

March 1, 2016

Public Utility Commission of Oregon
201 High Street SE, Suite 100
Salem, Oregon 97301

Sent via email

Re: Statement on Applications for Qualified Project Determination,
Docket Nos. UM 1760, 1761 & 1762

Chair Ackerman and Members of the Commission:

TechNet is an association representing over 70 of the nation's leading companies in the fields of information technology, internet media, green technology, and venture capital. TechNet would like to thank the Commission for the opportunity to provide comments to the March 1, 2016 meeting. TechNet would also like to thank the PUC Staff who have worked diligently on this issue for their thorough and careful work.

SB 611 was as passed in part, to help incentivize the development of high-speed internet and open the door for new investment by multiple companies. Because of it, the innovation economy in Oregon is moving in the right direction, with a more competitive tax structure and an environment that is on par with many other states in welcoming investment in high-speed internet. In order for this bill to remain successful, the intent of the legislation must be honored today and going forward. The technology community is following this process closely and it is important that Oregon sends a clear signal it welcomes innovation and is safe place to invest whether it is a new or already established company.

The PUC staff was tasked with verifying that companies applying for the exemption met the outlined criteria because the Legislature deemed that they have the knowledge to do so. During the rule making process the PUC staff did their due diligence in checking the legislative record, meeting with stakeholders and taking other steps necessary in executing the requirements of SB 611. They applied their expertise and created a set of rules consistent with SB 611. First, ensuring that the projects require capital investment in newly constructed or installed real or tangible personal property constituting infrastructure that enables a company to offer communications services, including the capacity to provide at least one gigabit per second symmetrical service, to a majority of residential customers of a company's broadband services in Oregon. Secondly, a company cannot deny communication services offered to residential customers because of the income level of the local service area.

The three applicants underwent a rigorous and thorough examination and the staff applied their expertise, without bias, to make a fair determination if the above criterion was met. TechNet has the utmost faith that the PUC staff executed carefully on the task at hand. Therefore, it is my hope that all recommendations made by staff are approved to continue the development of a competitive and robust market for high-speed internet in Oregon.

Sincerely,



Megan Schrader
Executive Director, Northwest Region, TechNet