October 14, 1998

Charlie Creason, President

Project Mutual Telephone

507 G Street

Rupert, ID 83350

RE: Albion Telephone Company EAS; Case No.  GNR-T-96-9

Dear Mr. Creason:

The Secretary of the Commission provided me a copy of your correspondence dated October 5, 1998.  You noted in your letter that the Commission in Case No. GNR-T-96-9 is considering requests for extended area service (EAS) between Albion Telephone exchanges in Cassia County and U S WEST exchanges in Burley and Declo, Idaho.  Your letter asks the Commission, if it “grants the expanded area calling, . . . to include Project Mutual’s Mini-Cassia exchanges which include Oakley, Burley/Hayburn, Paul, Rupert, Minidoka and Norland.”

The Commission Staff and other parties in Case No. GNR-T-96-9 are obtaining evidence and preparing testimony to prefile on November 13 for a Commission hearing on December 8, 1998.  The Commission is legally required to base its decision on the evidence presented to it on the record. Because the Project Mutual exchanges were not previously a part of the case, the parties have not obtained information, nor are they able to prepare evidence, regarding the possible inclusion of the Project Mutual exchanges in the case.  Although the Commission by order could include the Project Mutual exchanges in Case No. GNR-T-96-9, to do so would create a delay and require postponement of the hearing set for December 8.  Because this case was initiated two years ago and the hearing has been reset more than once, the Commission Staff does not intend to ask the Commission to further delay Case No. GNR-T-96-9 by expanding it to include the Project Mutual exchanges.

The Commission Staff believes consideration of EAS between Project Mutual’s exchanges and Albion’s exchanges should be a separate case in order to prevent any further delays in processing Case No. GNR-T-96-9.  In addition, Project Mutual is not subject to Commission regulation, thus a case involving Project Mutual probably would proceed differently from Case No. GNR-T-96-9.  Please call me if you have any questions regarding the process for opening a case to consider EAS between Project Mutual exchanges  and the exchanges operated by Albion Telephone.

Sincerely,

Weldon B.  Stutzman

Deputy Attorney General

WBS/vld

cc:Myrna Walters, Commission Secretary

Conley Ward

Ray Hendershot

Rich Redman, Albion Telephone Company