

**BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service            )           Application No. NUSF-92.37  
Commission, on its own motion, seeking to            )  
Administer the Nebraska Universal Service            )  
Fund’s Broadband Program: Application to the        )  
Nebraska Broadband Program Received from         )  
United States Cellular Corporation.                    )

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF STEPHANIE CASSIOPPI ON BEHALF OF  
UNITED STATES CELLULAR CORPORATION**

**Background of Witness**

1    **Q.    PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS FOR THE RECORD.**

2           My name is Stephanie Cassioppi. My address is 8410 West Bryn Mawr, Chicago, IL  
3           60631.

4    **Q.    ON WHOSE BEHALF ARE YOU PROVIDING THIS TESTIMONY?**

5    **A.**I am testifying on behalf of United States Cellular Corporation. United States Cellular  
6           Corporation has licensed wireless operations in 26 states, including Nebraska. In my  
7           testimony, I will refer to United States Cellular Corporation as “U.S. Cellular”.

8    **Q.    WHAT ARE YOUR DUTIES WITH U.S. CELLULAR AND HAVE YOU  
9           PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE ANY GOVERNMENTAL BODIES?**

10   **A.**My duties include overseeing state legislative and regulatory affairs for U.S. Cellular and  
11           managing our federal Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (“ETC”) projects, including  
12           filings, recertification and compliance. I also manage the outside lobbyists that are  
13           retained by U.S. Cellular. I testified before this Commission annually from 2010 to 2013  
14           in the NUSF-69 dockets to support U.S. Cellular’s Nebraska Universal Service Fund  
15           (“NUSF”) Dedicated Wireless Fund applications. In addition, I have testified before this  
16           Commission for the last two years in support of U.S. Cellular’s applications to receive  
17           funding from the NUSF Broadband Program (“NEBP”) in NUSF-77 and NUSF-92. I’ve

1 also testified before this Commission in support of U.S. Cellular's ETC designation  
2 application several years ago. I've testified before the Oklahoma Corporation  
3 Commission, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission, and legislative committees in  
4 Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio and Missouri, and before the Chicago City Council. Finally,  
5 I've submitted written testimony in many jurisdictions on a variety of issues.

6 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR RELEVANT EMPLOYMENT AND**  
7 **EDUCATIONAL HISTORY.**

8 **A.** I earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
9 and a graduate degree from DePaul University, Charles H. Kellstadt School of Business.  
10 Prior to working for U.S. Cellular, I was employed by Verizon Wireless for two years as  
11 a Director of External Affairs and prior to that I was employed for six years by Ameritech  
12 Cellular in the same capacity. Since 2006, my role with U.S. Cellular has been to provide  
13 state legislative and regulatory support to the operations in our 26 state territory.

14 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY?**

15 **A.** The purpose of my testimony is to provide information to the Commission that supports  
16 granting U.S. Cellular's application to receive funding from the NEBP. I will  
17 demonstrate U.S. Cellular's application is in the public interest and benefits consumers in  
18 Nebraska.

19 **Background of U.S. Cellular**

20 **Q. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE U.S. CELLULAR AND ITS PROVISION OF SERVICES**  
21 **IN NEBRASKA.**

22 **A.** U.S. Cellular provides a range of wireless services and products through a high-quality  
23 network to approximately five million customers in 26 states. U.S. Cellular has a strong

1 presence across Nebraska, employing approximately 196 associates and operating 15  
2 company-owned retail stores, and 28 authorized-agent locations. Since our founding in  
3 1983, U.S. Cellular has been headquartered in Chicago and we currently employ  
4 approximately 6,600 associates across our footprint.

5 Our Nebraska operations began in 2003 when U.S. Cellular launched service in the  
6 Omaha and Lincoln markets using CDMA-technology. In 2006, U.S. Cellular purchased  
7 106 cell sites that had been owned by Western Wireless, d/b/a Cellular One. The  
8 opportunity to purchase that network arose when Alltel, now Verizon, purchased Western  
9 Wireless and was forced to divest certain spectrum in Nebraska. The divestiture  
10 presented U.S. Cellular with the opportunity to increase its footprint from the Lincoln and  
11 Omaha markets to across Nebraska. After the acquisition, U.S. Cellular upgraded the  
12 Western Wireless towers at an expense of roughly \$70,000 per site. We have continued  
13 to grow and U.S. Cellular now has 399 towers in Nebraska. U.S. Cellular operates  
14 switching centers in Omaha and Grand Island. It has a full power back-up system to  
15 provide redundancy. We have field teams located across Nebraska enabling quick  
16 dispatch of personnel if problems arise that require on-site repair.

17 **Background of Application**

18 **Q. WERE YOU INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF U.S. CELLULAR'S NEBP**  
19 **APPLICATION THAT WAS FILED NOVEMBER 18, 2014?**

20 **A.** Yes. I oversaw the preparation of the application and the exhibits. In addition, I  
21 interfaced with our team of engineers to select the tower locations that were included in  
22 the application.

1 **Q. WHY IS U.S. CELLULAR SEEKING SUPPORT FROM THE NEBP?**

2 A. U.S. Cellular has previously been awarded funding from the NUSF Dedicated Wireless  
3 Program and the NEBP. That support has enabled U.S. Cellular to bring better wireless  
4 coverage, including wireless broadband to rural customers in Nebraska. With the  
5 significant changes that have taken place in the federal USF in recent years, the  
6 opportunity to obtain NUSF support is greatly appreciated and needed. The NEBP helps  
7 bring broadband to rural consumers who do not have this vital and fundamental service  
8 and U.S. Cellular is excited to again participate in the program.

9 **Q. BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR APPLICATION.**

10 A. U.S. Cellular is seeking NEBP funding to build four (4) new wireless towers. These  
11 towers will be built near the communities of Alexandria, Arcadia, Rose and Verdigre,  
12 Each tower will deliver wireless broadband speeds of at least 4 Mbps on the downlink  
13 and 1 Mbps on the uplink.

14 **Q. ARE THE TOWERS LOCATED IN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED AREAS?**

15 Yes, I believe the towers will be built in unserved or underserved areas. U.S. Cellular  
16 identified areas based on the Commission's criteria of 4 Mbps on the downlink and 1  
17 Mbps on the uplink utilizing the State Broadband Map, as well as from public maps of its  
18 competitors. Some overlap between wireless providers may occur, but such is  
19 unavoidable due to the delivery method of wireless service not having rigid boundaries.  
20 However, this should not negate the opportunity for wireless carriers to receive funding.

21 **Q. WILL U.S. CELLULAR CONSTRUCT THESE TOWERS WITHOUT SUPPORT**  
22 **FROM THE NEBP?**

1 A. No. The sites identified in our application exhibit a strong need for improved service, but  
2 they are not a primary business driver and are, at best, a secondary priority. It is highly  
3 unlikely that any of these sites will be constructed without NEBP support.

4 **Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON STAFF'S RECOMMENDATIONS?**

5 Yes. We are grateful to have received a positive recommendation from staff for funding  
6 the new towers that U.S. Cellular submitted for consideration. If approved, U.S. Cellular  
7 commits to fulfill all expectations required of NEBP recipients, such as meeting the  
8 deployment schedule, contributing the 25% financial match and filing broadband maps.

9 **Q. HOW WILL APPROVAL OF U.S. CELLULAR'S APPLICATION FURTHER**  
10 **AND PROMOTE THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND UNIVERSAL SERVICE IN**  
11 **NEBRASKA?**

12 A. Customers living in and passing through the areas that are served by these four new  
13 towers will enjoy the same level of wireless service that customers in Lincoln and Omaha  
14 receive, including wireless broadband. Accordingly, granting U.S. Cellular's application  
15 fulfills the goal of universal service by providing rural customers with advanced  
16 telecommunications services that are comparable to that provided in urban areas. Further  
17 besides improving accessibility to public safety resources, offering better wireless service  
18 in these rural areas may enable some consumers to consider using U.S. Cellular as their  
19 primary telecommunications provider. Robust competition will encourage all companies,  
20 wireline and wireless, to introduce innovative and better-priced offerings, which in turn  
21 benefits Nebraska's consumers.

22 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

23 A. Yes.