

DT 02-078

UNITED SYSTEMS ACCESS TELECOM, INC.

**Petition for Authority to Provide
Local Telecommunications Services**

Order Nisi Granting Authorization

O R D E R N O. 23,991

June 7, 2002

On April 24, 2002, United Systems Access Telecom, Inc. (USA Telecom) filed with the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) a petition for authority to provide switched and non-switched local exchange telecommunications services, pursuant to the policy goals set by the New Hampshire Legislature in RSA 374:22-g, effective July 23, 1995. Granting such authority in New Hampshire is governed by N.H. Code of Admin. Rules Puc 1300.

USA Telecom is certified to provide intraLATA toll service in New Hampshire under IXC No. 12-001-01 issued January 3, 2002. USA Telecom also has negotiated an Interconnection Agreement with Verizon NH which the Commission approved in Docket No. DT 01-230 by Order No. 23,905 dated January 25, 2002.

Pursuant to N.H. Code of Admin. Rules Puc 1300, an applicant's petition for certification as a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) shall be granted when the Commission

finds that (1) all information listed in Puc 1304.02 has been provided to the Commission; (2) the applicant meets standards for financial resources, managerial qualifications, and technical competence; and, (3) certification for the particular geographic area requested is in the public good.

The Commission Staff (Staff) has reviewed USA Telecom's petition for compliance with these standards. Staff reports that the company has provided all the information required by Puc 1304.02 and that this information supports USA Telecom's assertion of financial resources, managerial qualifications, and technical competence sufficient to meet the standards set out in Puc 1304.01(b), (e), (f), and (g). Staff further reports that adding USA Telecom to the choices available to New Hampshire telecommunications consumers appears to be in the public interest.

USA Telecom requests a waiver of the surety bond requirement in Puc 1304.02(b). In support, USA Telecom submitted a sworn statement that it does not require advance payments or deposits of their customers. Staff recommends granting the waiver.

USA Telecom has requested a waiver of Puc 1304.02(a)(6) which requires the filing of U.S.G.S. based map of the areas in which service will be offered. USA Telecom

avers that it will offer service only in those territories served by Verizon New Hampshire. Maps of that territory are already on file with the Commission. Staff recommends granting the waiver.

We find that USA Telecom has satisfied the requirements of Puc 1304.01(a)(1) and (2) and, further, that authorization is in the public good, thus meeting the requirement of Puc 1304.01(a)(3). In making this finding, as directed by RSA 374:22-g, we have considered the interests of competition, fairness, economic efficiency, universal service, carrier of last resort, the incumbent's opportunity to realize a reasonable return on its investment, and recovery by the incumbent of expenses incurred. This finding is further supported by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TAct). Because USA Telecom has satisfied the requirements of Puc 1304.01(a), we will grant the petition.

Given that USA Telecom will not charge any customer deposits, we find reasonable USA Telecom's request for a waiver of the requirement it post a surety bond to cover refunds of deposit. We find reasonable also USA Telecom's request for a waiver of the requirement that it file maps delineating the territory in which it intends to provide service.

As part of its petition, USA Telecom avers it will charge access rates no higher than Verizon New Hampshire's present and future rates for intraLATA switched access. At any point USA Telecom seeks to exceed Verizon New Hampshire's access rates it will first seek Commission review. The Commission will monitor access rates as the intraLATA toll and local exchange markets develop, in order to avoid any inhibition of intraLATA toll competition in contravention of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Pursuant to Puc 1304.02(a)(7), applicants for CLEC certification agree to adhere to all state laws and Commission policies, rules and orders. We take this opportunity to draw attention to two rules in particular. Puc 1306.01(8) and Puc 1306.01(10), respectively, describe Enhanced 911 (E911) and Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) as part of the minimum basic service that every CLEC must provide. Pursuant to Puc 1306.01(c), authorized CLECs are responsible to collect and properly remit the E911 surcharge, currently set at 42 cents per access line. Pursuant to Puc 1306.01(b), authorized CLECs are also responsible to collect and remit TRS charges, currently set at 8 cents per access line.

We note that as new competitors enter the market and request numbering resources, increased pressure is put on the

603 area code so long as today's number assignment process remains in effect. As evidenced by our recent orders, we have serious concern for the maintenance and viability of the 603 area code and the North American Numbering Plan as a whole. Accordingly, we will require that USA Telecom request and use numbers responsibly and conservatively, and to join in exploring alternative mechanisms to use existing numbers as efficiently as possible. For prefatory guidance, we refer USA Telecom to our Order No. 23,385 issued January 7, 2000, and Order No. 23,392 issued January 27, 2000.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that subject to the effective date below, USA Telecom's petition for authority to provide switched and non-switched intrastate local exchange telecommunications services in the service territory of Verizon New Hampshire, is GRANTED, subject to all relevant Commission rules and orders; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that USA Telecom's request for a waiver of the map filing requirement in Puc 1304.02(a)(6) is GRANTED: and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that USA Telecom's request for waiver of the surety bond requirement per Puc 1304.02(b) is hereby GRANTED subject to USA Telecom's agreement not to

collect any deposit, prepayment or advance payment prior to the provision of service; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that no less than ten days prior to commencing service, the Petitioner shall file with the Commission a rate schedule including the name description and price of each service, in accordance with N.H. Admin. Rules, Puc 1304.03(b); and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that USA Telecom shall cause a copy of this Order Nisi to be published once in a statewide newspaper of general circulation, such publication to be no later than June 17, 2002 and to be documented by affidavit filed with this office on or before June 28, 2002; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this Order Nisi shall submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing on this matter before the Commission no later than June 24, 2002; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this Order Nisi shall be effective July 5, 2002, unless the Petitioner fails to satisfy the publication obligation set forth above or the Commission provides otherwise in a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that, should the petitioner fail to exercise the authority granted herein within two years of the date of this order, the authority granted shall be deemed withdrawn, null, and void.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New
Hampshire this seventh day of June, 2002.

Thomas B. Getz
Chairman

Susan S. Geiger
Commissioner

Nancy Brockway
Commissioner

Attested by:

Debra A. Howland
Executive Director and Secretary