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Attorney for the Commission Staff

BEFORE  THE  IDAHO  PUBLIC  UTILITIES  COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE JOINT PETITION)

OF U S WEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC.)CASE  NO.  USW-T-97-4/

AND RURAL TELEPHONE COMPANY)RUR-T-97-1

FOR AMENDMENT OF THEIR RESPECTIVE)

CERTIFICATES OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE)COMMENTS OF THE

AND NECESSITY.)COMMISSION STAFF

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COMES  NOW  the Staff of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission, by and through its Attorney of record, Weldon B. Stutzman, Deputy Attorney General, and submits the following comments.

On January 17, 1997, the Commission received a Joint Petition for amendment of certified service area boundaries from U S WEST and Rural Telephone.  In this petition Rural and U S WEST desire to adjust the boundary between the Tipanuk and Mountain Home Exchanges to add an approximately thirty square mile area to Rural’s Tipanuk Exchange, and to exclude that area from U S WEST’s Mountain Home Exchange.

The requested Certificate amendments will not affect the service area boundaries of any other certificated telecommunications carrier, and will not injure or interfere with the operation of any line, plant or system of any other public utility already constructed.

Staff has visited the area under consideration and makes the following observations:

The northern portion of the U S WEST Mountain Home exchange is very sparsely populated.  The general topography is rolling desert land changing to hills.  Most of the roads are unimproved dirt.  The specific area under consideration begins at a point along Canyon Creek Road approximately 7½ miles north of Interstate 15.  In the general vicinity is located a group of buildings on the east side of Canyon Creek Road.  This complex is served by miles of open wire from the U S WEST Mountain Home exchange.  From this point the nearest building, which appears to be a brick structure with adjoining corrals, is four miles north.  The nearest home is approximately ½ mile north of the last U S WEST subscriber then, 4½ miles west.  (See attached map.)

One residential customer currently receives service in the subject area from U S WEST.  U S WEST agrees to maintain an adequate level of service to this customer.

According to Rural Telephone President Jim Martell, the cost to provide service in this area will be approximately $32,000+ 10%.  This amount would provide six miles of six-pair cable with carrier installed and ready for service.  Mr. Martell has informed Staff that all rights-of-way and easements have been secured and that Rural Telephone Company is ready to begin construction upon Commission approval and the weather.  Currently there is one business subscriber known to Staff who is requesting multiple lines and Rural Telephone states it has received six requests for residential service in this area.

Staff believes that the public convenience and necessity would be well served by this exchange between U S WEST and Rural Telephone.

Staff recommends the Commission approve the Joint Petition of U S WEST and Rural Telephone Company in the matter of boundary modification between the U S WEST Mountain Home Exchange and Rural Telephone Tipanuk Exchange.

DATED  at Boise, Idaho, this            day of February 1997.

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Weldon B. Stutzman

Deputy Attorney General

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Jim Long

Telecommunications Analyst

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