

QWEST, MCI FINALIZE NETWORK ACCESS PACT

Qwest Corp. and MCI, Inc., said today they had finalized a network access agreement, the terms of which will be made public and available to any competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) for adoption, in addition to being submitted to state commissioners and the FCC for informational purposes.

The agreement covers the 14-state regional area served by Qwest, and became effective on July 16. The four-year deal will expire in July 2008, according to a Qwest spokesman.

Steve Davis, Qwest's senior vice president-public policy, told TRDaily that the agreement consists of two parts, one providing for a replacement service to the unbundled network element-platform (UNE-P) and the other providing for batch "hot cuts."

Mr. Davis clarified that both the UNE-P replacement agreement and the batch hot cut agreement will be provided to state regulatory commissions, but that the UNE-P replacement agreement will not be provided for the purposes of seeking state approval. The agreement on batch hot cuts, however, will be sent to state commissions for approval, Mr. Davis said.

Although the entire agreement will be available to any requesting CLEC, competitors will not be able to incorporate individual parts of the agreements into their own pacts. Qwest said that the terms of any negotiated agreements will be made available to other carriers, under the condition that the requesting carriers accept the terms as a whole, or negotiate all new terms of their own.

Mr. Davis said that rates, terms, and conditions specified in the agreement will be available for review and posted on Qwest's web site.

"Qwest is gratified that the hard work and effort of reaching a commercially negotiated agreement with MCI has been finalized," Mr. Davis said. "The accord, an industry first between an RBOC (regional Bell operating company) and a major CLEC, provides MCI with pricing continuity and certainty about the availability of services."

Mr. Davis added that Qwest was hopeful it could reach similar wholesale agreements with other CLECs. MCI and Qwest had been holding arbitrated network access negotiations since May, in the wake of an FCC request that incumbent providers and CLECs negotiate commercial interconnection agreements. - Carrie DeLeon, cdeleon@tr.com