.  Gem State maintains that with the exception of toll control services, it provides all of the core services constituting universal service.  Gem State Petition at 3.  Although PTI presently offers its customers toll blocking, it does not have the capability to offer toll control services.  Consequently, the Company requests that the Commission issue it a waiver from offering the toll control service.  The Company respectfully requests that the Commission process its Petition under Modified Procedure.

Staff Analysis

Having reviewed these petitions, the Staff recommends that the Commission process these petitions under Modified Procedure.  Because these companies seek ETC designation effective January 1, 1998, the Staff recommends that the Commission shorten the Modified Procedure comment period to 14 days.  The Staff recommends that these matters be placed on the Commission’s consent agenda.

Commission Action

Does the Commission wish to process these petitions for ETC status via Modified Procedure on a 14 day comment cycle?

Don Howell

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