

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

December 20, 2024

IN RE:)	
)	
APPLICATION OF RIPPLE FIBER)	DOCKET NO.
TENNESSEE LLC FOR A CERTIFICATE)	24-00054
TO PROVIDE COMPETING LOCAL)	
TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES)	

**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 10, 2024 to consider the *Application of Ripple Fiber Tennessee LLC for a Certificate to Provide Competing Local Telecommunications Services* (the “*Application*”) filed by Ripple Fiber Tennessee, LLC (“Ripple Fiber,” “Applicant,” or “Company”) on August 26, 2024. In its *Application*, Ripple Fiber seeks a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (“CCN”) for authority to provide intrastate telecommunications services within the State of Tennessee.

I. LEGAL STANDARD

Ripple Fiber’s *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 November 27, 2024 setting the case for Hearing on December 10, 2024. No persons sought intervention prior to or during the Hearing. Mr. Lance Van der Spuy, President of Ripple Fiber, appeared at the Hearing and provided testimony.

Mr. Van der Spuy participated in the Hearing, adopting and summarizing his Pre-Filed Testimony with no corrections, revisions, or amendments. Mr. Van der Spuy 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. Upon conclusion of the presentation of its proof, the Administrative Judge granted Ripple Fiber's *Application* based upon the findings of fact and conclusions of law stated herein.

III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. RIPPLE FIBER'S QUALIFICATIONS

1. Ripple Fiber is a Delaware corporation authorized to do business in the State of Tennessee.
2. The Company's principal office is located at 600 Fairview Road, Southpark, Charlotte, NC 28014. The Company's telephone number is (470) 807-0922.
3. The *Application* and information in the record indicate that Ripple Fiber has the requisite technical and managerial ability to provide competitive local and intrastate telecommunications services within the State of Tennessee. Specifically, Ripple Fiber's management team possesses extensive business, technical, operational, and regulatory experience in the telecommunications industry.
4. Ripple Fiber has the necessary capital and financial ability to provide the services it proposes to offer.
5. Ripple Fiber has represented that it will adhere to all applicable statutes, policies, rules, and orders of the Commission.

B. PROPOSED SERVICES

Ripple Fiber proposes intends to build fiber optic networks in the state of Tennessee, which will initially be used to provide residential subscribers IP based communications services including internet access and VoIP services. As Ripple Fiber's network matures, and in response to customer demand, Ripple will eventually provide switched communications services including local and long-distance services mostly to business enterprise customers.¹

C. PERMITTING COMPETITION TO SERVE THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY

Ripple Fiber's *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. Ripple Fiber's 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

Ripple Fiber 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.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The *Application of Ripple Fiber Tennessee LLC for a Certificate to Provide Local Competing Telecommunications Services*, filed by Ripple Fiber Tennessee, LLC is approved.
2. Any party aggrieved by the Hearing Officer's decision in this matter may file a petition for reconsideration within fifteen (15) days from the date of this Order.

¹ Ripple Fiber Tennessee, LLC Response to Commission Data Request Filed October 7, 2024, p. 1 (October 30, 2024).

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