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VIA ECFS

EX PARTE

June 29, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90; *Petition of USTelecom for Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c) to Accelerate Investment in Broadband and Next-Generation Networks*, WC Docket No. 18-141; *8YY Access Charge Reform*, WC Docket No. 18-156

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On June 28, 2018, Tony Thomas, President and Chief Executive Officer of Windstream Services, LLC (“Windstream”), and the undersigned, met with Commissioner Michael O’Rielly and Amy Bender, Commissioner O’Rielly’s Wireline Legal Advisor, to discuss broadband deployment issues, USTelecom’s forbearance petition and the 8YY Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-referenced proceedings.

During the meeting, Windstream emphasized that it was fully committed to helping close the digital divide and supported initiatives, such as the Connect America Fund, that helped to establish a business case for rural broadband expansion and improvement. Windstream noted, however, that overbuilding of current network infrastructure was a risk and that steps should be taken to ensure that all funds, including those disbursed by other federal entities, are used to efficiently deliver broadband to unserved and underserved populations in rural America.

In addition, Windstream raised USTelecom’s recent ex parte outlining a modified transition proposal for unbundled network elements.¹ Windstream expressed its view that the proposal represented a reasonable compromise between parties with competing interests and that the transition period specified therein reflected the minimum amount of time necessary.

With respect to 8YY intercarrier compensation, Windstream underscored that it was not opposed to addressing market participants engaged in manipulative network management practices. However, large 8YY providers would be the beneficiaries of a move to bill and keep

¹ See USTelecom Ex Parte, WC Docket No. 18-141 (filed June 21, 2018).

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for all originating access, while costs would be shifted to consumers, essentially eliminating “toll free” 8YY calling. Windstream specified that there are reasonable solutions to address “bad actors” with respect to 8YY and that the Commission should seek a narrow remedy rather than a global solution that reduces the funding available for the transition to IP networks.

Please contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

/s/ Thomas Whitehead

Thomas Whitehead

cc: Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Amy Bender