

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

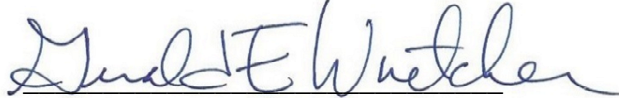
ELECTRONIC APPLICATION OF)
CUMBERLAND CONNECT, LLC FOR) CASE NO. 2021-00041
DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE)
TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER)

**RESPONSE OF CUMBERLAND CONNECT, LLC TO
COMMISSION STAFF'S FIRST REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Cumberland Connect, LLC submits its Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information.

Dated: March 15, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

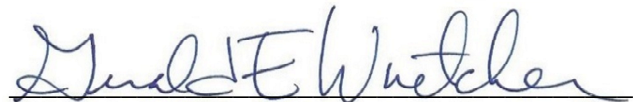


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Counsel for Cumberland Connect, LLC

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

In accordance with 807 KAR 5:001, Section 8, I certify that Cumberland Connect, LLC's electronic filing of this Response is a true and accurate copy of the same document being filed in paper medium; that the electronic filing was transmitted to the Public Service Commission on March 15, 2021; that there are currently no parties that the Public Service Commission has excused from participation by electronic means in this proceeding; and that within 30 days following the end of the state of emergency announced in Executive Order 2020-215 this Response in paper medium will be delivered to the Public Service Commission.



Counsel for Cumberland Connect, LLC

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RESPONSE OF
CUMBERLAND CONNECT, LLC
TO
COMMISSION STAFF'S FIRST REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

FILED: March 15, 2021

VERIFICATION

STATE OF TENNESSEE)
) SS:
COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY)

The undersigned, Mark T. Cook, P.E., being duly sworn, deposes and states that he has personal knowledge of the matters set forth in the responses for which he is identified as the witness, and the answers contained therein are true and correct to the best of his information, knowledge and belief.

Mark T. Cook P.E.
Mark T. Cook, P.E.
Broadband Manager
Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public in and before said County and State,
this 15th day of March, 2021.

Leah A. Clinard
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 1-16-2024

Notary ID: _____



Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 1

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-1. Confirm that Cumberland Connect is a common carrier eligible for support as defined in 47 C.F.R. § 54.101.

A-1. Yes. Cumberland Connect is a common carrier eligible for support as defined in 47 C.F.R. § 54.101.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 2

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-2. Provide a description of how Cumberland Connect meets the qualifications to comply with 47 C.F.R. § 54.101.

A-2. In compliance with 47 C.F.R. § 54.101 of the FCC's rules, Cumberland Connect will offer voice grade access to the public switched network or its functional equivalent through its interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol service to its subscribers, unlimited minutes of use for local service provided at no additional charge to end users, access to emergency services provided by local government or other public safety organizations, such as 911 and enhanced 911, to the extent the local government in Cumberland Connect's proposed ETC designation area has implemented 911 or enhanced 911 systems. Cumberland Connect does not distinguish between toll and non-toll calls in the pricing of its services. As a result, toll limitation services do not need to be offered for any Lifeline service offered by Cumberland Connect.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
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Question No. 3

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-3. Provide a description of how Cumberland Connect meets the qualifications to comply with 47 C.F.R. § 54.202.

A-3. Cumberland Connect meets the qualifications to comply with 47 C.F.R. § 54.202 because it will comply with all of the following conditions applicable to RDOF Phase I support recipients:

Cumberland Connect's network will ensure that its gigabit-tier broadband network will remain functional in emergency situations by ensuring that its network: (1) is equipped with a reasonable amount of back-up power to ensure functionality without an external power source; (2) will be designed to be able to reroute traffic around damaged facilities; and (3) is capable of managing traffic spikes from emergency situations.

Cumberland Connect's fiber huts and critical network facilities are designed with dual fiber path entry and utilize G.8032 (Ring Protection Switching) between huts. Network chassis support multiple line cards per chassis and the network configuration is implemented such that an individual line card or individual port failure does not result in a network failure outside of the affected port or card. G.8032 allows for a fiber hut to be disconnected from the ring while all other fiber huts remain connected and able to pass Internet and Voice traffic.

All fiber huts are equipped with battery backup capacity which activates instantaneously and does not require manual intervention or equipment reset. Fiber huts are equipped with a generator quick connect port allowing an external generator to be promptly connected to the building if a power failure event were expected to exceed the battery backup capacity. Generator runtimes are generally limited by fuel capacity, and if proper care is taken to fuel the generator during the run cycle, the generator can provide backup power indefinitely.

Battery capacity increases and permanent generator placement is available and will be considered as facility demands dictate.

G.8032 rings are designed to support two times the capacity of the normal peak network traffic. Multiple Internet providers are utilized to provide for redundant connections supporting Internet and voice services. Excess Internet capacity is built into the network for the purpose of redundancy for the planned or unplanned failure of a given provider.

Cumberland Connect is not a signatory to CTIA's Consumer Code for Wireless Service, but consistent with the CTIA's Consumer Code for Wireless Service, Cumberland Connect will: (1) disclose the rates and terms of service to its customers; (2) make clear on its website and in promotional materials where its service is generally available; (3) provide

contract terms to customers and confirm changes in service; (4) disclose early termination fees; (5) clearly and conspicuously disclose material charges and conditions related to the advertised prices and services; (6) separately identify its charges from taxes on billing statements; (7) provide customers the right to terminate service for changes to contract terms; (8) provide ready access to customer service; (9) promptly respond to consumer inquiries and complaints received from government agencies; and (10) abide by a policy regarding the privacy of customer information in accordance with federal and state laws.

Cumberland Connect is a wholly owned subsidiary of a member-owned electric cooperative, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation (“CEMC”), that provides electric service to more than 104,000 residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial electric customers in Kentucky and Tennessee – though the vast majority of CEMC’s customers are in Tennessee.

In 2019, CEMC initiated a fiber deployment project to build an advanced communications network capable of deploying smart-grid technologies. Cumberland Connect is constructing and will own the fiber hub sites, complete with the necessary network components, to connect the fiber-optic cable constructed and owned by CEMC. When Cumberland Connect’s fiber network is complete, it will enable approximately 104,000 households and businesses to have access to advanced broadband services with speeds up to 1 Gbps. Cumberland Connect has also been investing significant funds in its back office and operational support functions in conjunction with its fiber network buildout.

In addition to planning for construction financing, Cumberland Connect’s parent electric cooperative has secured two lines of credit for from CFC and CoBank, respectively. These lines credit provide additional liquidity for the electric cooperative’s fiber construction ensuring the company has sufficient funds for all project costs.

Cumberland Connect will provide the governing federal Lifeline discount, in full, to all Lifeline-eligible customers in Kentucky who will have the option of electing to use the discount on any broadband and/or voice plans offered by Cumberland Connect. All such plans will be identified on the Cumberland Connect website: cumberlandconnect.org.

Cumberland Connect’s broadband service comes with no data caps, no throttling, local customer service, symmetrical upload and download speeds, no residential contracts, and 24/7 technical support. In addition, all of Cumberland Connect’s current broadband and voice plans can be viewed at cumberlandconnect.org.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
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Question No. 4

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-4. Provide a description of the service that Cumberland Connect plans to offer that meets the qualifications to comply with 47 C.F.R. § 54.401.

A-4. Cumberland Connect will provide the current federal Lifeline discount which is non-transferable to all Lifeline-qualified customers on any of its fixed broadband and/or voice service offerings, all of which comply with the minimum Lifeline service levels set forth in 47 CFR § 54.408. Cumberland Connect will not collect a service deposit in order to initiate Lifeline for voice-only service plans and will not charge Lifeline customers a monthly number-portability charge.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 5

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

- Q-5. Confirm that Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute the Kentucky USF per-line surcharge, currently \$0.15 per line per month, to the Kentucky USF for each Cumberland Connect Kentucky customer, both Lifeline and non-Lifeline.**
- A-5. Yes. Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute the Kentucky USF per-line surcharge, currently \$0.15 per line per month to the Kentucky USF for each Cumberland Connect Kentucky customer, both Lifeline and non-Lifeline.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 6

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

- Q-6. Confirm that Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute the Kentucky Telecommunications Relay Service/Telecommunications Access Program surcharge, currently \$0.03 per line per month, to the Kentucky Telecommunications Relay Service/Telecommunications Access Program Fund for each Cumberland Connect Kentucky customer, both Lifeline and non-Lifeline.**
- A-6. Yes. Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute the Kentucky Telecommunications Relay Service/Telecommunications Access Program surcharge, currently \$0.03 per line per month, to the Kentucky Telecommunications Relay Service/Telecommunications Access Program Fund for each Cumberland Connect Kentucky customer, both Lifeline and non-Lifeline.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 7

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-7. Confirm that Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute to the appropriate 911 emergency service authority in its service area.

A.-7. Yes. Cumberland Connect will collect or otherwise contribute to the appropriate 911 emergency service authority in its service area.

Cumberland Connect, LLC

**Response to Commission Staff's First Request for Information
Case No. 2021-00041**

Question No. 8

Responding Witness: Mark T. Cook, P.E.

Q-8. Confirm that Cumberland Connect will comply with the annual assessment and gross earnings reports requirements pursuant to KRS 278.130-150.

A-8. Yes. Cumberland Connect will comply with the annual assessment and gross earnings reports requirements pursuant to KRS 278.130-150.