

BEFORE THE IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF CABLE ONE VOIP) CASE NO. CAB-T-24-01
LLC d/b/a SPARKLIGHT'S APPLICATION)
TO RELINQUISH DESIGNATION AS AN) ORDER NO. 36592
ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS)
CARRIER)
)

On December 16, 2024, Cable One VoIP LLC d/b/a/ Sparklight (“Company”) applied to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) to relinquish its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (“ETC”) designation in Idaho. According to the Company, it seeks to relinquish its ETC designation because it has withdrawn from the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC”) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (“RDOF”) program for the State of Idaho.

On March 12, 2025, the Commission issued a Notice of Application and Notice of Modified Procedure, establishing public comment and company reply deadlines. Commission Staff (“Staff”) filed the only comments. With this Order, we grant the Company’s Application to relinquish its designation as an ETC.

BACKGROUND

The RDOF is the largest program using Universal Service Fund (“USF”) money to support broadband expansion. It will provide \$20.4 billion over ten years to help build broadband networks in rural areas. The program has two phases: Phase 1 offers up to \$16.4 billion, and Phase 2 offers at least \$4.4 billion. Funding goes to areas that do not already have, or are not scheduled to get, broadband speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. The money comes from the USF and does not require approval from Congress.

The FCC gives out RDOF funds through a reverse auction. In this process, providers bid for funding to serve certain rural areas, offering to do the work for the lowest amount. Before bidding, providers must make sure the project makes financial sense regardless of RDOF support. If it does, the provider can submit a short form application to join Phase 1 of the auction. If the provider wins, they must then submit a more detailed long form application. Once approved and they accept the funds, they commit to providing broadband and phone service to all the locations listed in their bid. They also need to get ETC status to receive the funding.

APPLICATION

The Company is a Delaware-based LLC with its main office at 210 E. Earl Drive, Phoenix, Arizona 85012. It is fully owned by Cable One, Inc., a publicly traded corporation also based in Delaware. Cable One and its subsidiaries offer cable, internet, broadband, and phone services in Idaho. The Company is allowed to operate in Idaho as a foreign LLC.

The Company represented that its parent, Cable One, was part of a group that won bids in RDOF Auction 904 to provide phone and internet service in various states, including Idaho. In Case No. CAB-T-21-01, the Commission designated the Company an ETC for 57 census block groups it won in the auction and other areas where it asked to provide federal Lifeline services.

The Company stated that on October 17, 2024, it informed the FCC it was withdrawing from the RDOF program in Idaho. This decision was due to Cable One's major investments expanding and upgrading broadband service, and because the RDOF project in Idaho was no longer feasible due to unexpected cost increases since the auction ended. The FCC acknowledged the withdrawal and issued a public notice on November 27, 2024.

The Company confirmed that it qualifies for full ETC relinquishment under federal and Idaho law. It explained: (i) there are several other ETC providers in the areas it wants to leave, including wireless and local carriers; (ii) the Company has no customers in Idaho, so no one will be affected and no customer notice is needed; and (iii) since it is not currently serving anyone in Idaho, no services will be discontinued.

STAFF COMMENTS

Staff reviewed the Company's request and found that it met all the legal and regulatory requirements under the Federal Telecommunications Act, FCC rules, and RDOF guidelines. Staff concluded that the Company qualifies to fully relinquish its ETC status in Idaho.

According to *Idaho Code* § 62-610D(4), the Commission must allow a company to give up its ETC status in areas served by more than one ETC, as long as customers will still have access to service. The Company represented that this condition is met because many other ETC providers serve the area, and it has no customers in Idaho who need continued service. The Company asked the Commission to issue an order confirming it has officially and fully given up its ETC status in the state.

COMMISSION FINDINGS AND DECISION

The Commission has authority to grant ETC designation to a telecommunications carrier under federal and state law. 47 U.S.C. § 214(e); *Idaho Code* §§ 62-610D, 62-615(1). The Commission may also “permit an . . . [ETC] . . . to relinquish its designation as such a carrier in any area served by more than one (1) . . . [ETC,] . . .” provided such carrier provides appropriate notice to the Commission. *Idaho Code* § 62-610D(4). Before the Commission permits an ETC to cease providing universal service, the Commission requires a showing that all customers served by the relinquishing carrier will continue to be served.

The Commission has reviewed the record in this case, including the Application and all comments. The Commission finds that the original purpose for the Company obtaining ETC status has been negated and relinquishment of the ETC is appropriate. The Commission finds that, because the Company serves no customers in the designated areas, and those areas are already served by other ETCs, the Company has no remaining obligations. The Commission also finds that the Company properly notified the Commission of its intent to relinquish its ETC designation.

ORDER


IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Company’s request to relinquish its designation as an ETC in Idaho is granted.

THIS IS A FINAL ORDER. Any person interested in this Order may petition for reconsideration within twenty-one (21) days of the service date of this Order about any matter decided in this Order. Within seven (7) days after any person has petitioned for reconsideration, any other person may cross-petition for reconsideration. *Idaho Code* §§ 61-626 and 62-619.

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DONE by order of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission at Boise, Idaho this 6th day of May 2025.


EDWARD LODGE, PRESIDENT


JOHN R. HAMMOND, JR., COMMISSIONER


DAYN HARDIE, COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:


Monica Barrios-Sanchez
Commission Secretary

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