

outcome of that proceeding, we believe approval could occur by mid-2025. Accordingly, UScellular respectfully requests the Commission approve the relinquishment of UScellular's ETC designation, contingent upon and concurrent with the Closing. Upon approval of the acquisition and when the Closing date is known, UScellular will submit a notification filing with the Commission to specify the effective date of the ETC relinquishment.

The impact of the relinquishment will be minimal because: (1) T-Mobile intends to facilitate a seamless transition of UScellular's customers, who need to take no action unless they desire to switch carriers, and (2) T-Mobile, through its Assurance Wireless brand, is currently an ETC in Nebraska and will provide continued service to UScellular's Lifeline customers, including offering Lifeline discounts to eligible households.

I. BACKGROUND

A. UScellular.

UScellular is a publicly traded Delaware corporation headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, with 2023 revenues of approximately \$3.9 billion. UScellular is a majority-owned subsidiary of Telephone Data Systems, Inc.² In its 21-state footprint, UScellular provides its customers with postpaid and prepaid wireless voice, data, and messaging service, in-home/business broadband (fixed wireless access), and Internet of Things ("IoT") services. UScellular was designated an ETC by this Commission in 2007.³

to switch to a lower-cost T-Mobile plan or stay on their current UScellular rate plan, all while enjoying a world-class 5G network."

² *FCC Public Interest Statement* at 3.

³ *In the Matter of the Application of United States Cellular Corporation, Chicago, Illinois, seeking designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier pursuant to section 214(e)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934*, Application No. C-3725, Order Granting ETC Designation (July 3, 2007).

B. T-Mobile.

T-Mobile is a publicly traded Delaware corporation headquartered in Bellevue, Washington. Currently, T-Mobile is the second largest wireless carrier in the United States, serving over 125.9 million customers.⁴ Through its owned and operated retail stores, third-party distributors, and its websites, T-Mobile offers wireless voice and data services—as well as a wide selection of wireless devices and accessories—to residential and business customers in Nebraska. T-Mobile also offers a high-speed fixed wireless in home broadband service, an alternative to traditional landline internet service providers. T-Mobile was designated an ETC by this Commission under its Assurance Wireless brand to offer Lifeline to qualifying low-income households.⁵

C. General Description of the T-Mobile Acquisition.

Upon the Closing, UScellular will have transferred its wireless operations and customers, along with select spectrum assets to T-Mobile, including its customers in Nebraska. Because UScellular's wireless operations and its customers will transfer to T-Mobile at Closing, the transition is expected to be ubiquitous as to UScellular's current service areas and seamless from the customer perspective.⁶ As T-Mobile is also a Lifeline provider, it will be among the options available to UScellular's Lifeline subscribers to continue receiving discounted wireless service.

⁴ *FCC Public Interest Statement at 1-2; See also, <https://www.T-Mobile.com/news/business/T-Mobile-q2-2024-earnings>.*

⁵ *In the Matter of the Application of Assurance Wireless USA, L.P., Bellevue, Washington, seeking designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier in the State of Nebraska for the Limited Purpose of Providing Lifeline and NTAP Service to Qualifying Customers*, Application No. C-5559/NUSF-41, Order Granting ETC Designation (July 23, 2024).

⁶ *See generally FCC Public Interest Statement.* T-Mobile estimates that nearly all of UScellular's customers have compatible devices and the migration of the vast majority of UScellular customers can be accomplished almost immediately after closing. *See id.* at iii.

T-Mobile will quickly activate UScellular's spectrum and work to integrate UScellular's network into its own network. This process will benefit from T-Mobile's significant track record in incorporating acquired assets, with expected improvements to the combined network's capacity, speed and performance.⁷

II. DISCUSSION

Federal law provides a state commission "shall permit an eligible telecommunications carrier to relinquish its designation as such a carrier in any area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier."⁸ The federal requirements for relinquishment of ETC designation can be summarized as follows: (1) there must be more than one ETC serving in the area of the ETC seeking relinquishment; (2) the ETC seeking relinquishment must provide advance notice to the relevant public service commission; (3) the subscribers served by the relinquishing ETC must continue to be served by an ETC; and (4) to the extent that additional facilities are required to serve any of the relinquishing ETC's customers, sufficient notice shall be provided to ensure that the construction or purchase can be timely completed. As detailed below, UScellular's request complies with each of these requirements.

A. Other ETCs Serve UScellular's ETC Service Area.

UScellular's ETC service area is served by more than one ETC, including multiple wireless ETCs, such as T-Mobile. Immediately following the closing of the Transaction, all UScellular customers will have a choice between switching to T-Mobile or staying on a UScellular plan. As such, all UScellular Lifeline customers will continue on their current plans.

⁷ See, e.g., *id.* at (i)-(v).

⁸ 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(4).

These customers will not need to take any action in order for that to occur. Because at least one other ETC serves UScellular's ETC service area, federal law allows this Commission to permit UScellular to relinquish its ETC designation. T-Mobile's network integration and seamless customer migration mean there will be continuity of service for UScellular's customers, and no risk of Lifeline customers being left without service.⁹

B. UScellular Is Providing Advance Notice to the Commission.

Consistent with 47 U.S.C. § 214(e)(4) and 47 C.F.R. § 54.205(a), UScellular is filing this notice more than a month in advance of the requested effective date of relinquishment of its ETC designation.

C. The Remaining ETCs Will Serve Consumers.

UScellular's Lifeline subscribers will have at least one alternative ETC from which to choose, and, as discussed *supra*, T-Mobile will provide continued discounted wireless service to UScellular's Lifeline customers, if they choose.¹⁰ Thus, all low-income consumers in UScellular's ETC service area will continue to be served by an ETC consistent with 47 U.S.C. § 214(e).

D. No Additional Facilities Need Be Purchased or Constructed by the Remaining ETCs.

⁹ Because of this service continuity, the need for advance notice to avoid a loss of service is not present here. In addition, the pending status of the transaction means that 30-45 days advance notice could confuse customers, as the Closing would not yet be assured. In its supporting letter, T-Mobile has stated its intent to reach out to each customer soon after the Closing date to inform them of their options, including the option to migrate to Assurance Wireless. UScellular submits that T-Mobile's post-Closing outreach will be useful to customers since the transition will be seamless and they will not have to take any steps prior to the Closing date to maintain their service.

¹⁰ See *supra* p. 5.

To the best of UScellular's knowledge, none of the remaining ETCs will be required to purchase or construct additional facilities to continue to serve consumers within the applicable service area.

Because UScellular has met all four requirements set forth above, UScellular respectfully requests the Commission to follow the statutory directive permitting UScellular to relinquish its ETC status in Nebraska.

III. PUBLIC INTEREST CONSIDERATIONS

UScellular's proposed ETC relinquishments are consistent with the public interest. Service is available from other wireline and wireless providers, including T-Mobile (Assurance Wireless) and incumbent LECs that serve UScellular's ETC area. UScellular's subscribers will be able to transition to T-Mobile without taking any action, or they may receive service from multiple other carriers. Lifeline customers will continue to receive discounted wireless service, either from T-Mobile or from other providers if they choose.

IV. CONCLUSION

UScellular respectfully requests the Commission approve its ETC designation relinquishment request.

Respectfully submitted this 11th day of April, 2025.

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