

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

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| In the Matter of USCOC of Greater |) | |
| Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular Petition |) | <u>File No. RD-2025-0265</u> |
| For Relinquishment of Eligible |) | |
| Telecommunications Carrier Designation |) | |

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

COMES NOW the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission (Staff) and for its *Staff Recommendation* states:

1. On April 1, 2025, USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular (U.S. Cellular)¹ filed a request for the Missouri Public Service Commission (Commission) to relinquish its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) designation in the State of Missouri. The relinquishment is contingent upon, and concurrent with the closing of the anticipated acquisition of U.S. Cellular's wireless business operations by T-Mobile US, Inc. (T-Mobile), anticipated to occur mid-2025. If approved, the company will no longer receive federal universal service funding from the high-cost program and the Lifeline program.

2. On April 2, 2025, the Commission issued an order directing its data center to provide notice to each ETC in the State of Missouri set an intervention deadline of April 23, 2025, ordered Staff to file a recommendation regarding U.S. Cellular's filing no later than April 30, 2025, and provided that any other party wishing to respond to U.S. Cellular's filing shall do so no later than April 30, 2025.

3. Commission rule 20 CSR 4240-31.015.4 states that relinquishment of ETC status is accomplished by providing a letter signed by an authorized company

¹ U.S. Cellular was designated an eligible telecommunications carrier in File No. TO-2005-0384.

official or representative to the Commission at least 60 days prior to the relinquishment of the ETC status. The rule also requires compliance with 47 U.S.C. Section 214(e)(4), which states, in part:

A State commission ... shall permit an eligible telecommunications carrier to relinquish its designation as such a carrier in any area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier. An eligible telecommunications carrier that seeks to relinquish its eligible telecommunications carrier designation for an area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier shall give advance notice to the State commission ... of such relinquishment. Prior to permitting a telecommunications carrier designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier to cease providing universal service in an area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier, the State commission ... shall require the remaining eligible telecommunications carrier or carriers to ensure that all customers served by the relinquishing carrier will continue to be served, and shall require sufficient notice to permit the purchase or construction of adequate facilities by any remaining eligible telecommunications carrier.

4. As more fully explained in Staff's Memorandum, attached hereto as Attachment A and incorporated herein, no Lifeline customers are at risk of being without service. U.S. Cellular intends to facilitate a seamless transition of its Lifeline customers to T-Mobile, through its Assurance Wireless brand. U.S. Cellular Lifeline customers will be automatically switched to Assurance Wireless and be able to retain their existing plan, telephone number and in general retain their current mobile device. Customers do not need to take any action unless they choose to switch service to any of the numerous carriers that offer Lifeline service in the area.

5. Staff recommends the Commission approve the relinquishment of USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular's ETC designation in Missouri contingent upon, and concurrent with, the closing of the transfer of control to T-Mobile. Further,

Staff recommends the Commission order U.S. Cellular to submit notice specifying the effective date of the ETC relinquishment once closing date of the transfer to T-Mobile is known.

6. The Commission need not hold a hearing, if, after proper notice and opportunity to intervene, no party requests such a hearing. *State ex rel. Rex Deffenderfer Enterprises, Inc. v. Public Service Commission*, 776 S.W.2d 494 (Mo. App. W.D. 1989).

WHEREFORE, Staff respectfully recommends the Commission approve the relinquishment of USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular's ETC designation in Missouri contingent upon, and concurrent with, the closing of the transfer of control to T-Mobile. Staff further recommends the Commission order U.S. Cellular to submit notice specifying the effective date of the ETC relinquishment once closing date of the transfer to T-Mobile is known; and grant such other and further relief as is just in the circumstances.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Mark Johnson

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Attorney for the Staff of the
Missouri Public Service Commission

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served by electronic mail, or First Class United States Postal Mail, postage prepaid, on this 30th day of April, 2025, to all counsel of record.

/s/ Mark Johnson

MEMORANDUM

To: Missouri Public Service Commission Official Case File
Case No. RD-2025-0265

From: Kari Salsman, Senior Research/Data Analyst
John VanEschen, Regulatory Compliance Manager
Telecommunications Department

Subject: Staff's Recommendation for USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a
U.S. Cellular's Notice of Relinquishment of Its Eligible Telecommunication
Carrier Designation.

Date: April 30, 2025

On April 1, 2025, USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular (U.S. Cellular) filed a request for the Missouri Public Service Commission (Commission) to relinquish its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) designation in the State of Missouri. The relinquishment is contingent upon, and concurrent with the closing of the anticipated acquisition of U.S. Cellular's wireless business operations by T-Mobile US, Inc. (T-Mobile), anticipated to occur mid-2025.¹ If approved, the company will no longer receive federal universal service funding from the high-cost program and the Lifeline program.

The requirements for relinquishment of ETC status are contained in Commission Rule 20 CSR-4240-31.015(4). This rule indicates a company can relinquish its ETC designation by providing a letter signed by an authorized company official or representative at least sixty (60) days prior to relinquishing ETC status demonstrating compliance with 47 U.S.C. section 214(e)(4). These federal requirements are codified in FCC Rule 47 CFR 54.205 and essentially are intended to ensure the affected area will continue to be served by at least one ETC.

No Lifeline customers are at risk of being without service. U.S. Cellular intends to facilitate a seamless transition of its Lifeline customers to T-Mobile, through its Assurance Wireless brand. U.S. Cellular Lifeline customers will be automatically switched to Assurance Wireless and be able to retain their existing plan, telephone number and in general retain their current mobile device. Customers do not need to take any action unless they choose to switch service to any of the numerous carriers that offer Lifeline service in the area.

Staff recommends the Commission approve the relinquishment of USCOC of Greater Missouri, LLC d/b/a U.S. Cellular's ETC designation in Missouri contingent upon, and concurrent with, the closing of the transfer of control to T-Mobile. The order should direct U.S. Cellular to submit a notification filing specifying the effective date of the ETC relinquishment once the closing date is known.

¹ Public Notice: T-Mobile and UScellular seek FCC consent to the proposed transfer of control and assignment of certain spectrum licenses, authorizations, and spectrum leases held by US Cellular to T-Mobile; DA 24-1115; released Oct. 30, 2024.