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MAR 09 2005

COMPLAINT OF INDIANA BELL TELEPHONE
COMPANY, INCORPORATED D/B/A SBC
INDIANA FOR EXPEDITED REVIEW OF A
DISPUTE WITH CERTAIN CLECS REGARDING
ADOPTION OF AN AMENDMENT TO
COMMISSION APPROVED
INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS

INDIANA UTILITY
REGULATORY COMMISSION
CAUSE NO. 42749

You are hereby notified that on this date the Presiding Officers in this Cause make the following Entry:

1. **Background.** On February 25, 2005, the following competitive local exchange carriers ("CLECs") and Respondents in this proceeding: Acme Communications, Inc., eGIX Network Services, Inc., Cinergy Communications Company, Midwest Telecom of America, Inc., MCImetro Access Transmission Services LLC, MCI WorldCom Communications, Inc., Intermedia Communications, Inc., Trinsic Communications, Inc., and Talk America Inc. (collectively "Joint CLECs") filed a *Joint Motion for Emergency Order Preserving Status Quo for UNE-P Orders* ("Motion") with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission ("Commission"). The Motion asserts that the Complainant in this Cause, Indiana Bell Telephone Company, Incorporated d/b/a/ SBC Indiana ("SBC Indiana"), which is an incumbent local exchange carrier ("ILEC"), has stated that it intends to take action on or before March 11, 2005, to reject Joint CLECs' unbundled network element platform¹ ("UNE-P") orders. Such action, according to the Joint CLECs, will cause them irreparable harm and will breach SBC Indiana's currently effective, Commission-approved interconnection agreements with the Joint CLECs. The Joint CLECs request that the Commission, on or before March 7, 2005, issue a directive requiring SBC Indiana to (1) continue accepting and processing the Joint CLECs' UNE-P orders, including moves, adds, and changes to the Joint CLECs' existing embedded customer base, under the rates, terms and conditions of their respective interconnection agreements and (2) comply with the change of law provisions of the interconnection agreements in implementing the Federal Communication Commission's ("FCC's") *Triennial Review Remand Order* ("TRRO").²

¹ The unbundled network element platform consists of a complete set of unbundled network elements (local circuit switching, loops and shared transport) that a CLEC can obtain from an ILEC in order to provide an end-to-end circuit.

² Order on Remand, *In re Unbundled Access to Network Elements*, WC Docket No. 04-313, CC Docket No.01-338, 2005 WL 289015 (FCC Feb. 4, 2005).

Based on Joint CLEC's allegation that an emergency situation exists, a Docket Entry was issued on March 1, 2005, that modified the times, as found in 170 IAC 1-1.1-12, for SBC Indiana to file a Response to the Motion and for Joint CLECs to file a Reply to a Response. A Response and a Reply were timely filed on March 2 and March 4, 2005, respectively.

The Motion is in response to a statement in recent SBC Indiana Accessible Letters to Joint CLECs that, beginning March 11, 2005, SBC Indiana will no longer accept UNE-P orders. According to SBC Indiana, its plan to no longer accept UNE-P orders beginning March 11, 2005, is in compliance with that part of the FCC's February 4, 2005 TRRO which states that, as of the effective date of the TRRO (March 11, 2005), CLECs are not permitted to add new UNE-P arrangements using unbundled access to local circuit switching. Joint CLECs argue that such action by SBC Indiana would be a unilateral action in violation of SBC Indiana's interconnection agreements with the Joint CLECs.

2. Joint CLECs' Position. Joint CLECs point to the provision in each interconnection agreement that requires SBC Indiana to provide UNE-P to the CLEC at specified rates. Joint CLECs further state that any modification to an interconnection agreement made necessary by a change in law requires adherence to each agreement's specified change of law process which typically includes notice, negotiation and, if necessary, dispute resolution. Therefore, according to the Joint CLECs, SBC Indiana is required to continue to provide UNE-P to the Joint CLECs until such time as each agreement's change of law process has been fulfilled with respect to the change of law directive in the TRRO.

Joint CLECs contend that adherence to change of law processes will be substantive undertakings with respect to the TRRO's ruling that ILECs are no longer required to provide unbundled switching, because SBC Indiana is under obligations independent of Sections 251/252 of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996³ ("Act") to provide UNE-P to the Joint CLECs. Joint CLECs posit that, notwithstanding the TRRO's finding that ILECs are no longer required to make UNE-P available to CLECs, State statute and prior Commission Orders, Section 271 of the Act, and the *SBC/Ameritech Merger Order*⁴ require SBC Indiana to continue to make UNE-P available to the Joint CLECs. The Joint CLECs also argue that the TRRO itself requires carriers to implement the findings in the TRRO by implementing appropriate changes to their interconnection agreements.

Joint CLECs point not only to the terms of their interconnection agreements and language in the TRRO as requiring adherence to the requisite change of law provisions, but also to our January 21, 2005 Docket Entry in this Cause that, in denying certain Motions to Dismiss filed by certain CLEC Respondents, stated we would require factual

³ The 1996 Act amended the Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. § 151 *et seq.*

⁴ *Applications of Ameritech Corp. and SBC Communications Inc. For Consent to Transfer Control*, 14 FCC Rcd 14712 (1999).

evidence relevant to each interconnection agreement's change of law provisions in order to determine if Commission intervention was an appropriate remedy. Joint CLECs conclude that it is appropriate for the Commission to preserve the status quo as to all of the issues raised in the applicable Accessible Letters by requiring SBC Indiana to engage in the relevant change of law processes that are mandated by the parties' interconnection agreements, by the FCC in the TRRO, and in our January 21, 2005 Docket Entry in this Cause.

3. **SBC Indiana's Position.** SBC Indiana contends that the language of the TRRO is unambiguous and even repetitive in its express forbiddance of new UNE-P orders as of March 11, 2005. SBC Indiana claims, therefore, that the provisions of the Accessible Letters that are the subject of Joint CLECs' Motion are merely SBC Indiana's plan to implement, and are in full compliance with, the TRRO. SBC Indiana further argues that implementation of the FCC's clear prohibition against new UNE-P as of March 11, 2005, does not require negotiations between carriers that have entered into interconnection agreements.

SBC Indiana also contends that the Commission lacks jurisdiction to stay an action of the FCC; that only the FCC itself or a federal court of appeals has such jurisdiction. As a result, according to SBC Indiana, any dispute with the FCC's bar on continued access to UNE-P as of March 11, 2005, must come as a challenge to the FCC order itself and not SBC Indiana's planned implementation of it.

4. **The TRRO.** In a further attempt to adopt rules implementing the Act's requirement that the FCC determine those unbundled network elements to which CLECs "at a minimum" need access in order to compete, the FCC issued its Triennial Review Order⁵ ("TRO") on August 21, 2003. Among other things, the TRO found that CLECs were competitively impaired without unbundled access to ILECs' circuit switching for the mass market. The FCC determined that this impairment was primarily due to delays and other problems associated with ILECs' hot cut⁶ processes. Accordingly, all state commissions, including this Commission, were directed to either determine that there was no such impairment in a particular market or develop a "batch" hot cut process that would efficiently provision multiple CLEC orders for circuit switching. As a result, this Commission initiated three Causes to address the directives of the TRO, including one proceeding devoted to developing a batch hot cut process.

Major parts of the TRO were almost immediately challenged in the Federal District Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, which eventually vacated major portions of the TRO. In the end, appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the D.C. Circuit were unsuccessful. Among other findings, the D.C. Circuit vacated the rules that allowed states to conduct impairment analyses and the FCC's national finding of impairment for

⁵ *Report and Order and Order on Remand and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Review of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers*, 18 FCC Rcd 16978 (2003).

⁶ The physical process by which a customer is removed from the switch of one carrier and added to the switch of another carrier is referred to as a "hot cut."

mass market switching. The Court remanded those vacated parts of the TRO back to the FCC to make findings consistent with the Court's determinations. The result of that remand is the FCC's TRRO.

5. **The TRRO's Reasoning for Eliminating UNE-P.** In ruling to eliminate UNE-P, the FCC determined, based on the record developed during the TRO remand proceeding, that CLECs:

. . . . not only have deployed a significant, growing number of their own switches, often using new, more efficient technologies such as packet switches, but also that they are able to use those switches to serve the mass market in many areas, and that similar deployment is possible in other geographic markets. Additionally, we find that the BOCs have made significant improvements in their hot cut processes that should better situate them to perform larger volumes of hot cuts ("batch hot cuts") to the extent necessary. We find that these factors substantially mitigate the *Triennial Review Order's* stated concerns about circuit switching impairment. Moreover, regardless of any limited potential impairment requesting carriers may still face, we find that the continued availability of unbundled mass market switching would impose significant costs in the form of decreased investment incentives, and therefore we conclude not to unbundled pursuant to section 251(d)(2)'s "at a minimum" authority.⁷

The FCC elaborated on its concern that unbundling of mass market circuit switching has created a disincentive for CLECs to invest in facilities-based competition, by stating:

Five years ago, the Commission [FCC] expressed a preference for facilities-based competition. This preference has been validated by the D.C. Circuit as the correct reading of the statute. Since its inception, UNE-P was designed as a tool to enable a transition to facilities-based competition. It is now clear, as discussed below, that, in many areas, UNE-P has been a disincentive to competitive LECs' infrastructure investment. Accordingly, consistent with the D.C. Circuit's directive, we bar unbundling to the extent there is any impairment where – as here – unbundling would seriously undermine infrastructure investment and hinder the development of genuine, facilities-based competition. . . . The record demonstrates the validity of concerns that unbundled mass market switching discourages competitive LEC investment in, and reliance on, competitive switches. . . . Competitive LECs have not rebutted the evidence of commenters showing that competitive LECs in many markets have recognized that facilities-based carriers could not compete with TELRIC-based UNE-P, and therefore have made UNE-P their long-term business strategy. Indeed, some proponents of UNE-P effectively concede that it discourages infrastructure investment, at least in some cases. Some

⁷ TRRO, ¶ 199.

competitive LECs have openly admitted that they have no interest in deploying facilities. Particularly in residential markets, facilities-based competitive LECs have been unable to compete against other competitors using incumbent LECs' facilities at TELRIC-based rates, and are thus discouraged from innovating and investing in new facilities.⁸

6. Discussion and Findings. As noted above, the Joint CLECs have argued not only that the TRRO's change of law with respect to unbundling mass market circuit switching must be effectuated through the change of law provisions found in the parties' interconnection agreements, but also that Indiana statute and prior Commission Orders, Section 271 of the Act, and the *SBC/Ameritech Merger Order* independently require unbundling. In its Response to the Motion, SBC Indiana devotes a lengthy discussion to its refutation of each of these independent authority arguments. However, the Joint CLECs make clear in their Reply that they are not asking the Commission to resolve the issue of the applicability of these independent authorities. Instead, the Joint CLECs state that they raise these other authorities to demonstrate the sort of issues that must first be negotiated between SBC Indiana and the Joint CLECs and, if necessary, brought to dispute resolution.

The main issue we face in ruling on the Motion is whether the requirement of the FCC's TRRO prohibiting new UNE-P orders as of March 11, 2005, must be effectuated through the provisions of the parties' interconnection agreements regarding change of law, negotiation and dispute resolution, resulting in the possible and likely availability of new UNE-P orders after March 10, 2005, or if the FCC's intent is an unqualified elimination of new UNE-P orders as of March 11, 2005.

The FCC is clear in its decision to eliminate UNE-P: "Applying the court's guidance to the record before us, we impose no section 251 unbundling requirement for mass market local circuit switching nationwide."⁹ This determination in the TRRO is then incorporated in the accompanying FCC rules: "An incumbent LEC is not required to provide access to local circuit switching on an unbundled basis to requesting telecommunications carriers for the purpose of serving end-user customers using DS0 capacity loops."¹⁰

The one qualification that the FCC makes with respect to this clear directive is to allow a one year transition period for existing UNE-P customers.

Finally, we adopt a transition plan that requires competitive LECs to submit orders to convert their UNE-P customers to alternative arrangements within twelve months of the effective date of this order. This transition period shall apply only to the embedded customer base, and

⁸ *Id.* at ¶¶ 218, 220.

⁹ *Id.* at ¶ 199.

¹⁰ 47 C.F.R. § 51.319(d)(2)(i).

does not permit competitive LECs to add new customers using unbundled access to local circuit switching. During the twelve-month transition period, which does not supersede any alternative arrangements that carriers voluntarily have negotiated on a commercial basis, competitive LECs will continue to have access to UNE-P priced at TELRIC plus one dollar until the incumbent LEC successfully migrates those UNE-P customers to the competitive LECs' switches or to alternative access arrangements negotiated by the carriers.¹¹

Joint CLECs do not address the ramifications of the relief sought in their Motion vis-à-vis the stated transition directives of the TRRO. One reading of the TRRO is that the embedded base is a snapshot of those customers being served by UNE-P, and those customers for whom a request to be served by UNE-P has been made, as of March 10, 2005. If CLECs can continue adding new UNE-P customers after March 10, 2005, pending modification of their interconnection agreements pursuant to change of law provisions, how is the composition of the embedded base to be determined? We assume Joint CLECs would contend that new UNE-P customers added after March 10, 2005, would be added to the embedded base. If so, are these post-March 10th customers also subject to transitioning off of UNE-P by March 11, 2006? The Joint CLECs, however, might consider these questions premature in light of their primary assertion, as stated in the Motion: "Unless and until the Agreements are amended pursuant to the change of law process specified in the Agreements, SBC Indiana must continue to accept and provision the Joint CLECs' UNE-P orders at the specified rates."¹²

We do not find Joint CLECs' position to be the more reasonable interpretation of the TRRO. First, as stated earlier, the FCC is clear in its intent to eliminate UNE-P. It is also clear that the FCC intends to eliminate UNE-P from its existing requirement to be unbundled pursuant to section 251 of the Act. For some purposes, pursuant to sections 251/252 of the Act, interconnection agreements exist so parties can implement the unbundling requirements of the Act. If mass market circuit switching is no longer an element required to be unbundled pursuant to sections 251/252 of the Act, it can therefore no longer be required to be unbundled within the context of an interconnection agreement for the stated purposes of sections 251/252.

We also find the FCC's language of the TRRO and accompanying rules unambiguous as to the intent that access to UNE-P for new customers not be required after March 10, 2005. In its clear directive to eliminate future UNE-P, and eventually UNE-P that serves the embedded customer base, the FCC wants to ensure that existing UNE-P customers are not abruptly removed from the network. Therefore, the FCC creates a one-year transition period, the purpose of which is to allow CLECs to make alternative arrangements for these customers. We read the TRRO to say that as of March 11, 2005, ILECs are not required, pursuant to section 251 of the Act, to accept new UNE-P orders for new customers. In addition, as of March 11, 2006, all UNE-P customers in

¹¹ TRRO, ¶ 199.

¹² Motion, p. 10.

existence and all customer orders pending for such service as of March 10, 2005, must be transitioned off of UNE-P. Of course, ILECs and CLECs are free to negotiate the continued provisioning of UNE-P-like service.

As noted above, the TRRO creates the transition period by stating: "Finally, we adopt a transition plan that requires competitive LECs to submit orders to convert their UNE-P customers to alternative arrangements within twelve months of the effective date of this order."¹³ The effective date of the TRRO is March 11, 2005. The FCC then goes on to state: "This transition period shall apply only to the embedded customer base, and does not permit competitive LECs to add new customers using unbundled access to local circuit switching."¹⁴ We interpret the TRRO to say that the establishment of a one-year transition period is solely for the purpose of allowing an orderly movement of a CLEC's embedded customer base off of UNE-P, and even though UNE-P can continue to exist during this one-year transition period with respect to an embedded customer base, CLECs are not permitted to add new UNE-P customers during the transition period. We find the more reasonable interpretation of the language of the TRRO is the intent to not allow the addition of new UNE-P customers after March 10, 2005.

Clearly, too, the TRRO requires ILECs and CLECs to negotiate their interconnection agreements consistent with the findings in the TRRO:

We expect that incumbent LECs and competing carriers will implement the Commission's findings as directed by section 252 of the Act. Thus, carriers must implement changes to their interconnection agreements consistent with our conclusions in this Order. We note that the failure of an incumbent LEC or a competitive LEC to negotiate in good faith under section 251(c)(1) of the Act and our implementing rules may subject that party to enforcement action. Thus, the incumbent LEC and competitive LEC must negotiate in good faith regarding any rates, terms, and conditions necessary to implement our rule changes. We expect that parties to the negotiating process will not unreasonably delay implementation of the conclusions adopted in this Order. We encourage the state commissions to monitor this area closely to ensure that parties do not engage in unnecessary delay.¹⁵

However, we cannot reasonably conclude that the specific provision of the TRRO to eliminate UNE-P, which includes a specific date after which CLECs will not be allowed to add new customers using UNE-P, was also meant to have no applicability unless and until such time as carriers had completed the change of law processes in their interconnection agreements. To reach the conclusion proposed by the Joint CLECs would confound the FCC's clear direction provided in the TRRO, with no obvious way to

¹³ TRRO, ¶ 199.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.* at ¶ 233.

return to the transition timetable established in the TRRO. Had the FCC remained silent on the timing and pricing for the transition of the CLEC embedded customer base, it is more plausible that the parties would need to negotiate, and this Commission possibly arbitrate, the continued availability of UNE-P for new customers. Instead, the FCC is clear that, barring mutual agreement by the parties, UNE-P will no longer be available to new customers after March 10, 2005. This clear FCC directive leaves little room for the interpretation advocated by the Joint CLECs. For these reasons, we find our conclusion herein to be consistent with our finding in the January 21, 2005 Entry in this Cause that we will look to the parties' interconnection agreements in reviewing change of law issues. The elaboration that this Entry provides is that we cannot ignore the requirements of the changed law itself. The TRRO sets forth a default arrangement for the elimination of UNE-P. Unless and until the parties mutually agree to adopt an alternative arrangement instead of the default provisions of the TRRO, we must look to the FCC's directives in the TRRO for the elimination of UNE-P for new customers.

In their Motion, Joint CLECs raised some practical concerns about the effects of their inability to obtain UNE-P after March 10, 2005. Therefore, we find it appropriate to use this Entry to provide guidance on some of the disagreements that may arise as a result of this Entry's ruling. Joint CLECs express the concern in their Motion that "... if a CLEC customer requests remote call forwarding to his or her vacation home on March 1, 2005, and then asks the CLEC on March 12, 2005 to remove the remote call forwarding so that calls revert to their usual location, the CLEC will be unable to remove the call forwarding feature from the customer's account because of SBC's rejection of the CLEC's change request."¹⁶ We disagree. We think the TRRO is clear in its intent that a CLEC's embedded base (its UNE-P customers, and those customers for which UNE-P has been requested, as of March 10, 2005) not be disrupted. We would expect an embedded base customer to be able to acquire or remove any feature associated with circuit switching during the transition period.

Joint CLECs have also expressed concern that the agreement being offered by SBC Indiana for continued service after March 10, 2005, would require the immediate imposition of rates higher than the transition pricing established in the TRRO.¹⁷ We do not find this to be an unreasonable position for SBC Indiana to take. Clearly, the intent of the one-year transition period, and its associated pricing, is to allow for a planned, orderly, and non-disruptive migration of existing UNE-P customers off of UNE-P to an alternative arrangement at an established price for the transition period. Our interpretation is that the transition period is not designed to be a period in which CLECs that negotiate an agreement to continue their service with SBC Indiana are then entitled

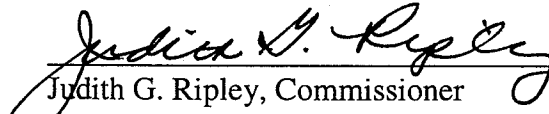
¹⁶ Motion, p. 9.

¹⁷ 47 C.F.R. § 51.319(d)(2)(iii) provides the following pricing requirements for UNE-P during the transition period: "The price for unbundled local circuit switching in combination with unbundled DS0 capacity loops and shared transport obtained pursuant to this paragraph shall be the higher of: (A) the rate at which the requesting carrier obtained that combination of network elements on June 15, 2004 plus one dollar, or (B) the rate the state public utility commission establishes, if any, between June 16, 2004, and the effective date of the Triennial Review Remand Order, for that combination of network elements, plus one dollar. Requesting carriers may not obtain new local switching as an unbundled network element."


to continue with the same transition pricing. Once a CLEC agrees to continue its existing service arrangement, the issue of transitioning and the associated reasons for transition pricing cease.

It is our finding, therefore, that SBC Indiana, pursuant to the clear FCC directives in the TRRO, is not required to accept UNE-P orders for new customers after March 10, 2005. As to the Motion's request that we order SBC Indiana to comply with the change of law provisions of the interconnection agreements in implementing the TRRO, we do not make such an order, but nonetheless express our expectation that both SBC Indiana and all affected CLECs will make changes to their interconnection agreements consistent with the requirements of the TRRO. Accordingly, the Motion is denied.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Judith G. Ripley, Commissioner



William G. Divine, Administrative Law Judge

3-9-05

Date