

November 16, 2023

Via Email: psc@utah.gov

Gary Widerburg Commission Administrator Utah Public Service Commission Heber M. Wells Building, 4th Floor 160 East 300 South Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Re: Docket No. 23-049-01

Qwest Corporation dba CenturyLink QC Petition for Statewide Exemption from Carrier of Last Resort Obligations

Rebuttal Testimony of Alan Lubeck

Dear Mr. Widerburg:

Attached for filing please find the Rebuttal Testimony of Alan Lubeck in Support of

CenturyLink's Petition for Statewide Exemption from the Carrier of Last Resort Obligations.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Katie Wagner

Senior Corporate Counsel

Katel W. gran

Attachments

cc: Service List

CENTURYLINK

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Counsel for Qwest Corporation dba CenturyLink QC

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH

In the Matter of)	Docket No. 23-049-01
QWEST CORPORATION DBA CENTURYLINK QC)	
Petition for Statewide Exemption from Carrier of Last Resort Obligations)	

REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF ALAN LUBECK

Qwest Corporation dba CenturyLink QC hereby submits the Rebuttal Testimony of Alan Lubeck in this docket.

Dated this 16th day of November, 2023.

CENTURYLINK

Katie N. Wagner, OK Bar #33296

Kotel W. ym

Senior Corporate Counsel Kagie.wagner@lumen.com

405-669-8712

By:

Certificate of Service

Docket No. 23-049-01

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Rebuttal Testimony of Alan Lubeck was served by email this 16th day of November, 2023 on the following:

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REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF ALAN LUBECK

Rebuttal Testimony of Alan Lubeck

On Behalf of

Qwest Corporation dba CenturyLink QC

November 16, 2023

I. IDENTIFICATION OF WITNESS

- 2 Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND CURRENT POSITION.
- 3 A. My name is Alan Lubeck. I am employed by Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC
- 4 (CenturyLink) as a Director of Public Policy, and I am providing this rebuttal testimony on
- 5 behalf of CenturyLink. I adopt and incorporate by reference CenturyLink's direct
- 6 testimony filed by witness David Ziegler.

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8 Q. WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES?

- 9 A. I work with the state government affairs teams on regulatory, legislative and local
- government issues for twenty-five states including Utah.

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12 Q. PLEASE REVIEW YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT

- 13 **BACKGROUND.**
- 14 A. I received a B.S. in Accounting from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in 1980, then
- spent six years at what is now Price Waterhouse Coopers working with audit and tax
- 16 clients. I joined Sprint in 1986, serving in various tax, accounting and finance positions. I
- ioined Sprint's Wholesale organization just after the 1996 Federal Telecom Act was
- passed, and over the next decade I negotiated interconnection, resale and collocation
- agreements. I moved to the Wholesale Product group in 2006, where I managed Special
- Access and Interconnection products and services. In 2009 I joined the Public Policy
- organization working on both federal and state level issues. In that capacity I have worked
- on federal and state Lifeline policies, CAF I and CAF II federal issues, state broadband
- programs, grant applications and reimbursement requests, as well as state deregulation
- 24 dockets in Wyoming and Minnesota.

1	Q.	HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE THE UTAH PUBLIC SERVICE
2		COMMISSION OR OTHER PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSIONS?
3	A.	I have not testified before the Utah Public Regulation Commission but have testified in
4		Commission dockets in Minnesota, Nebraska, South Carolina, Texas, and Wyoming.
5 6		II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY
7	Q.	WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY?
8	A.	The purpose of my testimony is to support the Petition of Qwest Corporation d/b/a
9		CenturyLink QC for Statewide Exemption from Carrier of Last Resort Obligations. The
10		objective of my testimony is to respond to certain issues raised in the testimony of witnesses
1		for the Department of Public Utilities ("DPU"), the Office of Consumer Services ("OCS"),
12		and the Utah Rural Telecom Association ("URTA").
13 14		III. REBUTTAL TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
15	Q.	DO ALL THE SERVICES CENTURYLINK IDENTIFIES AS OFFERING
16		COMPETITION QUALIFY AS FUNCTIONALLY EQUIVALENT SERVICES?
17	A.	Yes. Utah's governing statute for universal service fund states that "the commission shall
18		use funds in the Universal Public Telecommunications Service Support Fund to fund
19		one-time distributions from the Universal Public Telecommunications Service Support
20		Fund for a non-rate-of-return regulated carrier of last resort's deployment and management
21		of networks capable of providing: (i) access lines; (ii) connections; or (iii) broadband
22		Internet access service." Utah Code § 54-8b-15(3)(d). This statute further clarifies that
23		"broadband Internet access service' means the same as that term is defined in 47 C.F.R.

Sec. 8.2." Id. at § 54-8b-15(1)(a). While I am not an attorney, it is clear then, that Utah has

adopted by reference the definitions contained in federal regulation 47 C.F.R. § 8.2. This federal regulation therefore sets forth the type of services that qualify for Utah's universal service funding support for carriers of last resort ("COLR"). Because these services explicitly qualify for COLR funding, they must be considered functionally equivalent. *See* Utah Code § 54-8b-3(5)(b) (functionally equivalent services as a factor of competition).

Q. WHAT TYPE OF SERVICES ARE CONSIDERED "BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS SERVICE" ACCORDING TO 47 C.F.R. § 8.2?

A. Broadband internet access services include both wire and radio service. 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(a). "Fixed broadband Internet access service includes fixed wireless services (including fixed unlicensed wireless services), and fixed satellite services." 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(d). Mobile broadband Internet access service means a "broadband Internet access service that serves end users primarily using mobile stations." 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(e).

A.

Q. WHAT TYPE OF SERVICES IS CENTURYLINK RELYING ON IN SHOWING EFFECTIVE COMPETITION EXISTS IN UTAH?

CenturyLink's Petition at Exhibit 5 includes wired voice services (supported by copper, fiber, and cable technology), licensed fixed wireless (connecting two fixed locations such as tower to building via a radio or other wireless link), and mobile wireless (a type of internet connection that uses a network of cell towers to connect with a smartphone to transfer signals wirelessly via radio waves that carry calls, texts, and data). These are precisely the types of technology contemplated by Utah Code § 54-8b-15 and 47 C.F.R. § 8.2. CenturyLink's Petition at Exhibit 5 did not include satellite service, but in light of 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(d) explicitly approving of satellite as a functional equivalent service, I

incorporate by reference Exhibit 1, CTL-0517, which shows that satellite service is a competitive equivalent service that further supports CenturyLink's relief from COLR obligations. SpaceX's StarLink, Viasat, and Hughes Net all show that 100% of units in Utah are served by satellite.

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Q. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR UTAH'S CARRIERS OF LAST RESORT?

A. The Utah Universal Service Fund statute allows a non-rate-of-return-regulated carrier to use broadband internet access service, including mobile broadband, to receive state USF support to fulfill its COLR obligations. Whether by statute, federal policy, state policy, or market share, broadband internet access, including mobile broadband and fixed wireless, these types of voice services are functionally equivalent to plain old telephone service (POTs) lines.

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- Q. IN ADDITION TO EXHIBIT 5 TO CENTURYLINK'S PETITION, WHICH USES
- 15 FCC NATIONAL BROADBAND MAPPING TO SHOW
- 16 TELECOMMUNICATION COVERAGE AVAILABILITY, IS MORE DETAILED
- 17 EVIDENCE OF COMPETION AVAILABLE?
- 18 A. Yes. H3 Hexagon, Index 8 level is included in the publicly available Broadband Map data.
- This shows coverage down to a very granular size of about 0.7 square kilometers.

IV. REBUTTAL TO OFFICE OF CONSUMER SERVICES

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2	Q.	HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO OSC'S TESTIMONY THAT THERE MAY BE
3		POCKETS OF CUSTOMERS OR EVEN INDIVDUAL CUSTOMERS WITHIN A
4		COMPETITIVE WIRE CENTER THAT DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO
5		COMPETITIVE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE WIRE CENTER AS A
6		WHOLE?
7	A.	CenturyLink believes that modernizing telecommunications is a more productive solution
8		to this problem, rather than doubling down on antiquated COLR policies. The Utah
9		Broadband Center, an initiative of the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity,
10		recently published the Utah Digital Connectivity Plan. This plan is a requirement for
11		participation in the federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment ("BEAD") program
12		which will allocate \$42.45 billion of federal funding through the National

program, Utah will receive \$317 million to deploy affordable high-speed internet to Utahns who live and work at locations that qualify as unserved or underserved. As part of the BEAD process, Utah has completed its Initial Proposal, Volume 1 and is in the process of completing the Initial Proposal, Volume 2, which is due in December. In the Initial Proposal, Volume 1, the Utah Broadband Center designated locations served by DSL as

Telecommunications and Information Administration ("NTIA"). Through the BEAD

"underserved", making large parts of CenturyLink's service territory available for

competitive BEAD grants.² The solution to addressing pockets of Utahns that may not have

access to competitive options is to provide them with broadband equity moving forward.

¹ Utah Broadband Center. Initial Proposal, Vol. 1. Retrieved from https://www.connectingutah.com/initial-proposal.

² Utah Broadband Center. Initial Proposal, Vol. 1. Retrieved from https://www.connectingutah.com/_files/ugd/ceee1c-281a44aa014641deba544c3068fff98f.pdf.

This is also consistent with the explicit legislative policy of the State to "encourage new technologies and modify regulatory policy to allow greater competition in the telecommunications industry." Utah Code § 54-8b-1.1(8).

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Q. IN WEIGHING PUBLIC INTEREST, WHY IS IT CRITICAL THAT THE COMMISSION TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BEAD FUNDING?

A wholistic approach to existing COLR obligations that focuses on modernizing the telecommunication industry is undoubtedly in the public interest as "federal and state regulators must reconsider how legacy regulatory obligations should evolve as service providers accelerate their transition from Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) to an all-IP world." See FCC 11-161, ¶15.3 At the same time that Utah is receiving an unprecedented influx of funding - \$317 million - to expand broadband access, this Commission is tasked with determining whether CenturyLink (1) is subject to effective competition and (2) whether a COLR exemption is in the public interest. See Utah Code § 54-8b-3(4)(a) and (b). The purpose, in part, of this enormous amount of BEAD funding is to expand competing telecommunications services available from alternate providers. Id. at § 54-8b-3(5)(a). The BEAD expansion will therefore allow for alternate providers to supply competing services that are functionally equivalent or suitable. Id. at § 54-8b-3(5)(b). This will undoubtedly further erode CenturyLink's market share as competition increases. Id. at § 54-8b-3(5)(c). Additionally, BEAD funding reduces economic and regulatory barriers of entry into the telecommunication market as Utah's \$317 million of BEAD funding is distributed to telecommunication providers. Id. at § 54-8b-3(5)(d). The

³ Federal Communications Commission, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. October, 2011. Retrieved from https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-11-161A1_Rcd.pdf.

impact of this competition is simple – Utah consumers can continue to expect more and more options and availability in telecommunication providers. *Id.* at § 54-8b-3(5)(e).

A.

Q. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO OSC'S TESTIMONY THAT A CUSTOMER IN THE BOUNTIFUL WIRE CENTER WAS UNABLE TO ACCESS A COMPETITIVE SERVICE?

Reviewing the FCC National Broadband Map, it appears the specific customer at issue has residential fixed broadband coverage available from Comcast, Hughes Network Systems, LLC, JAB Wireless, Lumen, SpaceX, and T-Mobile. See Exhibit 2, CTL-0518-520. Mobile broadband is also available from AT&T, Dish Network, T-Mobile, and Verizon. *Id.* Confidential Exhibit OCS 1.2D states only that the customer attempted to acquire alternate services from Xfinity (Comcast), Verizon 5G and AT&T mobile service specifically but makes no mention of any of the other listed providers serving her address. It appears then that alternate providers were available for this location, but the customer did not review all options. Additionally, this customer's service was restored and a credit for a full month of service was issued on the account.

A.

Q. WHAT IMPACT WOULD COLR RELIEF HAVE ON CAPTIVE CUSTOMERS?

OCS's testimony states that "a customer is only captive if the customer does not have any option for service other than the COLR...." OCS Anderson Testimony 6:116-118. Logically, there cannot be any impact to "captive customers" because this is not a discontinuance action, and therefore COLR relief does not impact any customer that alleges they are captive. Although OCS cites to 54-8b-15(1)(b)(ii)(B) to assert that a "captive customer" includes future customers, that does not change the fact that (1) there are not

currently any non-customers requesting services such that they could be considered "captive customers" under OCS's analysis, which highlights the speculative nature of this reasoning, and (2) the entire purpose of this proceeding is to seek relief from this code section. I would therefore respectfully suggest that relying on this code section to define "captive customers" as including future, potential, speculative, and currently non-existing customers is circular reasoning that cannot be relied upon in determining CenturyLink's right to COLR relief. Instead, the Commission is required to look at the impact to existing customers who believe they may lack alternative telecommunication options, and because CenturyLink does not seek to discontinue service to existing customers in this proceeding, there simply is no impact to "captive customers." Moreover, "in determining if the proposed exemption is in the public interest, the commission shall consider, in addition to other relevant factors, the impact...on captive customers..." That is to say, the issue of captive customers is not the only factor this Commission must consider when weighing public interest. As outlined above, the existence of BEAD funding assures the public interest will be satisfied by expanding broadband equity, irrespective of the fact that existing captive customers are not be impacted by exempting CenturyLink from COLR obligations.

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- Q. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO OCS'S CONTENTION THAT UNLESS A
 SUBSTITUTE CARRIER OF LAST RESORT IS SECURED,
 DISCONTINUATION THROUGH ATTRITION WILL OCCUR?
- A. Again, captive customers that do "not have any option for service other than the COLR...."
 are not losing any service under this proceeding. *See* OCS Anderson Testimony 6:116-118.
 - Notwithstanding this, from a policy perspective CenturyLink disagrees fundamentally with

1 OCS's position that a substitute COLR is needed. The BEAD Program – not expanding 2 COLR – is the answer to modernizing the universal service challenge. In addition, as noted 3 by DPU witness Slusher, there are 22 states within the CenturyLink/Brightspeed footprint 4 that have already provided COLR relief. DPU Slusher Testimony, 5:118.

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RELIEF?

Q. **SHOULD ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE QUALITY** 7 REQUIREMENTS BE REQUIRED IF CENTURYLINK IS GRANTED COLR

9 No. In the event that this Commission finds that CenturyLink is subject to effective A. 10 competition, the Utah legislature has declared it is the explicit policy of the State to "allow 11 flexible and reduced regulation for telecommunications corporations and public 12 telecommunications services as competition develops." Utah Code § 54-8b-1.1(4). 13 Additionally, imposing service quality regulations simply because CenturyLink would no 14 longer be a COLR would be premature and unfairly burdensome as it is not based on any 15 demonstrable issue related to service quality. This Commission should not create overhasty 16 regulations that are contrary to legislative intent. Instead, if a service-quality concern were 17 to arise, the Commission retains jurisdiction over every telecommunication service 18 exempted under Utah Code § 54, Chapter 8b, allowing the Commission to address any 19 additional needs when appropriate. Id. at § 54-8b-7 (continuous jurisdiction of 20 commission).

1 Q. WITHOUT A COLR OBLIGATION, WILL CENTURYLINK MAINTAIN 2 ADEQUATE SERVICE QUALITY?

A. Yes. CenturyLink is dedicated to providing all customers with the best service possible,
and regardless of whether or not CenturyLink is a COLR, CenturyLink will continue to
provide quality telecommunications services to all customers. By way of example,
CenturyLink has received COLR relief in numerous other states and continues to provide
high quality services to its customer base.

Q. DOES PROPER PROTECTION FOR CUSTOMERS WITHOUT COMPETITIVE CHOICE EXIST?

A. Yes. While CenturyLink believes that all customers have competitive options, existing captive customers will not have their service discontinued as a result of this proceeding, and the Commission retains jurisdiction to address any additional needs when appropriate.

Id. at § 54-8b-7 (continuous jurisdiction of commission). Additionally, with the influx of BEAD funding, Utah consumers will increasingly have competitive service options.

A.

V. REBUTTAL TO UTAH RURAL TELECOM ASSOCIATION

Q. IS ETC DESIGNATION A FAIR COMPARISON TO COLR REQUIREMENTS?

In this instance, no. URTA states that "[t]he idea Congress enacted was to have a carrier obligated to provide universal services for every portion of every community." URTA Testimony 5:119-121. This is not a federal docket, and CenturyLink is not applying to be relieved of federal ETC requirements. If URTA thinks that the Utah Legislature erred by enacting laws allowing COLR to be exempted, URTA should take that up with the legislature. CenturyLink is applying to be relieved of COLR obligations according to

Utah's legislative code. But the comparison as cited by URTA does not account for funding obligations. Congress intended that ETC designation should be accompanied by a funding mechanism. A better comparison would be that ETC obligations at the federal level assume that carriers will provide service in their area in exchange for funding support – just as COLR obligations exist as part of a regulatory compact that COLR carriers will receive ongoing funding support. Here, CenturyLink is a COLR that no longer receives federal or ongoing state funding but remains obligated to serve any customer that requests service.

Q. IN GRANTING COLR RELIEF, SHOULD THE COMMISSION FOLLOW THE METHOD OF RELINQUISHING ETC DESIGNATION AT A FEDERAL LEVEL?

A. No. URTA's comparison of relinquishing ETC status being the equivalent of COLR relief is not factually accurate. Instead, the comparison is more similar to requesting a discontinuance, where a carrier would be required to show there are alternate providers in the area discontinuance is sought. Here, CenturyLink has been very clear that it is not seeking a discontinuance. Moreover, it has demonstrated that there are numerous alternate providers with functionally equivalent services in all wire centers.

A.

Q. IS CENTURYLINK REQUIRED TO RELINQUISH ITS ETC DESIGNATION TO RECEIVE COLR RELIEF?

No. URTA claims that "[w]ithout, relinquishing it's ETC designation for the Utah wire centers, CenturyLink remains obligated to provide ... universal services...." URTA Testimony 7:157-159. However, the code section URTA relies upon specifies that ETCs should "offer the services that are supported by Federal universal support mechanisms...."

47 USC § 214(e)(1). Again, CenturyLink is not receiving federal funding support.

Moreover, CenturyLink has received COLR relief in several other states without relinquishing ETC designation. Finally, URTA's position on this again conflates ETC discontinuation with COLR obligations. On the federal level, a carrier retains its ETC designation and responsibility to provide voice service until it seeks discontinuance authority from the FCC. *See* FCC 20-5 Report and Order at ¶137 ("More generally, price cap carriers must continue to maintain existing voice service until they receive discontinuance authority . . .") Because CenturyLink is not seeking discontinuance authority, URTA's assertion is not persuasive.

Q.

A.

SHOULD THE COMMISSION CONSIDER FIXED WIRELESS, BROADBAND INTERNET, AND OTHER SIMILAR TECHNOLOGIES AS FUNCTIONAL EOUIVALENTS?

Yes. As stated above, Utah has adopted by reference the definitions contained in federal regulation 47 C.F.R. § 8.2 in determining what services are eligible for universal service support. Broadband internet access services include both wire and radio service. 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(a). "Fixed broadband Internet access service includes fixed wireless services (including fixed unlicensed wireless services), and fixed satellite services." 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(d). Mobile broadband Internet access service means a "broadband Internet access service that serves end users primarily using mobile stations." 47 C.F.R. § 8.2(e).

Q. DOES A ONE-TIME DISTRIBUTION FROM THE UTAH UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND OR TARIFF LANGUAGE PREVENT COLR RELIEF?

A. No. To the extent that CenturyLink may be able to apply for a one-time distribution from Utah's Universal Service Fund, it is unclear what amount that funding would be. It may

not cover the entire cost of a new build, and that funding cannot be used to cover the cost of maintaining the infrastructure after the build is completed. More significantly however, the test for COLR relief is not whether there is funding to support the COLR obligation, but whether (1) there is effective competition and (2) the COLR exemption is in the public interest. Utah Code § 54-8b-3(4). While funding has traditionally accompanied COLR obligations and the lack thereof is helpful context, it is not a factor explicitly included in the guiding statute.

9 Q. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO URTA'S CONCENS REGARDING WHEN A 10 CURRENT CUSTOMER MOVES OUT OF THEIR LOCATION?

A. I reiterate my earlier statements that BEAD is the solution to connectivity concerns in 2024 rather than additional antiquated COLR obligations.

Α.

Q. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO URTA'S CONCERNS REGARDING PRICING?

URTA states that StarLink requires \$599.00 installation, however URTA does not account for the cost to consumers that could be required to pay CenturyLink a line-extension fee to receive a new service build out, which would be comparable if not more than StarLink's installation costs depending on excavation conditions. URTA also seems to imply that StarLink's service is the same as basic POTS service offered by CenturyLink. While it is true that both CenturyLink and StarLink can offer functionally equivalent voice service, URTA does not account for the fact that Utah citizens dramatically favor internet access over basic POTS services. The average consumer would receive value added from StarLink internet that is not available with basic POTS services. So while the voice service is functionally equivalent, StarLink also comes with the added bonus of internet access.

1 Notwithstanding that, there are numerous other services available to Utah citizens at 2 comparable prices. In addition, URTA pulled the most expensive satellite provider for their 3 comments. Both HughesNet and Viasat offer less expensive non-recurring and monthly 4 recurring charges than StarLink. 5 6 Q. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO URTA'S ASSERTION THAT 26.6 PERCENT USE 7 LANDLINE SERVICES FOR SOME PORTION OF THEIR COMMUNICATION 8 **NEEDS?** 9 In arriving at this point, URTA is including the 15.1% of Utah households that reported A. 10 they are "wireless mostly." While those users may occasionally use a land line, it is clear 11 their technology preference is wireless. As stated above, mobile wireless is a functional 12 equivalent of wireline services. 13 14 VI. **CONCLUSION** 15 WHAT IS YOUR CONCLUSION OF THE DATA PRESENTED? Q. 16 A. My conclusion is that CenturyLink is subject to effective competition in Utah, and 17 exempting CenturyLink from carrier of last resort obligations is in the public interest. 18 19 Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY? 20 A. Yes, it does.

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Exhibit 1

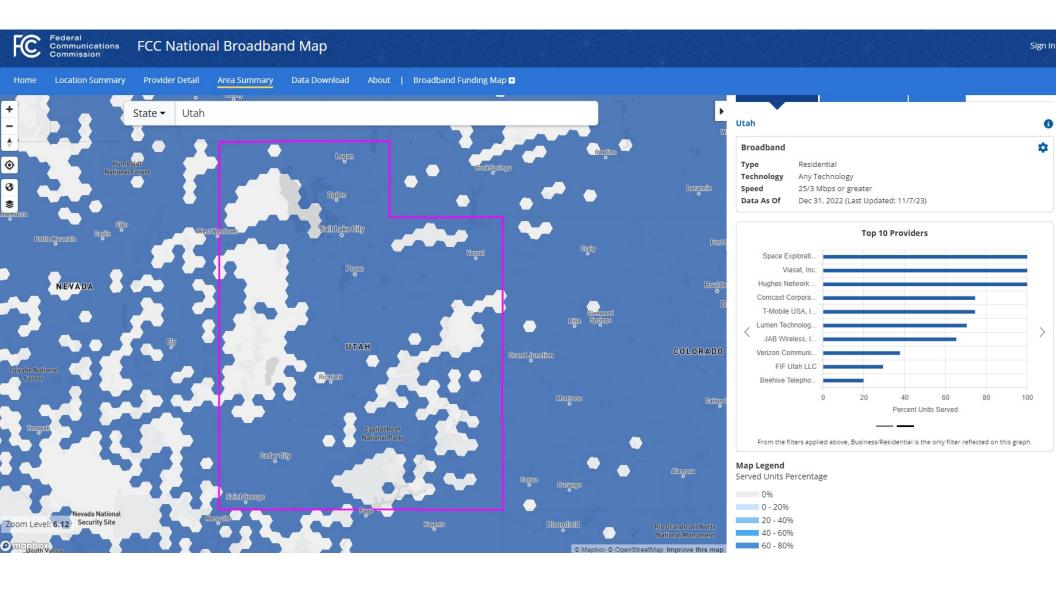


Exhibit 2

