

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

LeRoy Koppendraye
Ellen Gavin
Marshall Johnson
Phyllis A. Reha
Gregory Scott

Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

In the Matter of a Petition for Extended Area Service from the Inger/Wirt Exchange to the Deer River, Squaw Lake/Northome and Bigfork/Marcell Exchanges

ISSUE DATE: March 28, 2003

DOCKET NO. P-514, 423, 554/CP-97-1097

ORDER DENYING PETITION AND CLOSING DOCKET

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On July 16, 1997, telephone subscribers in the Inger/Wirt exchange petitioned the Commission requesting extended area service (EAS) to the Deer River, Squaw Lake/ Northome and Bigfork/Marcell exchanges.

On August 20, 1997, Paul Bunyan Telephone filed a traffic study for the months of May 1997, through July, 1997.

On August 25, 1997, the Minnesota Department of Public Service, now the Minnesota Department of Commerce, (the Department) filed comments noting that the traffic from the Inger/Wirt exchange to the Deer River, Squaw Lake/ Northome and Bigfork/Marcell exchanges is not sufficient to satisfy the Commission's criterion that at least 50 percent of the customers in the petitioning exchange must make three or more calls per month to the exchange or local calling area to which extended area service is requested. Therefore, the Department recommended that the Commission deny the petition and close the docket.

On October 14, 1997, Paul Bunyan Telephone filed a second traffic study covering the months of May, 1997, through July, 1997. The traffic study revealed that, even with the "weekenders" excluded, none of the proposed routes met the Commission's traffic requirements.

On January 22, 1998, the Commission received a letter from the petition sponsor indicating that he would like the current petition to be processed under the School District EAS law.

On July 24, 2000, in Docket No. P-423/AM-00-965, Paul Bunyan Telephone filed tariffs with the Commission indicating that the Inger/Wirt exchange (the petitioning exchange in this docket) would merge into the Squaw Lake exchange effective September 1, 2000. As a consequence, the Inger/Wirt exchange no longer exists as such. Squaw Lake has EAS to the Northome and Blackduck exchanges, so customers of the former Inger/Wirt exchange have been able to call those exchanges toll free since September 1, 2000.

On July 26, 2000, in Docket No. P-423/AM-00-965, the Department approved the tariffs merging the Inger/Wirt and Squaw Lake exchanges.

The Commission met to consider this matter on March 20, 2003.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This matter was commenced as a standard EAS petition from customers in a single exchange, an exchange that was subsequently merged into and became part of the Squaw Lake Exchange and, therefore, no longer exists.

When the Inger/Wirt exchange did exist, the traffic between it and the petitioned exchanges (the Deer River, Squaw Lake/ Northome and Bigfork/Marcell exchanges) did not meet the EAS traffic standard, regardless of whether Inger/Wirt's weekender customers are counted (as they were in one traffic study) or are excluded (as they were in another traffic study).

The petition sponsor has filed a letter requesting that the petition be processed as a request for School District EAS, but has not a filed a request for School District EAS signed by at least 15% of the subscribers in each exchange or 600 subscribers in each exchange (whichever is less) as is the threshold requirement for School District EAS.¹

In these circumstances, the Commission will deny the petition for standard EAS filed July 16, 1997 and close the docket.

ORDER

1. The petition for extended area service (EAS) between the Inger/Wirt exchange and the Deer River, Squaw Lake/ Northome and Bigfork/Marcell exchanges is denied.

¹ The criteria for establishing School District EAS routes are set by statute. Minnesota Laws 1997, Chapter 59. The threshold criterion is that a petition for School District EAS must be signed by at least 15% of the subscribers in each exchange, or 600 subscribers in each exchange, whichever is less.

2. The docket, accordingly, shall be closed.
3. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar
Executive Secretary

(S E A L)

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