

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

DOCKET NO. 04T-161

RE: THE APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT
BETWEEN CENTURYTEL OF EAGLE, INC., AND CENTURYTEL OF COLORADO, INC.
AND SPRINT SPECTRUM L.P.

**DECISION GRANTING APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL
OF INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT**

Mailed Date: June 1, 2004
Adopted Date: May 26, 2004

I. BY THE COMMISSION

A. Statement

1. This matter comes before the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for consideration of the Joint Application (Application) for approval of an interconnection and reciprocal compensation agreement filed by CenturyTel of Eagle, Inc., and CenturyTel of Colorado, Inc. (collectively referred to as CenturyTel), and Sprint Spectrum L.P. (Sprint) on April 7, 2004. The interconnection and reciprocal compensation agreement provides for the exchange of local traffic between CenturyTel and Sprint, and establishes a reciprocal compensation interconnection arrangement that compensates each other for terminating local telecommunications traffic that originates on the other party's network. The Application is filed pursuant to the Commission's Rules Establishing Procedures Related to the Submission for Approval of Interconnection Agreements within Colorado by Telecommunications Carriers, 4 *Code of Colorado Regulations* (CCR) 723-44 (Interconnection Agreement Rules). As part of their Application, CenturyTel and Sprint attached their Interconnection Agreement (Agreement).

2. Pursuant to 4 CCR 723-44-9 of the Interconnection Agreement Rules, notice of the submitted Application was given to the public. Interested persons were given an opportunity to file comments within 30 days of the notice. No comments were filed with the Commission. Likewise, no person has sought to intervene in this matter.

3. Now being duly advised, we will grant the Application.

B. Background

4. The Application and Agreement were submitted following the successful completion of voluntary negotiations between CenturyTel and Sprint. Rates were negotiated between the parties. CenturyTel states that it is a rural communications provider, and thus pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 251(f) is exempt from 47 U.S.C. § 251(c) which requires interconnection, the provision of unbundled network elements, and the duty to provide resale at wholesale rates among other requirements.

5. Pursuant to 4 CCR 723-44-5.7.3, the Commission shall approve or reject this negotiated Agreement within 90 days after its submission by the parties; otherwise the Agreement shall be deemed approved. In deciding whether to approve or reject the Agreement, the Commission follows the Interconnection Agreement Rules. Those rules were promulgated to implement certain directives set forth in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (Act), 47 U.S.C. § 251 *et seq.*

6. The Act sets forth the procedures for negotiation, arbitration, and approval of interconnection agreements between telecommunications providers. Notably, 47 U.S.C. §§ 252(a) and (e) mandate that all interconnection agreements between providers shall be submitted to the State commission (*e.g.*, the Colorado Public Utilities Commission) for review.

The State commission may approve or reject any submitted agreement in accordance with the standards listed in 47 U.S.C. § 252(e)(2) (commission may reject an agreement adopted by negotiation if it discriminates against a telecommunications carrier not a party to the agreement or if the implementation of such agreement is not consistent with the public convenience and necessity).

7. In pertinent part, 47 U.S.C. § 251 and the regulations promulgated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) require telecommunications carriers to interconnect their facilities and equipment. 47 U.S.C. § 251(a). The Act further imposes upon all local exchange carriers duties concerning resale, number portability, dialing parity, access to rights-of-way, and reciprocal compensation. 47 U.S.C. § 251(b). Additionally, the Act obligates incumbent local exchange carriers to negotiate in good faith the particular terms and conditions of interconnection agreements for the transmission and routing of telephone exchange service and exchange access. 47 U.S.C. § 251(c). CenturyTel claims exemption from these requirements because of its status as a rural telecommunications carrier. The FCC's regulations implementing 47 U.S.C. § 251 are codified at 47 C.F.R. pt. 51.

8. Section 47 U.S.C. § 252(d) addresses pricing standards. In order to comply with this section, rates for interconnection and network elements must be just and reasonable, nondiscriminatory, and based on the cost of providing the interconnection or network element. This section also deals with charges for the transportation and termination of traffic and with wholesale prices for telecommunications services.

9. Since 47 U.S.C. § 252(e) compels State commissions to review interconnection agreements between telecommunications carriers, the Commission adopted the Interconnection

Agreement Rules to establish the procedures for Commission review and approval of all interconnection agreements entered into between telecommunications carriers.

10. Under the 47 U.S.C. § 252(i) “pick and choose” provision of the Act, Sprint may at some future date opt-into the rates, terms, and conditions of any other Commission approved interconnection agreement between CenturyTel and another provider.

C. Findings

11. Rule 4 CCR 723-44-5.7.2.1 of the Interconnection Agreement Rules provides that the Commission may reject a submitted interconnection agreement entered into by negotiation only if:

(1) The agreement, or portion thereof, discriminates against a telecommunications carrier not a party to the agreement; or

(2) The implementation of such agreement, or portion thereof, is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or

(3) The agreement is not in compliance with intrastate telecommunications service quality standards or requirements.

Accord 47 U.S.C. § 252(e)(2)(A). In light of the requirements of Rule 4 CCR 723-44-5.7.2.1, we find that the Agreement should be approved, and, therefore, that the Application should be granted.

12. The Agreement addresses all pertinent provisions of 47 U.S.C. § 251. With respect to 47 U.S.C. § 252(d), costing and pricing issues are governed by the Agreement which incorporates by reference interim and final orders of the Commission.

D. Conclusion

13. Based upon the record in the present proceeding and the standards for review of interconnection agreements as set forth in the Interconnection Agreement Rules, we conclude

that the Application should be granted and that the Agreement between CenturyTel and Sprint should be approved.

II. ORDER

A. The Commission Orders That:

1. The Joint Application filed by CenturyTel of Eagle, Inc., CenturyTel of Colorado, Inc., and Sprint Spectrum, L.P. on April 7, 2004, which application incorporated their Interconnection Agreement, is granted.

2. This Order is effective on its Mailed Date.

B. ADOPTED IN COMMISSIONERS' WEEKLY MEETING May 26, 2004.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

Commissioners