

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

ARB 495

In the Matter of)	
)	
ERNEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC. and)	PUC STAFF'S COMMENTS
VERIZON NORTHWEST INC.)	
)	
Interconnection Agreement Submitted for)	
Commission Approval Pursuant to Section)	
252(e) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.)	

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE AGREEMENT

On July 1, 2003, Ernest Communications, Inc. and Verizon Northwest, Inc. (Verizon) filed an interconnection agreement with the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission). The parties seek approval of this agreement under Section 252(e) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Commission provided notice by posting an electronic copy of the agreement on the World Wide Web, at: <http://www.puc.state.or.us/caragmnt/>. The Commission Staff (Staff) offers these comments.

Under the Act, the Commission must approve or reject an agreement reached through voluntary negotiation within 90 days of filing. The Commission may reject an agreement only if it finds that:

- (1) the agreement (or portion thereof) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier not a party to the agreement; or
- (2) the implementation of such agreement or portion thereof is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

Staff notes that an interconnection agreement or amendment thereto has no effect or force until approved by a state Commission. *See* 47 U.S.C. Sections 252 (a) and (e). Accordingly, Staff points out that the effective date of this filing will be the date the Commission signs an order approving it, and that any provision stating that the parties' agreement is effective prior to that date is not enforceable.

Staff recommends approval of the agreement. Staff concludes that the agreement itself does not appear to discriminate against telecommunications carriers who are not parties to the agreement and does not appear to be inconsistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

Dated at Salem, this 14th day of July, 2003

Celeste Hari
Telecommunications Analyst