

**OREGON PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
(INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE)**

**DATE:** January 14, 2016 *AK*

**TO:** File through Bryan Conway and Bruce Hellebuyck *BH*

**FROM:** Jim Stange *JS*

**SUBJECT:** Frontier Communications Northwest Inc., Docket No. ADV 134/Advice No. SC15-17, Establishes a Special Contract submitted pursuant to ORS 759.250(5).

**BACKGROUND**

This filing will appear on the Commission's January 26, 2016, public meeting agenda.

Frontier Communications Northwest Inc. (Frontier) proposes to establish a thirty-six month special contract with a confidential customer for Frontier Simply Unlimited Service-Challenger bundle and an unregulated service. The contract went into effect on November 9, 2015, and it was filed on November 12, 2015. Frontier has asked staff not to divulge the contract customer's name. Pursuant to ORS 759.250, the Commission has 90 days from the date of filing to terminate the effectiveness of a special contract. For this filing, the end of the 90-day statutory period is February 10, 2016. The contract filing would become effective upon approval by the Commission.

**Description of Contract**

The contract is a thirty-six month, discount arrangement between Frontier and a confidential customer for Frontier Simply Unlimited Service-Challenger bundle. The bundle is being provided under the contract at a monthly rate of \$24.99 per unit, which represents a discount of 18 percent from the average tariffed rate of \$30.42.

The filing states that the company will give the discounted prices to any similarly situated customer requesting it.

The company also considers the contract services to be competitive. If Frontier does not provide the contract services, then a number of competitors would be able to provide the services.

Shortfall and termination liability language in the contract adequately protects other customers in case the confidential customer should seek early termination of the special contract.

## **Description of Services**

Frontier Simply Unlimited Service-Challenger includes one flat rate business access line, a group of standard custom calling features, flat rate Extended Area Service (EAS),<sup>1</sup> and the use of any four features from a group of optional add-on features. The bundle rate also includes the End User Common Line Charge and the Access Recovery Charge that are found in the company's federal tariff at no additional charge.<sup>2</sup> The Simply Unlimited Service-Challenger bundle monthly rates are \$38.99 for each of the first three lines and \$23.99 for the fourth through the twelfth lines.

This contract also provides a service that is not a regulated service.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

### **Review Procedures**

Although the form of regulation that applies to Frontier changed August 18, 2014, pursuant to ORS 759.255 and the regulatory plan allowed by the Commission under Order No. 14-290 (UM 1677), its services offered through special contracts remain fully regulated. Thus, Frontier special contracts for its regulated services are still subject to ORS 759.250.

Telecommunications utilities are allowed under ORS 759.250 to enter into special contracts with customers without being subject to standard tariff filing procedures under ORS 759.175. In addition, special contracts are not subject to hearings (ORS 759.180) or suspension (ORS 759.185).

ORS 759.250 outlines the requirements for approval of telecommunications special contracts, which are as follows:

1. The contract service must be a new service with limited availability, respond to a unique customer requirement, or be subject to competition.
2. Prices must exceed the long-run incremental cost of providing the service.
3. Telecommunications utilities are required to file special contracts no later than 90 days following the effective date of the contract. Contracts must not exceed five years, and ORS 759.250 does not permit automatic contract renewals.

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<sup>1</sup> The monthly business flat rate EAS charges range from \$1.90 to \$8.60.

<sup>2</sup> The monthly End User Common Line Charge (i.e., subscriber line charge/SLC) is \$6.50 and the Access Recovery Charge is \$1.63.

4. The Commission shall issue an order on the filed contract within 90 days of the filing. If the Commission does not act within 90 days of the filing, the contract is deemed approved. Staff understands that if a telecommunications utility does not provide sufficient evidence to support the contract under ORS 759.250, staff may recommend that the Commission reject the contract.

### **Classification and Unjust Discrimination Criteria**

PUC Order No. 92-651 (Docket UM 254), issued May 1, 1992, adopted procedures and guidelines for telecommunications special contract filings. The order specifies that in assessing special contracts the Commission must consider the reasonableness of the contract rates and whether the rates result in unjust discrimination. The statutes that underlie these areas of concern are ORS 759.210 (classification of service and rates) and ORS 759.260 (unjust discrimination).

Staff's analysis regarding conformance with ORS 759.210 is twofold. First, staff determines if a special contract rate class is developed by the telecommunications utility for one or more of the following reasons: a) the quantity of the contract service used; b) the purpose for which the contract service is used; c) whether price competition or a service alternative exists; d) the contract service being provided; e) the conditions of contract service; or f) other reasonable considerations. Second, staff determines if the special contract results in revenue sufficient to ensure just and reasonable rates for remaining customers (i.e., a "prudency review").

To determine conformance with ORS 759.260, staff determines if the special contract avoids unjust discrimination and is dependent upon the outcome of the analyses outlined above. The statute does not restrict the Commission from subsequent scrutiny of the reasonableness of special contracts for ratemaking purposes.

Staff has reviewed the company's estimated long-run, incremental cost of service (LRIC) and estimated net margin or contribution from the proposed sales under this contract. Staff's analysis indicates Frontier would receive revenues that would exceed LRIC and provide an adequate contribution for its services under the proposed contract. In other words, the special contract appears to be prudent in terms of revenue sufficiency.

## **Conclusions**

Staff has investigated the filing and finds that it complies with Order No. 92-651 (UM 254), the contracted services are subject to competition, the contract price(s) is above the company's cost of service, and the company would offer the discounted contract price(s) to any similarly situated customer requesting it.