**DA 16-1419**

**Released: December 21, 2016**

**wireless telecommunications bureau approves performance plans of the eight wireless providers that elected to participate in the alaska plan**

**WC Docket No. 16-271**

By this Public Notice, the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (Bureau) approves the performance plans of eight wireless providers in remote Alaska that elected to receive frozen high cost support pursuant to the terms provided by the *Alaska Plan Order*.[[1]](#footnote-2) The approved plans are included in Appendix A.

 On August 23, 2016, the Commission adopted the *Alaska Plan Order* to provide an integrated plan for high cost support for both fixed and mobile voice and broadband service in remote areas of Alaska (Alaska Plan), building on a proposal submitted by the Alaska Telephone Association (ATA).[[2]](#footnote-3) Given the unique climate and geographic conditions of Alaska, the Commission found that it was in the public interest to provide Alaskan carriers with the option of receiving fixed amounts of support over the next ten years to deploy and maintain their fixed and mobile networks. Consistent with the proposal submitted by ATA, the Commission provided that eligible wireless service providers that chose to participate in the Alaska Plan must submit a performance plan meeting requirements specified in the *Alaska Plan Order*.[[3]](#footnote-4) The Commission delegated authority to the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau to review the plans, including any timely filed update, and to approve a performance plan by public notice if it found that the plan met the applicable requirements adopted in the *Alaska Plan Order* and will serve the public interest.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Eight competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (CETCs) providing mobile wireless service in remote Alaska submitted proposed performance plans prior to the adoption of the *Alaska Plan Order*, and following its adoption, have timely filed revised plans.[[5]](#footnote-6) As required by the *Alaska Plan Order*, we treat the filing of such plans as an election by the respective carriers to participate in the Alaska Plan.[[6]](#footnote-7) Based on these commitments, over 131,000 more consumers in remote Alaska will have access to mobile broadband service at the end of 10 years, including over 120,000 that will receive 4G LTE service. After review, we find that the revised plans meet the requirements of the *Alaska Plan Order* and will serve the public interest. The plans extend 4G LTE broadband service to remote areas of Alaska where possible and otherwise improve or retain critical service.[[7]](#footnote-8) Accordingly, we approve each of the revised performance plans from these CETCs, and we direct the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to obligate and disburse frozen support as provided under the *Alaska Plan Order*, starting January 1, 2017, to each of these CETCs, subject to the following condition set out in that Order: an officer of the company must submit a letter in WC Docket No. 16-271 by December 29, 2016, certifying that the carrier will comply with the public interest obligations adopted in the *Alaska Plan Order* and the deployment obligations set forth in the approved performance plan.[[8]](#footnote-9)

*Additional Information*. For additional information on this proceeding, contact Matthew Warner of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Competition and Infrastructure Policy Division, Matthew.Warner@fcc.gov, (202) 418-2419, or Audra Hale-Maddox of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Auctions and Spectrum Access Division, Audra.Hale-Maddox@fcc.gov, (202) 418-0794.

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**Appendix A: Approved Performance Commitments**

**1. Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative (ASTAC)**

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**2. Bristol Bay Cellular**



**3. Copper Valley Wireless**



**4. Cordova Wireless**



**5. GCI**



**6. OTZ Wireless**

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**7. TelAlaska Cellular**

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**8. Windy City Cellular**



1. *Connect America Fund; Universal Service Reform–Mobility Fund; Connect America Fund–Alaska Plan*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 16-271, WT Docket No. 10-208, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 31 FCC Rcd 10139 (2016) (*Alaska Plan Order*). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Id.* ATA proposed a consensus plan designed to maintain, extend, and upgrade broadband service across all areas of Alaska served by rate-of-return carriers as well as their mobile affiliates. Letter from Christine O’Connor, Executive Director, Alaska Telephone Association, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket No. 10-90, Attach. (filed Feb. 20, 2015). We note that, in this Public Notice, we address only the performance plans submitted by mobile carriers. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10166-67, para. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *See id.* The Commission required that such performance plans specify the population that would be covered after five and ten years into the plan, respectively, broken down for each type of available middle mile, and within each type of middle mile, for each level of data service offered (including the minimum download and upload speeds for each level), and that each plan would commit to service meeting the deployment standard specified in the Order. *See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10166-67, para. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *See* Letter from Christine O’Conner, Counsel, ATA, to Marlene H. Dortch, WT Docket No. 16-271 (Dec. 14, 2016), App. (updating the ASTAC, Bristol Bay, OTZ Wireless, and TelAlaska performance plans); Letter from Julie A. Veach, Counsel, GCI, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WT Docket No. 16-271 (Nov. 29, 2016), App. (updating the GCI performance plan); Letter from Christine O’Conner, Counsel, ATA, to Marlene H. Dortch, WT Docket No. 16-271 (Nov. 2, 2016), App. (updating the Copper Valley, Cordova, and Windy City performance plans); *see also Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10166-67, 10171, paras. 85-86, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10171, para. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. In the *Alaska Plan Order*, the Commission stated that itexpected participants would work to extend 4G LTE service to populations not currently receiving it, but authorized the Bureau in particular instances to approve the maintenance of lower levels of technology, or upgrades from 2G to 3G, due to limitations such as difficult terrain or lack of access to terrestrial backhaul, and balancing the goal of reasonably comparable service with the goals of ensuring that support is used efficiently and remains within the amounts budgeted to a participating competitive ETC.*See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10167, para. 86.With one exception, the approved plans provide for deployment of some level of mobile broadband service, and in most cases, 4G LTE service, in all areas with terrestrial backhaul. *See* Appendix A. Bristol Bay states that, although there is terrestrial backhaul in its service area, it is constrained from providing wireless broadband due in part to the cost of the available backhaul. We approve Bristol Bay’s commitments in light of this consideration, contingent on its commitment that, if affordable middle mile becomes available, it will deliver mobile broadband at least 4 Mbps download/1 Mbps upload speeds by Year 5 and 10 Mbps download/1 Mbps upload speed by Year 10. *See* Appendix A. While ASTAC notes the availability of terrestrial backhaul in a small portion of its service area, it relies at this time predominantly on satellite backhaul, and we approve its commitment to deploy 3G technology throughout its service area on that basis. *See id.* We remind funding recipients that, under the *Alaska Plan Order*, all mobile carriers receiving funding under the Alaska plan that rely exclusively on performance-limiting satellite backhaul for any portion of their served population are required to report if any terrestrial backhaul or comparable satellite backhaul became commercially available in the previous calendar year, and, if they have not already committed to providing 4G LTE at 10/1 Mbps speeds to the population served by the new backhaul, to submit revised performance commitments factoring in the availability of the new backhaul option. *See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10172, para. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. *See Alaska Plan Order*, 31 FCC Rcd at 10171, para. 97 (requiring carriers to meet this condition following plan approval before receiving funding from USAC). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)