

On Wednesday, October 6th, 2010, Mark Johnson, Chief Technology Officer of MCNC and Joe Freddoso, President and CEO of MCNC met with Lisa Gelb, Deputy Chief of the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau and James Batchell Attorney Advisor of the Wireline Competition Bureau.

MCNC explained its role as the operator of the research and education backbone network in North Carolina. This backbone network, called the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN), provides intranet, transport and Internet Access services to almost all K20 public education institutions in North Carolina and most private colleges and universities. MCNC's work with K12 school districts and schools and charter schools in the state has given it broad exposure to current eRate rules.

The MCNC representatives discussed the organization's positive view of the revised eRate rules. The revised rules surrounding dark fiber as an eligible cost was discussed. MCNC expressed that dark fiber purchase through IRU or fiber construction would benefit a limited number of school districts but that these were generally large districts with high numbers of students. The initial capital investment would very likely be justified by the long term cost avoidance over current lease models.

The MCNC representatives also discussed the benefits that research and education networks provide to K12 education institutions including aggregation of demand for Commodity Internet access among several institutions. The aggregation leads to lower per meg prices for commodity access. The MCNC representatives expressed support for research and education networks being eligible to provide direct services to schools and schools districts as part of the revised eRate rules.