

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

UM 2147

In the Matter of

HUNTER COMMUNICATIONS &
TECHNOLOGIES, LLC,

Application to Expand Designated Service
Area as an Eligible Telecommunications
Carrier and Eligible Telecommunications
Provider.

ORDER

DISPOSITION: STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED

At its public meeting on August 18, 2026, the Public Utility Commission of Oregon adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter. The Staff Report with the recommendation is attached as Appendix A.

BY THE COMMISSION:



Alison Lackey
Chief Administrative Law Judge



A party may request rehearing or reconsideration of this order under ORS 756.561. A request for rehearing or reconsideration must be filed with the Commission within 60 days of the date of service of this order. The request must comply with the requirements in OAR 860-001-0720. A copy of the request must also be served on each party to the proceedings as provided in OAR 860-001-0180(2). A party may appeal this order by filing a petition for review with the Circuit Court for Marion County in compliance with ORS 183.484.

ITEM NO. CA11

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: August 18, 2026**

REGULAR _____ **CONSENT** X **EFFECTIVE DATE** _____ **N/A** _____

DATE: August 12, 2026

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Jon Cray

THROUGH: Nolan Moser and Melissa Nottingham **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: HUNTER COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGIES, LLC:
(Docket No. UM 2147)
Supplemental Application to Expand Designated Service Area to Offer
Federal and Oregon Lifeline Services.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Oregon Public Utility Commission (Commission) grant Hunter Communications & Technologies, LLC's d/b/a Hunter Fiber (Hunter) request to expand the Company's designated service area as a federal Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) for the limited purpose of receiving federal low-income support (Lifeline) from the federal Universal Service Fund and as a state Eligible Telecommunications Provider (ETP) to participate in the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program (OTAP)¹ in multiple locations within the counties of Deschutes, Harney, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill, excluding any Tribal lands that may be within the served area.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should expand Hunter's designated service area as a federal ETC and state ETP to receive federal Universal Service Fund and Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) support, respectively, for providing federal and Oregon Lifeline discounts to eligible households in Oregon with low incomes in multiple locations within

¹ The 2025 Oregon Legislature enacted House Bill 3148, which renamed the plan of assistance, i.e., OTAP, to Oregon Lifeline. However, Commission Order No. 15-382, adopted in Docket No. UM 1648 has not yet been revised to reflect the new program name.

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the counties of Deschutes, Harney, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill, excluding any Tribal lands that may be within the served area.

Applicable Law

Section 214(e)(2) of the Federal Communications Act of 1934, as amended by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (the Act), delegates authority to state commissions to designate common carriers that are eligible to receive federal universal service support, i.e., ETCs. State commissions may confer federal ETC status on incumbent local exchange carriers or competitive common carriers that meet the conditions set out in Section 214(e)(1) of the Act. In general, those conditions require that the ETC offer and advertise, throughout its designated service area, the services that are supported by federal universal service support mechanisms. The carrier must provide the supported services using either its own facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier's service.

Each state may adopt specific requirements for ETC designation that are consistent with those of the Act. The Commission updated its own set of requirements for federal ETC designation in Docket No. UM 1648, Order No. 15-382, entered December 1, 2015, as outlined in Appendix A.

To offer federal Lifeline discounts to eligible low-income customers in Oregon, a carrier must be designated as an ETP to participate in the Oregon Lifeline program, which serves as the state counterpart to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC's) Lifeline program. Oregon Lifeline requirements are based on Residential Service Protection law and found in Chapter 290, Section 6 and 16, Oregon Laws 1987, as amended. Commission rules governing OTAP are prescribed in Chapter 860, Division 033 of the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR).

Analysis

The Applicant

On May 4, 2021, the Commission designated Hunter as a federal ETC for the purposes of receiving Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and federal Lifeline support from the federal Universal Service Fund. The Commission also designated Hunter as a state ETP to participate in the OTAP and receive RSPF support. This designation applied to the specific census blocks identified in Order No. 21-138 in Docket No. UM 2147.

On April 16, 2024, the Commission approved Hunter's request to expand its designated service area for the limited purpose of receiving federal low-income support (Lifeline)

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from the federal Universal Service Fund and for state ETP participation in the OTAP in multiple locations within certain counties. Hunter's initial expansion covered Deschutes, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties, using approximately 55,000 residential addresses to define its ETC service territory. See Order No. 24-108 in Docket No. UM 2147.

The Supplemental Application

Hunter submitted the Company's supplemental application on August 7, 2026. Hunter now requests additional expansion within the same counties previously approved and seeks ETC and ETP designation in Harney County for the first time. The Company requests designation as a federal ETC for the sole purpose of receiving low income support (Lifeline) from the federal Universal Service Fund and ETP designation to participate in the OTAP and offer additional discounts from the RSPF to all eligible customers who reside within the locations in the counties of Deschutes, Harney, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath, Lake, Lane, Linn, Marion, Polk, and Yamhill, excluding any Tribal lands that may be within the served area. Hunter does not request high-cost support from either the federal or Oregon universal service funds.²

Review

Prior to the filing, Staff and Hunter engaged in email communications to discuss the Company's proposed expansion of its designated service area for ETC and ETP purposes. Staff finds that Hunter has demonstrated that it meets all current requirements for designation as a federal ETC and state ETP for offering federal and Oregon Lifeline discounts, as evidenced by the Company's previous filings approved in Order Nos. 21-138 and 24-108. Hunter has been a federal ETC and state ETP for five years and has demonstrated its ability and commitment to comply with federal ETC obligations in Appendix A of the Order No. 15-382 and state ETP in Chapter 860, Division 033 of OARs in its current designated service area.

ETP Designation

In addition to federal ETC designation, a carrier must receive state ETP designation from the Commission before it can participate in the OTAP and receive reimbursement from the RSPF for passing through the corresponding discount to the eligible customer.

² In Hunter's supplemental application, the Company states that it seeks to expand its federal (ETC) and state (ETP) designated service area for the sole purpose of receiving low-income support from the Oregon Universal Service Fund. To clarify, Hunter is requesting expansion of its federal ETC and state ETP designated service territory for the limited purpose of receiving federal and Oregon Lifeline support from the federal Universal Service Fund and Residential Service Protection Fund, respectively.

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Having already met the requirements for ETP designation in its current designated service areas, Hunter reiterates the Company's commitment in its supplemental application to comply with the OARs governing Oregon Lifeline in the expanded proposed designated service areas. The federal Lifeline program provides monthly support of \$9.25 for broadband internet access or \$5.25 for voice service to qualifying customers. Oregon Lifeline currently provides an additional \$15.00 per month for broadband internet access or voice services.³

Hunter currently offers federal and Oregon Lifeline discounts to customers in the areas where it is already designated as an ETC and ETP. Approval of the supplemental application will allow Hunter to extend federal and Oregon Lifeline discounts to additional eligible households throughout its expanded service territory, including the new addition of Harney County.

Designated Service Area

Designation as an ETC and ETP requires identification of a designated service area, defined in terms of specific geographic units such as wire centers, zip codes, or census blocks. Hunter identifies the Company's proposed designated service area through approximately 42,000 residential addresses. As part of its review, Staff compared Hunter's submitted list of approximately 45,000 residential addresses with the prior list of 55,000 addresses used in the Company's initial ETC expansion and identified approximately 2,700 duplicates. Hunter agreed that Staff could remove those duplicates. Staff has generally included proposed geographic units in an appendix to the memo; however, the competitively sensitive nature of these address lists warrants confidential treatment.

Conclusion

Staff finds that Hunter's petition demonstrates the Company has satisfied the eligibility criteria for federal ETC and state ETP designation for the limited purpose of receiving federal and Oregon Lifeline support, and that approval is in the public interest. Expanding Hunter's federal ETC and state ETP status will enable the Company to offer discounts to eligible households with low incomes across a broader portion of its service territory and provide residents with an additional choice among Oregon Lifeline providers.

Hunter already offers federal and Oregon Lifeline discounts in its current designated areas, and approval of the supplemental application will extend these benefits to more eligible households in the previously approved counties, as well as customers in Harney

³ See OAR 860-033-0035(1)(b).

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County. Staff appreciates Hunter's continued commitment to serving households with low incomes in Oregon and expanding access to affordable communications services.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Hunter Communications & Technologies, LLC's application to expand the Company's designated service area as a federal ETC for the sole purpose of receiving low-income support (Lifeline) from the federal Universal Service Fund, and for state designation as ETP to participate in the Oregon Lifeline program, excluding any Tribal lands that may be within the served area.

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