



California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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Dockets #: A.23-03-002, A.23-03-003

**CPUC Invites You to Public Forums on  
AT&T's Requests Regarding Voice Service Obligations**

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 26, 2024 - The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will hold in-person and virtual public forums for customers of AT&T to provide input into the company's two proposals to remove its obligation to provide voice services in its service territories.

WHEN	FORMAT	LOCATION
February 6, 2024, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.	In-person only	Clovis City Council Chambers 1033 5 <sup>th</sup> St., Clovis, CA 93612
February 22, 2024, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.	In-person only	Mendocino County Board of Supervisors 501 Low Gap Rd., Room 1070, Ukiah, CA 95482
March 14, 2024, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.	In-person only	Indio City Hall Council Chambers 100 Civic Center Mall, Indio, CA 92201
March 19, 2024, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.	Virtual only	Remote access via webcast or phone. More information below.

**WHAT:** The public forums will begin with a brief overview of AT&T's proposals, then parties to the proceeding may provide brief overviews, and then public comments will be heard. At least one representative from AT&T will be available to answer questions about individual customer bills or service.

**REMOTE ACCESS OPTIONS FOR THE MARCH 19 VIRTUAL PUBLIC FORUMS:**

- Live video broadcast with English or Spanish captions via webcast:

[www.adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc](http://www.adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc)

- Participants who choose to view via webcast will have audio and video but will not be able to make verbal comments. If you would like to make comment during the forums, refer to the phone-in information below.
- For captions, after clicking on the name of the meeting, click the green button below the video for captions. Then select captions by clicking on the white icon next to the word “live” at the bottom of the video.
- The public forums will be recorded and archived for future viewing.
- Phone: 1-800-857-1917, passcode: 6032788#
  - Participants will have audio and will be able to make comments. (To make a comment, after entering the passcode, when prompted press \*1, unmute your phone, and record your name.)
  - Wait times depend on the number of speakers in the public comment queue. During times of high call volumes, wait times will be longer. The operator will call on you when it is your turn to speak.

Customers can also make their voice heard in the proceedings and read the comments of others on the [CPUC’s website](#).

### **AT&T PROPOSALS:**

AT&T is requesting:

- 1) Approval to be relieved of its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations in certain areas of California. If approved, AT&T would no longer be required to offer landline telephone service where it is currently required to offer Basic Service in those areas. Basic Service includes nine service elements such as Lifeline rates for eligible customers, free access to 9-1-1, Telephone Relay Service, and directory and operator services. ([A.23-03-003](#))
- 2) Approval to give up its designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC), which is a telephone company that operates in a specific geographic area that receives financial assistance from the federal government-established Universal Service Fund to provide high quality and affordable telephone service to customers at all income levels. ([A.23-03-002](#))

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

- 1) **What is a Carrier of Last Resort (COLR)?** A COLR is a telecommunications service provider that stands ready to provide [basic telephone service](#), commonly landline telephone service, to any customer requesting such service within a specified area. At least one telephone company in a specified area is legally required to provide access to telephone service to anyone in its service territory who requests it. This ensures that everyone in California has access to safe, reliable, and affordable telephone service. AT&T is the designated COLR in many parts of the state and is the largest COLR in California. Where AT&T is the default landline telephone service provider, it must provide traditional landline telephone service to any potential customer in that service territory. AT&T is proposing to withdraw as the COLR in certain areas without a new carrier being designated as a COLR.
- 2) **What areas are impacted by AT&T's request to withdraw as a COLR?** [Here](#) is the list of census-designated places where AT&T is requesting to withdraw as the designated COLR and [here](#) is an online version of the map with address lookup.
- 3) **What might happen if AT&T withdraws as a COLR?** If AT&T's proposal is approved, as set forth in its application, then no COLR would be required to provide Basic Service in the areas in which AT&T is the COLR. This does not necessarily mean that no carriers would provide service in the areas—only that they would not be required to do so. Other outcomes are possible, such a carrier other than AT&T volunteering to become the COLR, or the CPUC denying AT&T's proposal.
- 4) **What is an [Eligible Telecommunications Carrier](#) (ETC)?** An ETC is a telephone company operating in a specific geographic area that receives financial assistance from the federal government-established [Universal Service Fund](#) to provide high quality and affordable telephone service to customers at all income levels in specific geographic areas. One example of a program funded by the Universal Service Fund is federal Lifeline. While funding for this program is provided by the federal government, each state determines a telephone company's eligibility for ETC designation. In California, a company's eligibility for these federal funds is determined by the CPUC.
- 5) **Does an ETC provide [California LifeLine](#)?** In California, the CPUC approves and denies applications for state funding for programs to provide universal support, including California LifeLine. The California LifeLine program is separate from the federal Lifeline program. An ETC may be a provider of California LifeLine as well as federal Lifeline, but eligibility to provide California LifeLine is not limited to only ETC providers.

- 6) **What is AT&T's ETC de-designation request?** AT&T is asking for CPUC approval to give up its ETC designation, which would allow it to no longer offer federal Lifeline, as well as other federal programs designed to subsidize telecommunications support for low-income individuals and individuals located in remote areas. AT&T's participation in the California LifeLine program is a separate matter from this application to give up its ETC designation. AT&T asserts that it is not necessary to keep its ETC designation because it no longer receives any federal high-cost support from the federal government to provide Universal Service. By relinquishing its ETC designation, AT&T would no longer be eligible to receive federal support to provide Lifeline, which could potentially affect all current AT&T federal Lifeline customers.
- 7) **What areas are impacted by AT&T's request to give up its ETC designation?** All areas of AT&T's service territory where it currently holds ETC designation, which is the same as its COLR service territory, could be impacted if the CPUC approves AT&T's application. [Here](#) is a map of the different COLR service territories in California, including AT&T's.
- 8) **What are the potential impacts of CPUC approval of AT&T's ETC de-designation request on customer bills?** For a household receiving federal Lifeline from AT&T, the bill could increase by \$5.25 per month for voice-only service, or \$9.25 per month for bundled or internet service. In addition to these amounts, a household on Tribal lands receiving federal Lifeline from AT&T could experience an additional \$25 per month bill increase.
- 9) **What is required of AT&T for the CPUC to approve AT&T's ETC de-designation request?** AT&T must demonstrate that another ETC provider can provide Universal support in the areas where AT&T wishes to surrender its ETC designation.

The CPUC welcomes attendance and comments at the public forums (formally called Public Participation Hearings), as public comments help the CPUC reach an informed decision. The Administrative Law Judge assigned to the proceedings is scheduled to issue a Proposed Decision in the case for consideration by the CPUC within a year.

No official action will be taken on this matter at the public forums.

If specialized accommodations are needed to attend, such as non-English or sign language interpreters, please contact the CPUC's Public Advisor's Office at [public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov](mailto:public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov) or toll free at 866-849-8390 at least five business days in advance of the public forums.

More information is available in the [Ruling](#) setting the public forums, and on this [website](#).

More information on public forums is available on the CPUC's [website](#).

To receive electronic updates on CPUC proceedings, sign-up for the CPUC's free [subscription service](#).

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### **About the California Public Utilities Commission**

The CPUC regulates services and utilities, protects consumers, safeguards the environment, and assures Californians access to safe and reliable utility infrastructure and services. Visit [www.cpuc.ca.gov](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov) for more information.