

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Communications Division
Carrier Oversight & Programs Branch**

**RESOLUTION T- 17587
March 1, 2018**

R E S O L U T I O N

Resolution T-17587. This Resolution approves the request of TruConnect Communications, Inc. (U-4380-C), an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier, to add an underlying wireless carrier, to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement, and to expand its Lifeline service area throughout California where its underlying carriers offer wireless service.

Summary

By this Resolution, the California Public Utilities Commission grants the request of TruConnect Communications, Inc. (U-4380-C), a wireless Eligible Telecommunications Carrier operating in California, to add an underlying wireless carrier, to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement, and to expand its federal service area statewide where its underlying carriers offer service. Approving TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s request is in the public interest because doing so expands the federal Lifeline service area and the participation of more customers eligible to receive Lifeline in the state.

Subject of Advice Letter

TruConnect Communications, Inc. (TruConnect) filed Advice Letter (AL) 22 on September 11, 2017, requesting to add an underlying wireless carrier, T-Mobile, to be exempt from the ZIP+4¹ requirement, and to expand its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) designated service area statewide consistent with the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC or Commission) authorization of other wireless ETCs to serve the Small Local Exchange Carriers (Small LECs) service areas. TruConnect does not seek designation in tribal areas within California at this time. TruConnect commits to offer federal Lifeline and California LifeLine in the expanded service area offerings the same terms and conditions and the currently approved service plans to all its customers.

¹ ZIP+4 code, introduced in 1983 by the United States Postal Service, includes the five digits of the ZIP Code with four additional digits that determine a more specific geographic location within the five digit segment area for postal delivery.

Background

In Resolution T-17339 (October 6, 2011), the Commission granted Telscape Communications, Inc. (Telscape) an ETC designation throughout California in the service areas of the Uniform Regulatory Framework (URF) carriers excluding the Small LECs service areas. The Commission directed Telscape to coordinate with the Small LECs by using their ZIP+4 data in order to prevent households in the Small LECs' territories from receiving Lifeline wireless phone services from Telscape.²

On March 11, 2014, the Communications Division (CD) approved Telscape's AL 4, granting it authority to operate as a California LifeLine wireless provider throughout the state.

In AL 15 filed on January 22, 2016, Telscape registered its corporate name change as TruConnect which the CD accepted on February 2, 2016.

Notice/Protests

TruConnect served AL 22 via email to all parties on the ETC service list and the California LifeLine Program proceeding list on September 7, 2017, and it appeared in the Commission's Daily Calendar on September 14, 2017. The Commission did not receive protests to this AL filing.

Discussion

TruConnect is a prepaid wireless service provider that offers federal Lifeline and California LifeLine services using the wholesale network service from its underlying carrier, Sprint, to offer the federal and state supported services to eligible customers.

TruConnect filed AL 22 requesting to add T-Mobile as an additional underlying carrier, to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement³ consistent with the Commission's previous authorization of other wireless ETCs to operate in Small LEC service territories,⁴ and to expand its federal Lifeline service area statewide where its underlying carriers offer service. TruConnect does not seek authorization to offer federal Enhanced Lifeline to Tribal land residents at this time.

ETC-Designated Service Area:

In Resolution T-17339, the Commission approved TruConnect's request to become an ETC reselling the services of Sprint and authorized it to offer federal Lifeline services in the service areas of the URF carriers, excluding the Small LEC service areas. In Ordering Paragraph 8, the Commission directed TruConnect to coordinate with the Small LECs to

² See Resolution T-17339 O.P. 8 and 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Resolution T-17266 (*Cricket*); Resolution T-17462 (*Telrite*).

use ZIP+4 codes “to screen customers and ensure that current customers of the Small LECs are not accepted as Telscape wireless federal Lifeline customers.”⁵

Granting TruConnect’s proposed expansion of its ETC-designated service area and exemption from the ZIP+4 requirement would enable the company to serve more eligible California households. Staff finds TruConnect’s proposal in the public interest as it would increase choices for low-income consumers. Staff also finds that, since the Commission granted TruConnect authority in 2014 to offer California LifeLine service throughout the state, it is reasonable to allow the company to offer federal Lifeline service throughout the state as well. Doing so is consistent with the California LifeLine program which has no geographic limitations for service. TruConnect has been compliant in remitting universal service surcharges and CPUC User Fees.

Accordingly, staff recommends approval of TruConnect’s request to add T-Mobile as an underlying carrier, to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement to operate in Small LEC service territories, and to expand its federal Lifeline service area statewide where its underlying carriers offer service.

Safety Considerations:

While wireless mobile phone service and E-911 and/or 911 connection has limitations, approval of TruConnect’s request will expand its service area to more consumers resulting in greater access to mobile services that customers can use during emergencies. The Commission reminds TruConnect of its consumer disclosure responsibilities regarding wireless location accuracy.

Obligations as an ETC and a California LifeLine Provider:

This Resolution does not relieve TruConnect from other requirements of its previously approved Commission authorities (both as an ETC and a California LifeLine provider) including, but not limited to: filing copies of Federal Communications Commission and Universal Service Administrative Company annual reports with the Director of Communications Division at cdcompliance@cpuc.ca.gov; complying with all processes, transmission requirements, eligibility rules, and validation checks administered by the California LifeLine Administrator; submitting marketing materials for staff review and approval; requesting service plan changes via the advice letter process; sending outage reports to staff; complying with consumer protections and 911 safety requirements; and, submitting its CPUC User Fees and universal service public purpose program surcharges on a timely basis.

Conclusions:

The Commission concurs with staff’s recommendation and approves TruConnect’s requests: 1) to add underlying carrier T-Mobile; 2) to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement of Resolution T-17339; and, 3) to expand its ETC-designated service area

⁵ See Resolution T-17339, O.P. 8.

throughout California where its underlying carriers offer service, including in the Small LEC territories.

TruConnect should file a Tier 2 advice letter to request approval for any future changes including, but not limited to: 1) its terms and conditions; 2) its approved federal ETC and California LifeLine wireless service plans; 3) its underlying carrier(s); and, 4) its designated service areas. To offer Lifeline service on federally-recognized Tribal lands that qualifies for Enhanced Tribal land support, TruConnect should file a Tier 2 advice letter demonstrating compliance with 47 Code of Federal Regulations Section 54.202(c) and the California LifeLine Program's rules.

COMMENTS

In compliance with Public Utilities Code § 311(g), the Commission emailed a notice letter on January 26, 2018, informing all parties on the ETC service list and the California LifeLine proceeding service list of the availability of this Resolution for public comment at the Commission's website www.cpuc.ca.gov. The notice letter also informed parties that the Commission will post the final conformed Resolution adopted and it will be available at this same website.

FINDINGS

1. The Commission approved TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s Eligible Telecommunications Carrier designation in Resolution T-17339 (October 6, 2011) allowing it to offer federal Lifeline wireless service using the network services of Sprint within the Uniform Regulatory Framework carriers' service areas, excluding Small Local Exchange Carriers' service areas.
2. Communications Division approved TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s Advice Letter 4 on March 11, 2014, thus authorizing the company as a California LifeLine provider.
3. On September 11, 2017, TruConnect Communications, Inc. filed Advice Letter 22 requesting: 1) to add T-Mobile as an additional underlying carrier; 2) to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement in Resolution T-17339; and, 3) to expand its federal Lifeline service area throughout California where its underlying carriers offer service, including in the Small LEC territories.
4. Staff finds it in the public interest to add T-Mobile as an underlying carrier and to approve TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s request to expand its ETC-designated service area to all of California where its underlying carriers, Sprint and T-Mobile, offer service, including in the Small LECs' territories, and to exempt TruConnect from the ZIP+4 requirement.

5. TruConnect Communications, Inc. is required to continue to fulfill all other requirements of its previously approved authorities (both as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier and a California LifeLine provider), including, but not limited to: filing copies of Federal Communications Commission and Universal Service Administrative Company annual reports with the Director of Communications Division at cdcompliance@cpuc.ca.gov; complying with all processes, transmission requirements, eligibility rules, and validation checks administered by the California LifeLine Administrator; submitting marketing materials for staff review and approval; requesting service plan changes via the advice letter process; sending outage reports to staff; complying with consumer protections and 911 safety requirements; and, submitting its CPUC User Fees and universal service public purpose program surcharges on a timely basis.
6. On January 26, 2018, the Commission emailed a draft of this Resolution to the Eligible Telecommunications Carrier service list and the California LifeLine Program proceeding service list for public comments.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Commission approves the request of TruConnect Communications, Inc. (U-4380-C) to add T-Mobile as an underlying carrier, to be exempt from the ZIP+4 requirement, and to expand its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier-designated federal Lifeline service area statewide where its underlying carriers, Sprint and T-Mobile, offer service.
2. TruConnect Communications, Inc.'s shall continue to be obligated to all previously approved Commission requirements including, but not limited to: filing copies of Federal Communications Commission and Universal Service Administrative Company annual reports with the Director of Communications Division at cdcompliance@cpuc.ca.gov; complying with all processes, transmission requirements, eligibility rules, and validation checks administered by the California LifeLine Administrator; submitting marketing materials for staff review and approval; requesting service plan changes via the advice letter process; sending outage reports to staff; complying with consumer protections and 911 safety requirements; and, submitting its California Public Utilities Commission User Fees and universal service public purpose program surcharges on a timely basis.
3. TruConnect Communications, Inc. shall use a Tier 2 advice letter to request approval for any future changes including, but not limited to: 1) its terms and conditions 2) its approved federal Eligible Telecommunications Carrier and California LifeLine wireless service plans; 3) its underlying carrier(s); and, 4) its designated service areas. To offer Lifeline service on Tribal lands that qualifies for Enhanced Tribal land support, TruConnect Communications, Inc. shall use a

Tier 2 advice letter demonstrating compliance with 47 Code of Federal Regulations Section 54.202(c) and the California LifeLine Program's rules.

This Resolution is effective today.

I certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly introduced, passed, and adopted at a conference of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California held on March 1, 2018, the following Commissioners voting favorably thereon:

TIMOTHY J. SULLIVAN
Executive Director

Resolution T- 17587
CD/ABA

APPENDIX A

Attachment A
Resolution T-17587
TruConnect Communications, Inc.

**Proposed Service Area for Federal Lifeline Wireless
ETC Service in California**



END OF APPENDIX A