

**NATIONAL EXCHANGE CARRIER ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**REVISIONS TO TARIFF F.C.C. NO. 5**  
**ETHERNET TRANSPORT SERVICE**  
**TRANSMITTAL NO. 1646**  
**DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION**

## **1. Introduction**

This filing modifies Ethernet Transport Service (ETS) Access Service provisions by introducing an ETS Rural Health Care-Rate Option (RHC-RO) that applies to ETS services provided to rural health care providers. As described in proposed Section 16.3.9, the ETS RHC-RO is a specialized pricing plan available to any eligible rural health care provider as defined in Title 47, Part 54, Subpart G, Section 54.600 and 54.601.

The ETS RHC-RO is available on all currently available ETS service elements, speeds and optional features as listed in NECA's Tariff F.C.C. No. 5. The ETS RHC-RO provides discounted, stabilized monthly ETS rates on committed service elements that will be in effect from October 30, 2021 through June 30, 2023 (i.e., Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) Plan Year 2022)<sup>1</sup>. The ETS RHC-RO is designed to support the needs of rural health care provider customers for broadband connectivity used for telehealth and telemedicine applications.

## **2. Proposed Tariff Modifications**

The proposed ETS RHC-RO is initially only offered by West River Telecommunications Cooperative (SAC 381637) within its serving territory. The proposed ETS RHC-RO pricing is available on all currently available ETS service elements, speeds and optional features as listed in NECA's Tariff F.C.C. No. 5, provided to any qualified rural health care provider eligible entity. The stabilized ETS RHC-RO monthly rates will remain in effect through June 30, 2023 and will not be subject to telephone company-initiated rate changes. ETS nonrecurring charges are not stabilized under this ETS RHC-RO. ETS RHC-RO rates are not eligible for additional discounts under an ETS Term Discount Plan (TDP) or an ETS Port Term Discount Plan (PTDP). The rural health care provider eligible entity may add additional ETS services or features, or upgrade ETS services at any time during Plan Year 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Service Administration Co., Section on Rural Health Care, *Funding Year Overview*, <https://www.usac.org/rural-health-care/additional-program-guidance/funding-year-overview/>.

Existing ETS tariff provisions specified in Sections 16.3.1 through 16.3.4 will apply for ETS elements covered in this ETS RHC-RO unless specified otherwise in this filing. An Access Order Charge (AOC) does not apply to establish the ETS RHC-RO. The minimum service period provisions applicable to non-stabilized ETS services do not apply to ETS services covered in the ETS RHC-RO.

To be eligible to subscribe to the ETS RHC-RO, the rural health care provider eligible entity must have a valid FCC Form 461 for the Healthcare Connect Fund Program and/or FCC Form 465 for the Telecommunications Program posted on the USAC's website requesting Category One Internet and/or Telecommunications services for Rural Health Care Program plan year, July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, which can be served using ETS provided under NECA's Tariff F.C.C. No. 5. After qualifying as a rural health care provider eligible entity, the ETS RHC-RO customer must provide written notice to the telephone company of its subscription to the ETS RHC-RO for Plan Year 2022 and commit to retain in-service all ETS elements ordered under the ETS RHC-RO through June 30, 2023.

The ETS RHC-RO customer may convert existing in-service ETS elements provided by the telephone company to rates under the ETS RHC-RO without application of nonrecurring charges or AOCs. Discontinuance or shortfall charges will be waived for an ETS RHC-RO customer wishing to convert existing in-service ETS committed Ports covered by an existing ETS TDP or ETS PTDP commitment period to the ETS RHC-RO.

Should the ETS RHC-RO customer disconnect any or all of the ETS services covered under this ETS RHC-RO plan at any time prior to June 30, 2023, it will be subject to a discontinuance charge equal to 20% of the ETS RHC-RO monthly rate per month for each element in the plan disconnected prior to June 30, 2023. In addition, should the ETS RHC-RO customer disconnect all of the ETS services covered under this ETS RHC-RO plan prior to June 30, 2023, it will not be permitted to opt back into the current ETS RHC-RO Plan Year 2022 at a future date.

At the end of Plan Year 2022 (i.e., June 30, 2023), the ETS RHC-RO customer can subscribe to an ETS TDP, individual ETS PTDPs, convert to month-to-month billing at the telephone company's then current non-stabilized rates, or subscribe to a new ETS RHC-RO, if one is available.

### **3. Proposed Rates, Revenue and Cost Support**

The proposed stabilized monthly rates for each ETS rate element available in this ETS RHC-RO are offered by West River Telecommunications Cooperative (SAC 381637) as shown in NECA Tariff F.C.C. No. 5, Section 17.4.8.(C)(13).

NECA used a sample of the ETS RHC-RO eligible rural health care providers of West River Telecommunications Cooperative to estimate the costs and projected revenue underlying the introduction of the ETS RHC-RO.

The projected annual ETS RHC-RO revenue covers the projected annual costs of providing the ETS RHC-RO service to serve the sample ETS RHC-RO eligible health care providers of West River Telecommunications Cooperative. NECA expects a *de minimis* pool revenue impact of -0.003% for the remainder of the current tariff test period resulting from the proposed new service. As a result, NECA is not proposing to adjust other ETS rates or any rate band assignments as a result of this filing.