

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**September 30, 2024**

<b>IN RE:</b>	)	
	)	
<b>PETITION OF AMERICAN BROADBAND</b>	)	<b>DOCKET NO.</b>
<b>AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY</b>	)	<b>24-00025</b>
<b>LLC FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE</b>	)	
<b>TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER IN</b>	)	
<b>THE STATE OF TENNESSEE</b>	)	

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**ORDER DESIGNATING AMERICAN BROADBAND AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
COMPANY LLC AS AN ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER**

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This matter came before, Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard, Commissioner Robin L. Morrison, Commissioner Clay R. Good, Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill, and Commissioner David Crowell of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (the “Commission” or “TPUC”), the panel assigned to this docket, during a regularly scheduled Commission Conference held on August 12, 2024, for consideration of the *Petition of American Broadband and Telecommunications Company, LLC* (“*Petition*”) filed by American Broadband and Telecommunications Company, LLC (“American Broadband” or “Company”) on April 19, 2024.

**BACKGROUND AND *PETITION***

In accordance with Tennessee law, the Commission annually certifies wireline companies as Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (“ETC”) upon verifying compliance with federal standards.<sup>1</sup> Orders designating wireline companies as ETCs are submitted to the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) to allow designated Tennessee companies to receive federal funding for certain services, including Lifeline service. Prior to Tennessee legislative changes in 2022, the Commission lacked authority to designate non-wireline companies, e.g., wireless or cellular providers, as ETCs.

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<sup>1</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 54.314 (2023). *See also* Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-104(c) (2023).

Tennessee Public Acts Chapter 789 enacted on March 4, 2022, and signed into law on April 8, 2022, provides the Commission authority to designate cellular providers as ETCs. The newly enacted language stipulates:

Notwithstanding § 65-4-101(6)(A)(vi), the Commission may upon petition designate a provider or reseller of domestic public cellular radio telephone service as an eligible telecommunications carrier pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 54.201 for purposes of providing Lifeline service.<sup>2</sup>

On April 19, 2024 American Broadband and Telecommunications Company LLC filed its *Petition* for the purpose of providing Lifeline service to qualifying Tennessee consumers. In its *Petition*, American Broadband states that it meets all the statutory and regulatory requirements for designation as an ETC, including Tennessee Code Annotated Section 65-4-104 as recently amended. Further, American Broadband states it has been designated a Lifeline Only wireless ETC in twenty-one (21) other states and is also authorized by the FCC and Uniformed Service Administrative Company (“USAC”) to participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) throughout the United States, including Tennessee.<sup>3</sup> As support, the Company submitted a Compliance Plan and a Revised Amended Compliance Plan, which were FCC approved May 25, 2012.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, American Broadband states that it seeks ETC designation solely to provide Lifeline service to qualifying Tennessee consumers and it will not (and is not eligible to) seek access to funds from the Federal Universal Service Fund (“USF”) for the purpose of participating in the Link-Up program or providing service to high-cost areas.<sup>5</sup> The Company also filed a signed affidavit by Jeffrey Ansted, President, American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC, affirming that the matters, facts and statements set forth in the *Petition* are true to the best of his knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tenn. Code Ann. §65-4-104(c) (West 2022). *See also* 2022 Tenn. Pub. Acts Ch. 789.

<sup>3</sup> *Petition*, pp. 7-8 (April 19, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* p. 11 and Exh. B.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* p. 27 and Exh. A.

## **STANDARD FOR COMMISSION APPROVAL**

Commission approval is required for designation as an ETC pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, 47 U.S.C.A § 214(e), which provides, in relevant part:

### **(E) PROVISION OF UNIVERSAL SERVICE**

**(1) ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS.** A common carrier designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier under paragraph (2), (3), or (6) shall be eligible to receive universal service support in accordance with section 254 of this title and shall, throughout the service area for which the designation is received—

**(A)** offer the services that are supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms under section 254(c) of this title, either using its own facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier's services (including the services offered by another eligible telecommunications carrier); and

**(B)** advertise the availability of such services and the charges therefor using media of general distribution.

### **(2) DESIGNATION OF ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS**

A State Commission shall upon its own motion or upon request designate a common carrier that meets the requirements of paragraph (1) as an eligible telecommunications carrier for a service area designated by the State commission. Upon request and consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, the State commission may, in the case of an area served by a rural telephone company, and shall, in the case of all other areas, designate more than one common carrier as an eligible telecommunications carrier for a service area designated by the State commission, so long as each additional requesting carrier meets the requirements of paragraph (1). Before designating an additional eligible telecommunications carrier for an area served by a rural telephone company, the State commission shall find that the designation is in the public interest.<sup>7</sup>

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

State Commissions have been designated to certify ETCs that meet the requisite federal criteria, so that such designated companies may in turn receive federal support for providing certain services. In this case, American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC is seeking federal low-cost funds which are designated to provide Lifeline service to qualified Tennessee consumers.

According to information provided by the Company, American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC has been offering the requisite services (Lifeline) as defined in Section 254(c) of the Federal Telecommunications Act in other states. Moreover, the Company advertises the availability of the requisite services and otherwise meets the eligibility criteria for designation as an

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<sup>7</sup> 47 U.S.C.A. § 214(e)(1)-(2).

ETC. Further, this request to become certified as an ETC certainly meets the public interest as approval of this petition will allow American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC access to federal funds to greatly assist in the provisioning of wireless voice service as well as broadband service in areas that otherwise might not receive such essential service.

Upon consideration of the *Petition* and the entire record in this docket, the panel found that American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC meets the qualifications necessary to be designated as an ETC and that ETC designation is in the public interest. Therefore, the panel unanimously approved the *Petition*.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:**

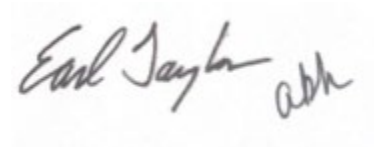
1. The *Petition of American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier* is approved, designating American Broadband and Telecommunications LLC as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier in the State of Tennessee.
2. Any person who is aggrieved by the Commission's decision in this matter may file a Petition for Reconsideration with the Commission within fifteen (15) days from the date of this Order.
3. Any person who is aggrieved by the Commission's decision in this matter has the right to judicial review by filing a Petition for Review in the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Middle Section, within sixty (60) days from the date of this Order.

**TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION:**

**Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard**  
**Commissioner Robin L. Morrison**  
**Commissioner Clay R. Good**  
**Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill, and**  
**Commissioner David Crowell, concurring.**

None dissenting.

**ATTEST:**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Earl Taylor", followed by the initials "abh" in a smaller, cursive script.

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**Earl R. Taylor, Executive Director**