



Control Number: 50664



Item Number: 163

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April 14, 2020

Filing Clerk
Public Utility Commission of Texas
PO Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326



RE: Project 50664 – Covid 19 Activities

As the national and state impacting pandemic continues, TSTCI wanted to assist in keeping the PUC advised of our members' commitment to continuing to provide quality telecommunications, including broadband, to their customers, students, medical facilities and their communities.

Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (TSTCI), a statewide and a rural broadband association that represents more than 24 small rural companies, share that their members are already exceeding the recommendations of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) requested pledge. These companies and their employees live where they work and are headquartered in rural communities all across Texas. The companies' combined **geographic service areas cover almost 46,000 square miles** of Texas' vast rural area. Well before this pandemic happened, most of these rural companies were already deep into the deployment of fiber for their customers and their infrastructure. These companies are good stewards in and of their communities – as such, the majority have recently deployed dozens of free-use Wi-Fi "hotspots" in order to make access more widely available for their communities and especially rural students. These hotspots allow students to access their school networks for classes and homework, as well as the internet to do any necessary research.

Like other critical and essential workers around our state and around our country, TSTCI member companies are working around the clock during this crisis to ensure that every rural resident in their service areas have access to broadband internet access. These dedicated companies whose rural linemen and installers are considered essential workers are working in unprecedented circumstances. While they are taking every precaution available for them, they do face exposure risks as they continue to do the work of providing this vital service to the vast farm and ranch areas of rural Texas.

The TSTCI members listed below have either committed to the FCC's "Keep Americans Connected Pledge" and/or have implemented policies exceeding this pledge. As the FCC and the PUC recognized, small rural providers are working with their communities to ensure consistency of service. With the challenges that many Texans/Americans are facing, the Keep Americans Connected pledge hopefully is another tool to give many Texans/Americans assurance that they will not lose their broadband/telephone connectivity in these trying adverse circumstances.

The FCC specifically requested that broadband/telephone service providers, and trade associations take the Pledge. Nationwide, more than 700 companies and associations have signed the Chairman's Pledge. The Keep Americans Connected Pledge reads:

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Given the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on American society, *[[Company Name]]* pledges for the next 60 days to:

- not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic;
- waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and
- open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.

TSTCI and the following TSTCI member companies have signed the Keep Americans Connected Pledge and/or have implemented policies which encompass the request. We are proud to report that many member companies are going above and beyond the pledge to support their communities and their schools:

<u>COMPANY NAME/ SERVICE OFFICE LOCATION</u>		<u>SQUARE MILES SERVED IN TX</u>
Alenco Communications	Joshua, TX	4,000 sq. miles
Border to Border Communications (Hilliary Co.)	Zapata, TX	786 sq. miles
Brazos Telephone Cooperative	Olney, TX	1,508 sq. miles
Cameron Communications	Sulphur, LA	173 sq. miles in Texas
Cap Rock Telephone Cooperative	Spur, TX	5,000 sq. miles
Coleman County Telephone Coop.	Santa Anna, TX	280 sq. miles
Colorado Valley Telephone Coop.	La Grange, TX	900 sq. miles
Cumby Telephone Cooperative	Cumby, TX	75 sq. miles
Dell Telephone Cooperative	Dell City, TX	10,500 sq. miles
Electra Telephone Co. (Hilliary Co.)	Electra, TX	191 sq. miles
ENMR Telephone Cooperative	Clovis, NM	99 sq. miles in Texas
Five Area Telephone Cooperative	Muleshoe, TX	1,900 sq. miles
Industry Telephone Company	Industry, TX	230 sq. miles
La Ward Telephone Exchange	La Ward, TX	235 sq. miles
Lake Livingston Telephone Company	Livingston, TX	18 sq. miles
Lipan Telephone Company	Lipan, TX	262 sq. miles
Livingston Communications	Livingston, TX	83 sq. miles
Mid-Plains Rural Telephone Coop.	Tulia, TX	3,769 sq. miles
Poka Lambro Telephone Cooperative	Tahoka, TX	4,500 sq. miles
South Plains Telephone Cooperative	Lubbock, TX	2,335 sq. miles
Southwest Arkansas Telephone Coop.	Texarkana, AR	50 sq. miles in Texas
Tatum Telephone Co. (Hilliary Co.)	Tatum, TX	98 sq. miles
Taylor Telecom	Merkel, TX	2,000 sq. miles
Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative	Stanton, TX	3,172 sq. miles
West Plains Telecommunications	Muleshoe, TX	400 sq. miles
XIT Rural Telephone Cooperative	Hereford, TX	3,323 sq. miles

Each company manager is available to provide you any additional information you may desire and many have filed individual information in this Project. In addition, if I can be of additional assistance to you in providing more information about how these companies are serving the needs of their rural customers, in the regular course of business and during this unusual time, please contact Weldon R. Gray, CEO-TSTCI, 903-658-0055 or weldon@tstci.org