

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Connect America Fund)	WC Docket No. 10-90
)	
ETC Annual Reports and Certification)	WC Docket No. 14-58
)	
Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime)	CC Docket No. 01-92

COMMENTS OF WINDSTREAM CORPORATION

Windstream Services, LLC, on behalf of its incumbent local exchange carrier (“ILEC”) affiliates (hereinafter “Windstream”), submits the following comments in response to the Commission’s *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM)* seeking comment on streamlining annual reporting requirements for Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs).¹

Windstream is appreciative of the Commission’s decision in the *Report and Order* accompanying the *FNPRM* to eliminate the requirement for price cap ETCs to file a service quality improvement plan and annual updates.² As the Commission recognizes, price cap ETCs receiving Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II support already are required to submit, on ongoing basis, geocoded location information to demonstrate their compliance with the program’s mandate that support recipients provide qualifying service to a specific number of locations.³ This mandate is essentially the ETCs’ plan for service quality improvement in connection with CAF Phase II support, and thus any additional service quality improvement plan

¹ *Connect America Fund, et al.*, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, Order and Order on Reconsideration, and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (released March 30, 2016) (*FNPRM*).

² *Id.* at ¶ 220.

³ *See* 47 C.F.R. § 54.313(e)(1).

or “five-year plan” requirement would be unnecessary and overly burdensome for providers.

Similarly, Windstream is supportive of the Commission’s proposals in the *FNPRM* to eliminate or modify the requirements by ETCs to provide outage information, unfulfilled service requests, the number of complaints per 1,000 subscribers for both voice and broadband service, pricing for both voice and broadband, and certification that the ETC is complying with applicable service quality standards.⁴ The current Form 481, even with the elimination of the service quality improvement plan requirement, is a massive undertaking and requires substantial internal resources. As the Commission notes, much of this information is collected or collectible through other means.⁵ For example, the Commission already has mechanisms to collect outage reporting information and consumer complaints, and Form 481 is in many respects duplicative and is not the most efficient way for the Commission to obtain such information in a usable form.

To the extent the Commission decides to retain any of these obligations, Windstream supports its proposals to clarify certifications and ensure that reporting requirements are appropriately tailored to demonstrate compliance with CAF Phase II obligations.⁶ Thus, if the Commission retains the obligation to certify compliance with applicable service quality standards, it should adopt its proposal to clarify what standards and rules are “applicable.” Moreover, to the extent the Commission retains an obligation to report pricing information, it should limit that obligation to prices of offerings in CAF Phase II areas that are used to meet the program’s obligations, rather than the full range of service offerings.

⁴ *FNPRM* at ¶ 388.

⁵ *See id.*

⁶ *See id.* at ¶¶ 390-91.

Finally, Windstream supports the Commission's proposal to eliminate ETCs' requirement to file duplicate copies of Form 481 with states and Tribal governments.⁷ As the Commission notes, this would reduce the filing burden on ETCs, and an online tool permitting such state and Tribal governments access to Form 481 data would be beneficial to users. However, Windstream urges the Commission to ensure that such a tool, when available, provides appropriate protection for information submitted confidentially.

CONCLUSION

Windstream is supportive of the Commission's ongoing efforts to minimize and appropriately tailor the reporting requirements of CAF Phase II support recipients while improving its own ability to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁷ See *id.* at ¶ 391.