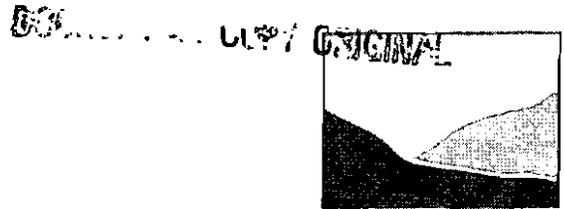


# SOUTHWESTERN COMMISSION

125 Bonnie Lane, Sylva, NC 28713

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May 5, 2009

Pat Smathers, Mayor of Canton  
Chairman of the Board

**FILED/ACCEPTED**

**MAY 14 2009**

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

Cherokee County

Andrews  
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Hayesville

Graham County

Robbinsville  
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Haywood County

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Clyde  
Maggie Valley  
Waynesville

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Dillsboro  
Forest Hills  
Sylva  
Webster

Macon County

Franklin  
Highlands

Swain County

Bryson City

Mr. Thomas Buckley  
Sr. Deputy Chief, Telecommunications Access Policy Division  
Wireline Competition Bureau  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St SW  
Washington DC 20054

Re: Proposed RHCPP Project Merger – WC Docket No. – 02-60  
Merger of North Carolina RHCPP projects:

Dear Mr. Buckley:

This letter is to formally request that the FCC grant a merger of the Western Carolina University Project (project coordinator Southwestern Commission) - \$3,596,290 - with the following other NC-based Rural Health Care Pilot Projects:

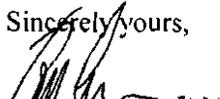
- o Albemarle Health - \$1,583,076,
- o University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina - \$960,939 ,
- o North Carolina TeleHealth Network (project coordinator Cabarrus Health Alliance) - \$6,023,985.

The Cabarrus Health Alliance will assume the project coordinator role for the combined NC project and will have formal authority to request use of the discounts available to our RHCPP Project. We (Southwestern Commission) will take up an advisory role in the combined project.

Subsequent to the announcement of the selection of the RHCPP proposals in November 2007 by the FCC, selectee Western Carolina University (WCU) searched among its partner agencies and organizations for the best method and process to use the discounting opportunity in support of the RHCPP program objectives. As a result of this search discussions occurred between WCU and the Southwestern Commission. In mid-2008 we agreed to formally take on the program coordinator role. Since that time we have been seeking a practical way to proceed with the project. We recently concluded that merging with the other NC RHCPP projects to pursue the development of a broadband network for eligible hospitals in NC would be the best option for supporting the RHCPP's objectives and serving NC's citizens. We are enthusiastic about this approach and wish to proceed with all due speed.

We will await your formal notice that the projects are merged.

Sincerely yours,

  
Mr. Bill Gibson  
Executive Director

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