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BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Joint Application of Verizon Communications Inc., Frontier Communications Parent, Inc., Frontier California Inc., Citizens Telecommunications Company of California Inc., Frontier Communications of the Southwest Inc., Frontier Communications Online and Long Distance Inc., and Frontier Communications of America, Inc. for Approval of the Transfer of Control of Frontier California Inc. (U1002C), Citizens Telecommunications Company of California (U1024C), Frontier Communications of the Southwest Inc. (U1026C), Frontier Communications Online and Long Distance Inc. (U7167C), and Frontier Communications of America, Inc. (U5429C), to Verizon Communications Inc. Pursuant to California Public Utilities Code Section 854.

Application 24-10-006

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING GRANTING IN PART THE MOTION TO MODIFY THE PROCEEDING SCHEDULE AND PROVIDING BRIEFING INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTIES

This ruling grants in part the motion of the Joint Applicants¹ to amend the proceeding schedule to combine submission of comments on settlement

¹ The Joint Applicants are: Verizon Communications Inc. (Verizon), Frontier Communications Parent, Inc. (Frontier Parent), and Frontier's California operating subsidiaries (Frontier California Inc., Citizens Telecommunications Company of California Inc., Frontier Communications of the Southwest Inc., Frontier Communications Online and Long Distance Inc., and Frontier Communications of America, Inc.).

agreements with submission of briefs. In addition, this ruling provides briefing instructions to parties to facilitate efficient and timely resolution of this proceeding.

1. Background

The schedule for this proceeding was established in the January 13, 2025 Assigned Commissioner's Scoping Memo and Ruling. Subsequently, this schedule was modified by the May 29, 2025 Assigned Commissioners Amended Scoping Memo and Ruling and the July 23, 2025 Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Modifying the Procedural Schedule.

On September 4, 2025, the Joint Applicants filed settlement agreements pursuant to Rule 12.1 with 1) the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), 2) the Communications Workers of America, District 9 (CWA), and 3) the Public Advocates Office at the California Public Utilities Commission (Cal Advocates). For each settlement agreement, the settling parties filed a motion to request that the Commission adopt the agreement, triggering a 30-day comment period.

On September 5, 2025, the Joint Applicants filed a motion to modify the proceeding schedule (Motion). In the Motion, the Joint Applicants proposed an alternative schedule that would 1) combine the deadline for opening briefs with the deadline for comments on the settlement agreements, 2) adjust the schedule for briefs, and 2) conclude the proceeding in December 2025.² Specifically, they proposed the following modified schedule:³

² Motion at 1-2.

³ Motion at 1.

Event	Date
Opening briefs and comments on 9/4/25 settlement motions	September 26, 2025
Reply briefs and reply comments on 9/4/25 settlement motions	October 6, 2025
Proposed decision	November 18, 2025
Final decision	December 18, 2025

In addition, the Joint Parties requested that if any oral argument is to take place, it should occur after issuance of the proposed decision in early December, “without creating any further delay.”⁴ In sum, these changes would move the opening brief deadline backward by two weeks and reduce the interval between opening and reply briefs from three weeks to 10 days.⁵

The Utility Reform Network (TURN) and the Center for Accessible Technology (CforAT) filed responses to the Joint Applicants’ Motion on September 10, 2025.

On September 11, 2025, the Joint Applicants requested the opportunity to reply to TURN and CforAT pursuant to Rule. I granted that request on September 11, 2025 and the Joint Applicants replied on September 12, 2025.

On September 12, 2025, CETF requested the opportunity to reply to TURN and CforAT’s responses. I granted that request on September 12, 2025, and allowed all interested parties to reply to TURN and CforAT’s responses.

On September 12, 2025, CETF replied in support of the Joint Applicant’s Motion. On September 15, 2025, CWA provided notice to the service list of this proceeding that it did not intend to file a reply to TURN and CforAT’s responses,

⁴ Motion at 1.

⁵ Motion at 2.

but that it “does, however, support the Joint Applicants’ motion.”⁶ On September 16, 2025, Cal Advocates also provided notice to the service list of this proceeding that it did not intend to file a reply to TURN and CforAT’s responses. Also on September 16, 2025, Access Humboldt provided notice to the service list of this proceeding that it does not intend to file a reply TURN and CforAT’s responses and noted that it does not support the Joint Applicants’ Motion.

2. Motion to Amend the Proceeding Schedule

The Joint Applicants argued that inclusion of party comments on the September 4, 2025 settlement agreements in in briefs would “achieve significant efficiencies”⁷ and “only results in a reduction of one business day in the timeframe for reply comments on the settlements under Rule 12.2.”⁸

In addition, the Joint Applicants stated that “delaying a resolution until 2026 would unnecessarily perpetuate Frontier’s financial challenges and risk restarting the clock on the United States Department of Justice’s [DOJ] clearance, which expires on February 13, 2026.”⁹

Further, the Joint Applicants argued that “the existence and expansive scope of the Settlement Agreements with Cal Advocates, CETF, and CWA should greatly reduce the scope of the disputes in the proceeding.”¹⁰ According to the Joint Applicants, the three settlement agreements establish a “powerful set of tangible deliverables that, when combined with the extensive testimony from

⁶ September 15, 2025 e-mail of Rachel E. Koss, “[EXTERNAL] RE: A.24-10-006 | E-mail Ruling Granting Request for Reply.”

⁷ Motion at 2.

⁸ Motion at 2.

⁹ Motion at 2.

¹⁰ Motion at 3.

the parties already presented in the proceeding, greatly narrow the issues to be briefed.”¹¹ Lastly, the Joint Applicants argued that “there is no longer an imperative to provide extended intervals between hearings and briefs, nor is it necessary to create a large gap between opening and reply briefs or provide the full 30 days for comment on the September 4, 2025 settlement agreements.”¹²

3. Responses

3.1. Briefing Timeline

In its response, TURN argued that the Commission should not adopt the schedule changes requested by the Joint Applicants and should retain the existing procedural schedule. Specifically, TURN stated that the Commission was not obligated to issue a final decision “according to the Joint Applicants’ preferred timeline,”¹³ and that the Joint Applicants “bear the largest share of responsibility” if the current procedural schedule “jeopardizes” any element of the transaction.¹⁴

In addition, TURN argued against the Joint Applicants’ claim that the “expansive scope” of the three proposed settlement agreements should facilitate expedited resolution of the proceeding.¹⁵ TURN noted that the three settlement agreements were not all-party settlements that have the unanimous support of all active parties that addressed the underlying issues in testimony or are likely

¹¹ Motion at 3.

¹² Motion at 3.

¹³ TURN Response at 1.

¹⁴ TURN Response at 1.

¹⁵ TURN Response at 2.

to address them in briefs, but rather an agreement between only a subset of those parties.¹⁶ TURN stated that:

whatever the Commission thinks of the scope of the agreements in terms of the breadth of the issues covered, it should recognize that at this juncture their submission may not make the agency's task significantly easier. Instead, it could still need to resolve differences in the positions taken by the settling parties and the remaining non-settling parties, a task that may not be materially different (and equally time consuming) as compared to what the Commission would face absent the settlements.¹⁷

Lastly, TURN argued against the Joint Applicants' statement that there is no longer an imperative to provide extended intervals between hearings and briefs or between opening and reply briefs.¹⁸ TURN again stated that the three settlements were not all-party settlements, and that in the case of any contested settlements the contesting party "will need to brief the new positions, and are likely to need to rely, to some extent, on any new evidence adduced through the evidentiary hearings."¹⁹

TURN concluded that any imperative to resolve the proceeding quickly "must be balanced against the imperatives of providing non-settling parties with a sufficient opportunity to review ... the recently-submitted [*sic*] settlements and provide the Commission with the quality of analysis and presentation of alternatives that the agency needs...."²⁰

¹⁶ TURN Response at 2.

¹⁷ TURN Response at 2.

¹⁸ Motion at 3; TURN Response at 3.

¹⁹ TURN Response at 3.

²⁰ TURN Response at 4.

CforAT also argued against granting the Joint Applicants' Motion. According to CforAT, "the multiple delays in the schedule for the Commission to resolve this proceeding have been the result of strategic choices made by the Applicants."²¹ CforAT stated that, as a small intervenor with limited staff, it "should not be penalized for these tactical choices by Applicants, particularly when CforAT participated in good faith...."²² CforAT argued that the proposed changes to the procedural schedule would put "substantial pressure on [its] ability to effectively address all pending legal and factual issues and to contribute to the Commission's consideration of the public interest impacts of the proposed application and proposed settlements."²³

3.2. Combined Settlement Comments and Briefs

TURN did not comment on the Joint Applicants' proposal to combine comments on the settlement agreements with briefs. CforAT stated that, as a small intervenor, it would "not experience combined deadlines as an opportunity for 'efficiencies,' but as a further tactical effort by Applicants to reduce our ability to support the Commission's efforts to fully address all issues based on a complete record."²⁴ In addition, CforAT noted that it would "experience substantial strain if we were required to simultaneously comment on three settlement agreements and draft legal briefs, and to do so on an extremely tight timeline."²⁵

²¹ CforAT Response at 8.

²² CforAT Response at 9.

²³ CforAT Response at 9.

²⁴ CforAT Response at 11.

²⁵ CforAT Response at 11-12.

4. Replies

In their September 12, 2025 reply to CforAT and TURN, the Joint Applicants argued that CforAT and TURN had failed to rebut the Joint Applicants' showing that there is good cause to grant the Motion.²⁶ The Joint Applicants cited the "swift disposition of the evidentiary hearings" as "compelling grounds for adjusting the schedule as Joint Applicants have requested."²⁷ The Joint Applicants noted the "limited scope of the remaining disputed issues and the limited number of intervenors who continue to advance these disputes" and restated that their requested schedule is "reasonable and warranted."²⁸

Further, the Joint Applicants stated that CforAT and TURN had failed to show that they would be prejudiced by the proposed schedule changes, or that the proposed change to briefing time was a "drastic reduction" in briefing time.²⁹ The Joint Applicants furthered argued that combining the briefing and settlement schedule into a single set of pleadings would streamline the record and promote efficiency for both the Commission and all parties because they involve the same issues.³⁰

5. Discussion

We agree with TURN and CforAT that the Joint Applicants' proposed modifications to the procedural schedule would prejudice non-settling parties and would unduly limit time for parties to fully review the proposed settlement

²⁶ Joint Applicants' Reply at 1.

²⁷ Joint Applicants' Reply at 1.

²⁸ Joint Applicants' Reply at 1.

²⁹ Joint Applicants' Reply at 3.

³⁰ Joint Applicants' Reply at 3.

agreements. Therefore, we deny the Joint Applicants' request to shorten the timeline for submission of briefs.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge the concern of the Joint Applicants and the parties that support their Motion that this proceeding should be resolved timely and in advance of the February 13, 2026 deadline for DOJ clearance. Resolution of the proceeding by this deadline can be achieved without modifications to the proceeding schedule, particularly if the briefing and settlement schedule are combined into a single set of pleadings as proposed by the Joint Applicants.

Therefore, we find that parties shall file any comments on the three September 4, 2025 motions for adoption of settlement agreements as part of their briefs. This extends the deadline for submission of opening comments on the settlement agreements by four days and the submission of reply comments by 12 days.³¹ The proceeding schedule therefore remains as described in the July 23, 2025 Administrative Law Judge's Ruling Modifying the Procedural Schedule with the modification described above. That schedule is reproduced here:

³¹ Pursuant to Rule 12.2, Parties may file comments contesting all or part of the settlement within 30 days of the date that the motion for adoption of settlement was served, and parties may file reply comments within 15 days after the last day for filing comments. Pursuant to Rule 1.2, "these rules shall be liberally construed to secure just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of the issues presented. In special cases and for good cause shown, and within the extent permitted by statute, the Commission may permit deviations from the rules." No statute prohibits extension of the 30 and 15 day comment periods.

Event	Date
Opening Briefs with Rule 12.2 Comments	October 10, 2025
Reply Briefs with Rule 12.2 Comments [matter submitted]	October 31, 2025
Proposed decision	Within 90 days of submission.
Commission decision	Q1 2026

6. Briefing Instructions

To facilitate efficient and timely resolution of the instant proceeding, parties are instructed to file and serve opening briefs of no longer than 40 pages and reply briefs of no more than 20 pages, including any comments on settlement agreements. Both opening and reply briefs shall use the following format:

Section 1: Settlement Agreements

Parties shall provide any comments on the Rule 12.1 settlement agreements pursuant to Rule 12.2.

Section 2: Scoping Questions

- a. Parties shall separately respond to each item and sub-item in scope³² by issue number – 1a to 7b – in the order listed in the May 29, 2025 Assigned Commissioners Amended Scoping Memo and Ruling. Where applicable, parties shall indicate whether the settlement agreements partially or fully meet the requirements of Section 854 and the relevant subsections of Section 854.
- b. In cases where a party has no response to a question in scope, the party may indicate that they have no response to that question.

³² See the May 29, 2025 Assigned Commissioners Amended Scoping Memo and Ruling for the list of issues and sub-issues in scope.

- c. In cases where a party's response applies to more than one question in scope, the party may use a single response for more than one question. For example, "The response to Question XX is the same as the response to Question YY."

IT IS RULED that:

1. The Joint Applicants' September 5, 2025 Motion is partially granted.
2. Opening comments on the Rule 12.1 settlement motions are due on October 10, 2025 as part of opening briefs due on the same date.
3. Reply comments on the Rule 12.1 settlement motions are due on October 31, 2025 as part of opening briefs due on the same date.
4. Parties are directed to submit opening and reply briefs according to the instructions herein.

Dated September 18, 2025, at San Francisco, California.

/s/ ELIZABETH FOX

Elizabeth Fox
Administrative Law Judge