

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

January 3, 2025

IN RE:

**APPLICATION OF STRATUS NETWORKS,
INC. TO PROVIDE COMPETING LOCAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES
WITHIN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE**

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**DOCKET NO.
24-00026**

**INITIAL ORDER GRANTING CERTIFICATE OF
PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY**

This matter came before the Administrative Judge of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (the “Commission” or “TPUC”) at a Hearing held on December 19, 2024 to consider the *Application of Stratus Networks, Inc. to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services Within the State of Tennessee* (the “Application”) filed by Stratus Networks, Inc. (“Stratus Networks,” “Applicant,” or “Company”) on April 25, 2024. In its *Application*, Stratus Networks seeks a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (“CCN”) for authority to provide intrastate telecommunications services within the State of Tennessee.

I. LEGAL STANDARD

Stratus Networks’ *Application* was made in accordance with and is considered in light of the criteria for granting a CCN as set forth in Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-201 which provides, in pertinent part:

(a) No public utility shall establish or begin the construction of, or operate any line, plant, or system, or route in or into a municipality or other territory already receiving a like service from another public utility, or establish service therein, without first having obtained from the commission, after written application and hearing, a certificate that the present or future public convenience and necessity require or will require such construction, establishment, and operation, and no person or corporation not at the time a public utility shall commence the

construction of any plant, line, system, or route to be operated as a public utility, or the operation of which would constitute the same, or the owner or operator thereof, a public utility as defined by law, without having first obtained, in like manner, a similar certificate

* * *

(c) (1) After notice to the incumbent local exchange telephone company and other interested parties and following a hearing, the commission shall grant a certificate of convenience and necessity to a competing telecommunications service provider if after examining the evidence presented, the authority finds:

(A) The applicant has demonstrated that it will adhere to all applicable commission policies, rules and orders; and

(B) The applicant possesses sufficient managerial, financial and technical abilities to provide the applied for services.

* * *

Furthermore, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-112, a competing telecommunications provider is required to file with the Commission a small and minority-owned telecommunications business participation plan which provides the provider's plan for purchasing goods and services from small and minority-owned telecommunications businesses and information on programs that might provide technical assistance to such businesses.

II. HEARING ON THE MERITS

In accordance with the requirements of Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-4-204, a public notice of the Hearing in this matter was issued by the Administrative Judge on December 9, 2024 setting the case for Hearing on December 19, 2024. No persons sought intervention prior to or during the Hearing. Mr. Ben Russell, Chief Technical Officer of Stratus Networks, appeared at the Hearing and provided testimony.

Mr. Russell participated in the Hearing, adopting and summarizing his Pre-Filed Testimony with no corrections, revisions, or amendments. Mr. Russell provided an update on the status of

similar applications that were pending in fifteen (15) other states when the *Application* was originally filed. Mr. Russell testified that the Company will comply with all applicable laws, and TPUC rules, policies, and orders and stated that it is in the public interest to grant the *Application*. He also provided a summary of the Company's financial, technical, and managerial qualifications and provided responses to the questions of the Administrative Judge.

The Administrative Judge opened the floor for public comment, but no member of the public came forward to comment. Additionally, the Administrative Judge noted that the Commission received no written comments concerning the *Application*. Upon conclusion of the presentation of its proof, the Administrative Judge granted Stratus Networks' *Application* based upon the findings of fact and conclusions of law stated herein.

III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. STRATUS NETWORKS' QUALIFICATIONS

1. Stratus Networks is an Illinois corporation, formerly known as Access2Go, Inc. authorized to do business in the State of Tennessee.¹

2. The Company's principal office is located at 4700 N. Prospect Road in Peoria, Illinois 61625. The Company's telephone number is (800) 990-9093.

3. The *Application* and information in the record indicate that Stratus Networks has the requisite technical and managerial ability to provide competitive local and intrastate telecommunications services within the State of Tennessee. Specifically, Stratus Networks' management team possesses extensive business, technical, operational, and regulatory experience in the telecommunications industry.²

¹ *Application*, pp. 1-2 & Exhs. B, C (April 25, 2024).

² Commission records indicate that the Applicant previously held a CCN to provide resold telecommunications services within the state. *See In re: Application of Access2Go, Inc. for Authority to Provide Resell Telecommunication Services in Tennessee*, Docket No. 10-00175, *Order Granting Authority to Resell Interexchange Long Distance*

4. Stratus Networks has the necessary capital and financial ability to provide the services it proposes to offer.

5. Stratus Networks has represented that it will adhere to all applicable statutes, policies, rules, and orders of the Commission.

B. PROPOSED SERVICES

Stratus Networks proposes to offer basic local exchange telephone services and exchange access services in Tennessee. The Company intends to offer such service statewide, to the extent open to competition.³

C. PERMITTING COMPETITION TO SERVE THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY

Stratus Networks' *Application* and its proposed services would inure to the benefit of the present and future public convenience by permitting competition in the telecommunications services markets in the State and fostering the development of an efficient, technologically advanced statewide system of telecommunications services. Stratus Networks' proposed services would also assist in ensuring that persons are able to obtain competitive pricing, increased accountability through reliable and responsive customer service, and advanced technological innovation.

D. SMALL AND MINORITY-OWNED TELECOMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS PARTICIPATION PLAN AND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Stratus Networks has filed a satisfactory small and minority-owned telecommunications business participation plan, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 65-5-112 and the Commission's Rules.

Services in Tennessee (January 13, 2011) ("2010 CCN Docket"). See also *In re: Petition of Access2Go, Inc. to Change Its Name to Stratus Networks, Inc.* Docket No. 14-00156, *Petition* (December 12, 2014). The Company voluntarily surrendered its CCN to provide resold telecommunications services in 2021. See *2010 CCN Docket, Access2Go, Inc., (now known as Stratus Networks, Inc.) Notification of Voluntarily Surrendering Certificate to Provide Resold Interexchange Services and Such Tariff and Letter of Credit Be Cancelled and Withdrawn* (November 5, 2021).

³ *Application*, pp. 2-3 (April 25, 2024).

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The *Application of Stratus Networks, Inc. to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services Within the State of Tennessee*, filed by Stratus Networks, Inc. is approved.

2. Any person(s) who is aggrieved by the Administrative Judge's decision in this matter may file a petition for reconsideration within fifteen (15) days from the date of this Order.

3. This Initial Order shall become a Final Order of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission, if no petition for reconsideration or appeal of this Order is filed prior to the expiration of the fifteen (15) day appeal period.



Aaron J. Conklin, Administrative Judge