

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska) Application No. C-5303/PI-240
Public Service Commission, on)
its own motion, to determine) ORDER ISSUING FINDINGS
whether adequate service) AND REQUIRING REPORTS
quality is being provided by)
carriers operating within the)
State of Nebraska.) Entered: April 16, 2024

BY THE COMMISSION:

On August 10, 2021, the Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission") initiated this proceeding on its own motion to investigate whether adequate service quality is being provided by certain carriers operating within the State of Nebraska. This proceeding focused on the service being provided by the price cap carriers ("Price Cap Carriers") providing telecommunications service in the state.¹ Those carriers are as follows: United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink ("UTC"); Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC ("Qwest");² Windstream Nebraska, Inc. ("Windstream"); and Citizens Telecommunications Company of Nebraska d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska ("Frontier").³

E V I D E N C E

1. Information Requests

In the course of this docket, the Commission requested information from the Price Cap Carriers regarding the carriers' repair and replacement timelines, number of technicians on staff, and dispatch procedures. These responses were described in detail by order of the Commission in this docket on November 28, 2023 ("Nov. 28 Order").

Also in the Nov. 28 Order, the Commission found that the concerns described in the order opening this proceeding were not

¹ Commission Docket No. C-5303/PI-240, *In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, to determine whether adequate service quality is being provided by carriers operating within the State of Nebraska*, Order Opening Docket and Seeking Comment (Aug. 10, 2021) ("August 10 Order").

² Testifiers in this proceeding referred to CenturyLink Qwest and CenturyLink UTC colloquially as "CenturyLink." That trade name will therefore be used to collectively describe those two entities for purposes of this order.

³ CenturyLink, Windstream, and Frontier will collectively be referred to as the "Price Cap Carriers."

adequately alleviated by the written responses received by the Price Cap Carriers.⁴ The Commission also noted that it continues to receive consumer complaints regarding service quality.⁵ The Commission therefore requested that the Price Cap Carriers refresh the record regarding the questions posed in the information requests, and answer some additional questions.⁶ Responses to those questions were received from each of the Price Cap Carriers on January 5, 2024.⁷

2. Written Subscriber Testimony

The Commission sought written testimony from subscribers to landline service offered by the Price Cap Carriers twice in this proceeding. Forty commenters offered written testimony.⁸ Of the testimony submitted, two related to Frontier; fifteen related to Windstream; and thirty-three related to CenturyLink.

In testimony, many subscribers testified that they have experienced outages lasting multiple weeks or even months.⁹ Some testifiers described recurring outages.¹⁰ Some testifiers described instances where service technicians would repeatedly miss appointments.¹¹ Other testifiers described difficulty in communicating with customer service representatives located outside the United States.¹² Testifiers also described experiencing outages due to rain or other weather.¹³ Some testifiers described

⁴ Nov. 28 Order at 11.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at 11-13.

⁷ See Exhibit 17 (Comments of Qwest Corporation); Exhibit 18 (Comments of Windstream); and Exhibit 22 (Comments of Frontier).

⁸ See Exhibits 10, 11, and 19 (combined witness testimony submitted as exhibits in both hearings).

⁹ See, e.g., Ex. 11 at 1 (testimony of Bernard Smid); Ex. 19 at 1-2 (testimony of Dean and Patricia Loland); *Id.* at 18-19 (testimony of Tina Cameron); *Id.* at 6 (testimony of Henry Witt).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Ex. 10 at 45-46 (testimony of Mark Charipar); *Id.* at 47-49 (testimony of Cynthia Weddle); Ex. 19 at 3-4 (testimony of Glen Gosnell).

¹¹ See, e.g., Ex. 19 at 38-39 (testimony of Richard Teppert).

¹² See, e.g., Ex. 11 at 38-41 (testimony of Thomas Sandene); Ex. 19 at 12-13 (testimony of Tammie Nuber).

¹³ See, e.g., Ex. 10 at 16-17 (testimony of Edward Heinert); *Id.* at 38 (testimony of Robert Kalin); Ex. 19 at 21-22 (testimony of Lindsey Lerman).

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cables not being buried for long periods of time.¹⁴ Many subscribers appeared to be very upset by their treatment by a Price Cap Carriers.¹⁵

3. January 17, 2024 Hearing

The Commission also conducted two public hearings in this proceeding. The first of these hearings, held on October 26, 2022, was described in detail in the Nov. 28 Order. The second hearing was held on January 17, 2024 in the Commission Hearing Room. The Commission sought testimony from members of the public who have experienced a telephone service outage from one of the Price Cap Carriers. Members of the public were allowed the opportunity to submit written testimony in advance of the hearing.¹⁶ The Price Cap Carriers were also invited to testify.¹⁷

A hearing in this matter was held on January 17, 2024, in the Commission Hearing Room in Lincoln, Nebraska. Sallie Dietrich appeared on behalf of the Telecommunications and NUSF Department of the Commission ("Department"). Mary Vaggalis appeared on behalf of Windstream. Kevin Saville appeared pro hac vice, and Paul Schudel appeared, on behalf of Frontier. Jason Topp appeared pro hac vice, and Katherine McNamara appeared, on behalf of CenturyLink. Exhibits 15 through 22 were entered into evidence at the hearing.¹⁸ The Commission also accepted late-filed exhibits numbered 23 through 25.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Ex. 10 at 22 (testimony of Marvin Pesek).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Ex. 19 at 2 (testimony of Dean and Patricia Loland) ("I have never been told so many lies by a corp in my life!"); Ex. 10 at 10 (testimony of Dennis Birnstihl) ("If we had any other options for another carrier we would certainly change.").

¹⁶ Exhibit 19.

¹⁷ Nov. 28 Order at 13.

¹⁸ Exhibit 19 consisted of written witness testimony received prior to hearing from Dean and Patricia Loland, Omaha; Glen Gosnell, North Platte; Lori and Robert Wall, Seward; Henry Witt, Papillion; Deborah Knowlton on behalf of Paul and Patricia Janecek, Fort Calhoun; Jaclyn and Mickey McLaughlin, Omaha; Tammie Nuber, York; Karen Jensen, Omaha; Linda Reeh, Omaha; Tina Cameron, Omaha; Dorothy Polan, Omaha; Lindsey Lerman, Omaha; James Price, Omaha; Willis and Beverly Caster, Omaha; Laney Ferguson, Orchard; John Schram, Gretna; Cecilia Knepper, McCook; Richard Teppert, Bayard; Connie Jones, Omaha; and Carol Nemec, Omaha. Exhibit 21 was reserved for written witness testimony filed after the hearing deadline; however, no additional witness testimony was received.

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The Commission first sought testimony from members of the public receiving landline service from the Price Cap Carriers; however, no such testimony was presented.¹⁹ The Commission then sought testimony from the Price Cap Carriers. Windstream presented testimony first from Scott Barnett, Operations Director for Windstream.²⁰ Mr. Barnett was asked to describe any work Windstream had done on its network since the October 2022 hearing in this docket.²¹ Mr. Barnett stated that Windstream has invested approximately \$340 million in capital improvements to build fiber and related electronic components.²² Mr. Barnett stated that repairs to the existing network have taken place as well, but did not have a dollar figure to support that.²³ Mr. Barnett stated that Windstream is replacing copper cables with fiber where possible because fiber is faster for both telephone and Internet service.²⁴

Mr. Barnett testified that in order to keep existing infrastructure functioning, Windstream employs copper technicians to check and repair copper cables.²⁵ Mr. Barnett stated that copper cables require more upkeep than fiber due to their size.²⁶ He also stated that fiber is less susceptible to weather incidents than cable.²⁷ He further testified that in order to prevent cable cuts, Windstream contracts with a third-party vendor, USIC, to mark facilities following a locate request.²⁸

Mr. Barnett stated that in the event of a cable cut, Windstream will gather information relevant to the cut.²⁹ He stated that if a group continually causes cuts, Windstream will send cease and desist orders.³⁰ Mr. Barnett was not sure what the timeframe within which Windstream is required to respond to a locate request

¹⁹ See Transcript at 13-14.

²⁰ *Id.* at 15.

²¹ *Id.* at 16.

²² *Id.* at 16-17. Mr. Barnett later testified that this investment was solely from Windstream's capital. *Id.* at 45.

²³ *Id.* at 17.

²⁴ *Id.* at 17-18.

²⁵ *Id.* at 18-19.

²⁶ *Id.* at 19-20.

²⁷ *Id.* at 27.

²⁸ *Id.* at 20.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

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pursuant to the One-Call Notification System Act.³¹ Mr. Barnett testified that during the busy season, Windstream's response to a locate request, through USIC, might take "up to three days."³² Mr. Barnett was not sure what percentage of tickets would be responded to within two business days.³³ Mr. Barnett stated that he believes USIC provides good service.³⁴

Mr. Barnett then testified that in the case of telephone service outages, Windstream attempts to respond within a day and a half.³⁵ Mr. Barnett stated that Windstream does not have any systems in place to automatically alert it of outages at the customer end, nor would it be alerted as to cable cuts.³⁶ He described an outage where a DSLAM goes down, which would result in an outage alert.³⁷ Mr. Barnett stated that customer service technicians or cable technicians, who are Windstream employees, would repair the outage.³⁸ He stated that these employees are all located in Nebraska.³⁹

Mr. Barnett stated that it is difficult to hire service technicians.⁴⁰ He stated that Windstream does have open positions right now for Lincoln and Nebraska City.⁴¹ He stated that technicians are located within a certain area, but will travel when needed, including for major outages.⁴² He noted that the number of technicians has gone down in recent years, stating that this was in part due to efficiencies gained with the use of fiber.⁴³ On

³¹ *Id.* at 21. Nebraska law requires that "[t]he operator shall respond no later than two business days after receipt of the information in the notice or at a time mutually agreed to by the parties." Neb. Rev. Stat. § 76-2323.

³² Transcript at 21-22.

³³ *Id.* at 22.

³⁴ *Id.* at 31.

³⁵ *Id.* at 22.

³⁶ *Id.* at 23.

³⁷ *Id.* at 23-34. "DSLAM" stands for Digital Subscriber Line Access Multiplexer. *DSLAM*, Newton's Telecom Dictionary (32nd ed. 2021).

³⁸ Transcript at 24.

³⁹ *Id.* at 25.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 25-26.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 26.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.* at 31.

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questioning, Mr. Barnett was not aware of an industry standard ratio for number of technicians per number of customers.⁴⁴

Following Mr. Barnett's testimony, Amy Mallgrave, Manager of Region Operations, testified on behalf of CenturyLink. Ms. Mallgrave stated that she manages local operations for CenturyLink, including overseeing service quality issues, and has been in that position since April of 2023.⁴⁵ Ms. Mallgrave stated that CenturyLink has undertaken a "large fiber overbuild" in the state of Nebraska.⁴⁶ Ms. Mallgrave stated that CenturyLink is using Nebraska Universal Service Fund ("NUSF") grant money for some of these builds, and is also upgrading plant to fiber in the Omaha area.⁴⁷

Ms. Mallgrave stated that CenturyLink does not currently have plans to invest in replacing copper with fiber.⁴⁸ Ms. Mallgrave stated that customers on fiber are seeing less trouble with their service.⁴⁹ She also noted that fiber is easier to repair because multiple customers can be served by one fiber line.⁵⁰

Ms. Mallgrave stated that CenturyLink monitors the number of codes showing that a repair ticket has been closed in a certain area, and may send technicians to investigate.⁵¹ She stated that calls to repair a network are often initiated by customers rather than CenturyLink itself.⁵² She further stated that in the event of a service outage, CenturyLink attempts to restore service within thirty-six hours.⁵³

Ms. Mallgrave stated that in the past year, CenturyLink has received an unusual number of locate requests due to a high amount of excavation in Nebraska.⁵⁴ Ms. Mallgrave testified that

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 40-41.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 47.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 48.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 49.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 50.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.* at 51-52.

⁵² *Id.* at 52.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 53-54.

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CenturyLink contracts with USIC to respond to locate requests for Nebraska facilities, and with Stake Center for "national" facilities.⁵⁵ Ms. Mallgrave stated that she was aware of the statutory requirement for locate requests to be completed within two business days.⁵⁶ She acknowledged that CenturyLink's responses state that they attempt to complete eighty percent of locates within two business days, and stated that she is not comfortable with that number.⁵⁷ Ms. Mallgrave stated that USIC has been struggling with maintaining adequate staffing.⁵⁸ She stated that CenturyLink monitors USIC's performance during the busy season.⁵⁹ She was not aware of whether CenturyLink's contract with USIC included any remedial measures for times USIC did not meet the two business day standard.⁶⁰

Ms. Mallgrave testified that CenturyLink does not necessarily have goals for repair timeframes, and that various factors affect the timeframe.⁶¹ She stated that outages are reported through a ticketing system, and that tickets are assigned to technicians.⁶² She stated that technicians usually work in a geographic area, but that she did not have standard travel times for them.⁶³ Ms. Mallgrave stated that the time to restore service in the case of an outage could be from three to six days, but that many outages are resolved in less than twelve hours.⁶⁴ When asked about a specific service outage, Ms. Mallgrave stated that it is "totally unacceptable to have sixty days out of service."⁶⁵ When asked whether CenturyLink has taken steps to lessen the outage time since the October 2022 hearing in this matter, Ms. Mallgrave stated that CenturyLink has improved its reporting and employee retention.⁶⁶

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 54.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ Ex. 17 at 4; Transcript at 55-57.

⁵⁸ Transcript at 56.

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 57.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 58.

⁶¹ *Id.* at 61.

⁶² *Id.* at 61-62.

⁶³ *Id.* at 62.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 62-63.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 73.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 63-64. Ms. Mallgrave later testified that the number of CenturyLink's maintenance staff has been slowly declining over the years due

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Ms. Mallgrave testified that CenturyLink has three call centers in the United States, in Des Moines, Utah, and Boise, and that CenturyLink also has offshore call centers.⁶⁷ She stated that it is unlikely that a Nebraska customer calling about an outage would reach a representative located in Nebraska.⁶⁸

Cassandra Knight, Vice President of Regulatory Reporting, then testified on behalf of Frontier. Ms. Knight stated that she oversees regulatory reporting across Frontier's twenty-five states, and is not specifically focused on Nebraska.⁶⁹ She stated that there are no Frontier employees specifically focused on service quality in Nebraska.⁷⁰

Ms. Knight stated that since October of 2022, Frontier has leveraged its technology to better inform its technicians of plant records in order to increase efficiency in repairs.⁷¹ Ms. Knight stated that in the past year, Frontier spent "over a million in capital" in Nebraska.⁷² Ms. Knight was unable to speak to whether Frontier has engaged in proactive repairs or maintenance.⁷³ Ms. Knight stated that Frontier has not invested in any new fiber networks in Nebraska, and that Frontier's facilities in Nebraska are all copper.⁷⁴

On questioning, Ms. Knight was unable to testify as to whether Frontier has maintenance schedules or routine checks for its cables.⁷⁵ Ms. Knight testified that in the event of a service outage, Frontier attempts to restore service to the customer within forty-eight hours.⁷⁶ She stated that Frontier has eight install and repair technicians in Nebraska, not accounting for the central

to changes in technology and changes in the number of access lines. *Id.* at 72-73.

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 69.

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 81.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 81-82.

⁷¹ *Id.* at 82-83.

⁷² *Id.* at 83.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 83-84.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 84.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 84-85.

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office or plant maintenance technicians.⁷⁷ She stated that staffing for positions is the same as it was in October of 2022, and that Frontier does not currently have any open positions.⁷⁸

Ms. Knight testified that Frontier works with USIC to perform locates, but was unable to speak to how often Frontier meets the required two-day standard.⁷⁹ Ms. Knight stated that there are no Frontier call centers in Nebraska.⁸⁰

Following Ms. Knight's testimony, no other testimony was presented. The hearing was then adjourned. Late-filed exhibits numbered 23 through 25 were entered into the record prior to January 24, 2024. On January 24, the record was closed.

O P I N I O N A N D F I N D I N G S

The Commission is required pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-123(1) to regulate the quality of telecommunications services provided by telecommunications companies. Regulation of service quality includes consideration of the adequacy of service, including the adequacy of the carrier's plant and equipment, the number and nature of service interruptions, trouble reports, and customer complaints.⁸¹ The Commission will also consider the nature of access line service offered and the nature of the access line service desired by the public served.⁸² Additionally, local exchange carriers are required to make all reasonable efforts to prevent interruptions of access line service, and in the event of an interruption, to re-establish access line service with the shortest possible delay consistent with the physical conditions encountered, the available work forces and with normal safety practices.⁸³ If service quality complaints cannot be resolved informally, the Commission may issue an order following a hearing

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 86. Ms. Knight also noted that Frontier has approximately 6,000 access lines in Nebraska. *Id.*

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 87.

⁷⁹ *Id.* at 89.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 90.

⁸¹ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.02A.

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.03A.

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providing such relief as is reasonable based on the evidence presented at hearing.⁸⁴

This docket has been open since August of 2021. At the time the docket was opened, the Commission had received numerous informal consumer complaints relating to the length of time taken to resolve consumer problems and the number of service technicians available to make repairs. The Commission noted that some informal complaints which described instances where it could take weeks or months for a service technician to be dispatched to a subscriber's home.⁸⁵ The Commission also expressed concerns that a carrier's reluctance to repair or replace aging infrastructure may have a significant public safety risk for consumers.⁸⁶

Through the course of this investigation, the Commission has sought to determine what industry standards apply to the service quality issues identified in this docket, and whether the Price Cap Carriers are meeting those standards. Unfortunately, the Commission finds that many of its inquiries have been met with reticence to disclose requested information, as well as a lack of willingness on the part of the carriers to improve their internal metrics.

The information gathered in this investigation shows that customers of the Price Cap Carriers – Frontier, Windstream, and CenturyLink – are experiencing significant difficulty in obtaining adequate telephone service.⁸⁷ These difficulties should not be occurring. In Nebraska, the Price Cap Carriers receive substantial amounts of support every year from the Nebraska Telecommunications Universal Service Fund ("NUSF").⁸⁸ This support is allocated on an ongoing basis in part for the purpose of ensuring the carriers have adequate plant and equipment, as required by Commission statutes and regulations.⁸⁹ Additionally, local exchange carriers

⁸⁴ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-123(1).

⁸⁵ See Aug. 10 Order at 1.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ See Exhibits 10, 11, and 19 (combined witness testimony submitted in both hearings).

⁸⁸ In 2023, \$2.15 million was paid to Price Cap carriers in ongoing support. In 2022, \$2.6 million was paid to Price Cap carriers in ongoing support.

⁸⁹ "A telecommunications company that receives [NUSF] support shall use that support only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended." Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-324(1); see also 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 10-004.02F.

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are required to employ appropriate engineering and administrative procedures to determine the adequacy of access line service being provided to its customers.⁹⁰ Carriers must also continually review their operations to assure that the access line service provided is adequate.⁹¹ Reviewing the evidence adduced throughout the pendency of this docket, is especially troubling that some Price Cap Carriers do not appear to have taken steps since the investigation was opened to proactively improve their service.⁹²

In reviewing the number and nature of customer complaints regarding voice service from the Price Cap Carriers, as well as data provided by the Price Cap Carriers, the Commission finds that the Price Cap Carriers do not appear to be meeting the standards set forth in Commission regulations for adequacy of access line service. Specifically, it appears that the service desired by customers of the carriers is one which does not experience frequent outages, or outages of significant duration. Customers have also expressed that they seek a service for which they can easily access a locally-based customer service representative, and for which repair appointments occur promptly and without missed appointments or rescheduling.

The Commission is also concerned with the nature of the outages experienced by customers of the Price Cap Carriers. Data submitted by the Price Cap Carriers indicates that while fiber cuts continue to occur, they constitute a small percentage of the total number of outages on the carriers' networks.⁹³ The remainder of the outages, then, appear to result from the carriers' maintenance and repair practices on their own facilities. The Commission finds that these practices appear to be lacking and resulting in inadequate service to the Price Cap Carriers' customers.

⁹⁰ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.02D.

⁹¹ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.02H.

⁹² See, e.g., Transcript at 48-49 (CenturyLink testifying that most repairs in the previous year and a half have been reactive); *Id.* at 83 (Frontier witness unable to speak to repairs or maintenance on the network).

⁹³ See Exhibit 23 (Windstream reporting that in 2022, 42 out of 513 network outages were caused by cable cuts and in 2023, 50 out of 799 outages caused by cable cuts); Exhibit 25 (Frontier reporting 6 out of 71 outages caused by cable cuts in 2022, and 6 out of 57 outages caused by cable cuts in 2023). CenturyLink requested confidential treatment of its late-filed Exhibit 24, but the data submitted also reflects a small overall percentage of outages in 2022 and 2023 were caused by cable cuts.

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In order to improve its monitoring of the Price Cap Carriers' use of ongoing NUSF support, the Commission has increased its reporting requirements. The Price Cap Carriers are now required to describe at the exchange level how ongoing support will be used, and funding is only released to the carriers after the Commission has reviewed and approved the proposed uses.⁹⁴ However, the Commission finds that this required reporting does not specifically address the ongoing issues with regard to outages. Commission rules address outages through trouble report requirements.⁹⁵ Carriers are required to meet the following standard set forth in Commission regulations:

It shall be the objective to so maintain access line service that the average rate of all access line trouble reports in an exchange is no greater than six (6) per one hundred (100) access lines per month, based on a six (6) month period. In the event this average trouble rate reaches eight (8) per month, in a particular exchange, it shall be the responsibility of the exchange carrier serving that exchange to develop a plan to improve service in the exchange with the objective being to reduce trouble reports to acceptable levels.⁹⁶

The Commission finds, based upon the evidence adduced in this investigation, that it is likely that the Price Cap Carriers have failed to meet the standard of six trouble reports per one hundred access lines per month, per exchange. The Commission therefore finds that each of the Price Cap Carriers should submit to the Commission by **Friday, May 31, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time** the following information:

⁹⁴ Proper uses of ongoing support include, but are not limited to, the hiring and retention of service technicians, upgrading transmission or switching equipment for use in the price cap carriers' network, the replacement outdated equipment or emergency backup functionalities, or a reasonable share of administrative and overhead costs for customer support personnel located in Nebraska. *In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its Own Motion, to Administer the Universal Service Fund High-Cost Program*, Commission Docket No. NUSF-99, Progression Order No. 2, Order Authorizing Payments and Setting Project Selection Deadline (Jan. 23, 2024).

⁹⁵ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.04.

⁹⁶ 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.04C.

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Exchange	Number of Lines in Exchange	Number of Trouble Reports in Exchange		Trouble Reports per 100 Lines	
		November 2023		November 2023	
		December 2023		December 2023	
		January 2024		January 2024	
		February 2024		February 2024	
		March 2024		March 2024	
		April 2024		April 2024	

This information must be submitted in Excel format, and should be provided via email to psc.telecom@nebraska.gov. The Price Cap Carriers are strongly encouraged to consult with Commission staff in the event of any questions or issues in compiling this data.

The Price Cap Carriers are further ordered, in accordance with 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.04C, to identify any exchange which averages eight or more trouble reports per one hundred lines in any month listed in the above-described report. Should a Price Cap Carrier identify any such exchange, the Price Cap Carrier must develop a plan to improve service in the exchange sufficient to ensure the exchange does not exceed six trouble reports per one hundred lines each month. Each Price Cap Carrier is hereby ordered to submit to the Commission by **Friday, May 31, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time** a listing of all exchanges requiring a corrective action plan pursuant to 291 Neb. Admin. Code § 5-002.04C. Corrective action plans will be due to the Commission by **Friday, June 28, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time**.

Additionally, the Commission finds that a significant portion of customer complaints originate from reported trouble obtaining adequate assistance from customer service representatives. Many other complaints relate to missed appointments by service technicians. The Commission therefore finds that each of the Price Cap Carriers must establish and implement a plan to improve customer service responsiveness and ensure service appointments are kept. The plan must ensure customers are able to call and reach

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a customer service representative familiar with Nebraska's network and customers. This customer service line must be available to customers who are experiencing an outage lasting seventy-two hours or more, and to customers who have had a scheduled appointment rescheduled or missed by the company. The carriers' plan must also address any patterns of missed service technician appointments and implement steps to resolve these issues.

The Commission finds that the Price Cap Carriers shall submit to the Commission a report on the establishment of improved customer service by **Friday, June 28, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time**. The submitted report shall contain customer service phone number(s) established, the geographic location of the customer service representatives who will answer calls made to this number, a description of what steps will be available for these customer service representatives to escalate and/or remedy customer complaints made to this number, and any changes to the carrier's service technician scheduling practices. This report should be made by email to psc.telecom@nebraska.gov. If a Price Cap Carrier believes its existing customer service lines meet the requirements of this Order, it shall provide the above-described information to the Commission without delay.

The Commission thanks the Price Cap Carriers for their effort to date in improving the quality of telephone service available to Nebraskans. Again, we encourage the Price Cap Carriers to consult with Commission staff to resolve any questions prior to the above-listed deadlines. The Commission will evaluate the data received and may request additional reporting or other corrective actions as appropriate.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink; Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC; Windstream Nebraska, Inc.; and Citizens Telecommunications Company of Nebraska d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska shall each submit to the Commission by **Friday, May 31, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time** a report, as described above, detailing trouble reports received, by exchange, for the six-month period between November 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink; Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC;

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Windstream Nebraska, Inc.; and Citizens Telecommunications Company of Nebraska d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska are each hereby required submit to the Commission by **Friday, May 31, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time** a list of all exchanges within their service territories which have met or exceeded eight trouble reports per one hundred lines for any single month between November 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024, and shall submit a corrective action plan to the Commission for each such exchange by **Friday, June 28, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink; Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC; Windstream Nebraska, Inc.; and Citizens Telecommunications Company of Nebraska d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska shall each submit to the Commission by **Friday, June 28, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Central Time** a report, as described above, on the establishment of this customer service phone number.

IT IS FINALLY ORDERED that each of the above-listed reports must be submitted to the Commission by email service to psc.telecom@nebraska.gov at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on each of the due dates listed above.

ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 16th day of April, 2024.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Eric M. Hamler

Tim Schram

Karen Stocker

David W. Hensley

Chair

ATTEST:

Thomas W. Golden

Executive Director

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. NUSF-131, PO #3

Attachment A

Proposed Procedural Schedule Second 2024 Reverse Auction

Event	2024 #2 Date
Comments due	Friday, May 3, 2024
Hearing	Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 1:30 p.m. Central Time
Pre-Auction Application Forms due	Friday, May 31, 2024
Order issuing auction & list of qualified bidders entered	Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Eligible bidding areas released	Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Bidding begins	Monday, July 8, 2024
List of successful bidders released Quiet Period ends	<i>Approximately two weeks following close of Auction</i>
Post-Auction Application Forms due	<i>Date will be announced in a future Commission Order</i>
Final award of bids released	<i>Following review of Post-Auction Commitment Forms</i>