

**CONSOLIDATED COMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES  
FCC No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9**

**June 17, 2024**

**Transmittal No. 127**

**Description and Justification**

**DESCRIPTION**

In connection with the June 17, 2024 Annual Filing, Consolidated Communications Companies (Consolidated Communications) hereby submits its Tariff Review Plan (TRP) revisions to Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") for its Companies regulated under Tariff Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with the required supporting documentation. This information is being filed in accordance with the Commission's TRP Notices released March 27, 2024 (DA24-294) and May 10, 2024 (DA24-434) for Consolidated's incumbent local exchange carriers (LECs) subject to price cap regulation, as well as rate-of-return LECs electing Business Data Services (BDS) Incentive Regulation. This filing fulfills the requirements established in Sections 61.38, 61.39, 61.41 through 61.50, 51.907, 51.909, 51.915 and 51.917 of the Commission Rules. Exhibit 1 lists the COSAs' associated with each Consolidated Communications company included in this filing.

In addition to the annual TRP filing, Consolidated Communications is proposing changes to the rates associated with the Federal Universal Service Fund (FUSF) Factor. These proposed changes include necessary supporting material and is in compliance with the Commission's rules. Consolidated Communications' FCC Tariff No. 7 proposes changes in compliance with the CALLS Order released in 2000 (*15 FCC Rcd 12,962 (2000)*), the Contribution Order released in 2002 (*17 FCC Rcd 24,952 (2002)*), and the Waiver Order released in 2003 and modified in 2008 (*18 FCC Rcd 4818 (2003) as modified by Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Order on Reconsideration, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 98-171, 90-571, 92-237, 99-200, 95-116, 98-170 (rel. Feb. 14, 2008)*).

## **JUSTIFICATION**

The following justification is provided for the proposed rates filed by Consolidated Communications:

### **A. Demand**

Demand data for the TRP regulated special access and common line services, if applicable, reflects the period January 1 through December 31, 2023. For price cap and rate of return BDS services, the demand is used in the calculations of the *Price Cap Index* (PCIs), *Actual Price Index* (APIs), and *Service Band Index* (SBIs). Commission rules require new service offerings to be included in the first TRP filing following the completion of the base year in which the new services become effective. Exhibit 5 provides a listing of the new services that were introduced in the base period.

Pursuant to paragraph 61.42(g) of the Commission's rules, only the demand for services that have not received regulatory relief pursuant to 61.42(f) are included in the appropriate BDS baskets. Consolidated Communications has received price cap regulatory relief under FCC 17-43 (released April 28, 2017) and elected to implement the

rate-of-return BDS incentive regulation as outlined in §61.50. End User Channel Terminations in the rate of return SACs' of Berkshire Telephone Corp, and Consolidated Communications of Maine – Community Services have been deemed competitive per DA18-1089 (released October 25, 2018). Subsequently, Chatutauqua & Erie Telephone Co., also a rate of return SAC, was granted BDS regulatory relief in DA 20-114 (released on January 31, 2020). The demand for the End User Channel Terminations in these competitive rate of return SACs' are omitted from the TRP and Tariff No. 9.

The TRP Order requires a detailed listing of services excluded from price cap regulation. These excluded services are listed in Exhibit 6.

Demand data for the 2012 Base Period Revenues used in determining the Inter-carrier Compensation Access Reduction, if applicable, and the Access Recovery Charge (ARC) are for the period of October 2010 through September 2011 as defined in §51.903(e), §51.915(c) and §51.917(b)(7).

Consolidated Companies rate-of-return LECs regulated under FCC Tariff No. 9 continue to participate in the National Exchange Carriers Association (NECA) tariff for switched access. Therefore, data for determining the Inter-Carrier Compensation Access Reduction, Access Recovery Charge (ARC) for these rate-of return LECs are submitted to NECA.

## **B. PCI Development**

PCIs for each BDS basket are calculated in accordance with Commission rules. A GDP-PI factor of 2.6644% was used in calculating the PCIs and is based on the percentage change in the Gross Domestic Product Price Index (GDP-PI) between the quarter ending December 31, 2023 and the corresponding quarter of 2022. Pursuant to FCC 17-43, a productivity offset equal to 2% was applied in calculating PCIs for the special access basket. Information on the GDP-PI calculation is provided in Exhibit 2.

### **C. Compliance with Indices**

In this filing, the Commission requires Consolidated Communications to compute the appropriate adjustments to the current indices or CMT, where applicable, for each Price Cap basket. The adjustments to the Indices are set forth in the Tariff Review Plan, form IND-1. The sources for the existing indices are found in Exhibit 3, IND-1 References.

The Subscriber Line Charges in FCC #1-4 are set at the current capped levels pursuant to Consolidated's Price Cap Orders<sup>1</sup>. PCCC and CCL rates continue to be capped at zero for all Consolidated Companies.

### **D. Exogenous Cost Allocations**

Consolidated Communications proposes the following general exogenous cost adjustments: 1) Regulatory Fee, 2) Telecommunications Relay Service, and 3) North American Number Plan Administration.

Each of the incremental exogenous costs in this filing is allocated based on Common Line and BDS revenues. Exogenous costs allocated to competitive BDS services are excluded from the TRP. Common Line services are excluded from the TRP for the Incentive Regulation Plan per Section 61.50 of the Commission rules; thus, the exogenous costs allocated to the Common Line services are excluded from the BDS TRP that governs the special access rate development for FCC #6 and #9.

Consolidated Communications has also adjusted the BDS exogenous amounts to reflect any shift in revenue growth. The result is that no exogenous adjustment is made if the support rate has not changed. In other words, the rate per dollar of revenue remains unchanged if the factor is unchanged. Exhibit 4 shows the incremental exogenous costs calculations and allocations that are included in the BDS TRP filing.

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<sup>1</sup> See, Orders, Consolidated Communications Petition for Conversion to Price Cap Regulation and for Limited Waiver Relief, DA 08-1026 para 17; Joint Petition of Price Cap Holding Companies for Conversion of Average Schedule Affiliates to Price Cap Regulation and for Limited Waiver Relief (FCC 12-154, WC Docket No. 12-63) para 31; SureWest Telephone Petition for Conversion from Rate of Return to Price Cap Regulation and for Limited Waiver Relief (DA 13-1253, WC Docket No. 13-71) para 19.

Carriers with Subscriber Line Charges at the maximum SLC level, are permitted to include that portion of exogenous cost increases in mandatory TRS, regulatory, or NANPA fees in their Eligible Recovery Form and recover such expenses through the ARC and/or CAF-ICC funding mechanism, when applicable. Exhibit 4A provides cumulative exogenous cost calculations that are authorized per DA12-575 to be included in the CAF-ICC Eligible Recovery Form.

#### REGULATORY FEE

The calculation of change in regulatory fees to be reflected in the 2024-2025 tariff year is based on the application of the Commission prescribed factor of 0.00540 to 499A Interstate Revenues. This factor is set forth in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 23-66, released August 10, 2023.

#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE

The Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) fee is based on the annual IPCTS cost recovery factor of 0.01615 to the 499A Total Revenues and the Non-IPCTS cost recovery factor of 0.00025 is applied to the 499A Interstate Revenues per FCC Order DA 23-577, released on June 30, 2023.

#### NORTH AMERICAN NUMBER PLAN ADMINISTRATION

Pursuant to Public Notice, DA 23-675, released August 10, 2023, the contribution factor of 0.0001047 is applied Total 499A Revenues to fund the 2023 numbering plan.

#### **E. Rate Detail & Revenue Impact Summary**

Included with the filing is a rate detail schedule. This detail shows the current and proposed rates in EXCEL spreadsheet format. In addition to the rate detail schedule, a revenue impact summary is provided to ensure that the rate detail calculations agree with the SUM-1 and the RTE-1. FCC Tariff #9 contains many study areas with four rate bands. For convenience, Exhibit 1 contains a list of the study areas and the band that applies to each study area. Exhibit 7 contains the Revenue Impact Summary.

## **F. FUSF Rates**

The proposed changes to the FUSF rates are attributed to the change in the FCC prescribed contribution factor between the 2nd quarter and the 3rd quarter 2024 from 0.328 to 0.344 per CC Docket No. 96-45 (rel. June 12, 2024). In addition, FCC Tariff No. 7, in compliance with the CALLS, the Contribution Order released in 2002, and the Waiver Order released in 2003 and modified in 2008, as outlined above, proposes multi-line FUSF rates that are adjusted to reflect updated multi-line demand associated with the multi-line equivalency calculation.

Beginning in the 2022 tariff filing, a revenue neutral change in the application of the FUSF assessment to residential end users was implemented. Subsequently, in the April 1, 2024 tariff filing, a change in the application of the FUSF assessment to business end users was implemented. Consolidated's FCC Tariff #7 no longer bills a flat rate FUSF Charge on business and residential services. Varying ARC charges have complicated the calculation of a flat rated FUSF Charge on business and residential services. Consolidated applies the FUSF factor on eligible interstate revenues consistent with the FUSF factor application in FCC Tariff Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Consolidated Communications Companies hereby submits for FCC Tariff No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 the accompanying TRP, proposed FUSF rate changes and exhibits consistent with the Commission's regulations for price cap local exchange carriers and rate of return LECs electing BDS Incentive Regulation. The proposed adjustments are supported as just and reasonable.

## **EXHIBIT INDEX**

The Consolidated Communications Companies provides the necessary detail to support the calculations of indices, exogenous costs, Transitional Access rate reductions, Eligible Recovery, ARC and FUSF rates in various workpapers. The following is the index of such workpapers.

### **Certifications**

#### **FCC Tariff No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8 Price Cap CAF-ICC Forms**

- 2024 Rate Ceiling Final**
- 2024 Eligible Recovery Final**
- 2024 Tariff Rate Comp Final**
- 2024 Price Cap Summary Final**
- 2024 True Up Final**

#### **FCC Tariff No. 6 Rate of Return CAF-ICC Forms**

- 2024 Rate Ceiling CAF RoR ILEC**
- 2024 RoR ILEC ICC Data**
- 2024 Tariff Rate Comp CAF RoR ILEC**
- 2024 RoR ILEC Summary**
- 2024 True Up RoR ILEC**

#### **All tariffs – BDS Forms**

- Tariff Review Plan**
- TRP Rate Detail**
- Exhibit 1**
- Exhibit 2**
- Exhibit 3**
- Exhibit 4**
- Exhibit 4A**

- Exhibit 5**
- Exhibit 6**
- Exhibit 7**
- Exhibit 8**

- Affiliate and COSA Information**
- GDP-PI Factor Development**
- IND-1 Transmittal Documentation**
- Exogenous Cost Calculations**
- Cumulative Exogenous Cost Calculations**
- New Services**
- Services Outside of Price Cap**
- Revenue Impact Summary**
- Toll Free Originating End Office Access**
- Service Rate Calculations**