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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC ISSUES DECLARATORY RULING SUPPORTING LOWER CALLING RATES BETWEEN LAREDO, TEXAS, AND NUEVO LAREDO, MEXICO

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) released a Declaratory Ruling regarding international calling rates between Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. The ruling supports efforts of the City of Laredo, Texas and the Texas Public Utility Commission to establish an approach that would lower prices between these two cities, but recognizes that the FCC cannot, in this instance, act unilaterally.

The cities of Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, are directly opposite each other on the Rio Grande, on either side of the border between the United States and Mexico and have extensive economic and social ties that generate substantial communications across the border. Because telephone calls across the border are international calls, the current cost of such calls is substantially higher than would be the case between two adjacent cities within the United States that share communities of interest.

Today's declaratory ruling supports the goal of lower cross-border calling rates. For the purposes of achieving lower calling prices, the Commission concludes that current FCC rules would permit carriers to develop calling plans that would offer prices for cross-border traffic between Laredo and Nuevo Laredo at rates comparable to local traffic within the city. The ruling notes, however, that implementation of such pricing plans will require the cooperation of Mexico's telecommunications regulatory authority, Comision Federal de Telecomunicaciones de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (COFETEL) and Mexico's foreign carriers, and recognizes that COFETEL may take steps to permit the negotiation of such arrangements. In its Declaratory Ruling, the FCC urges mutual cooperation among the carriers involved. The FCC further states that it would welcome any specific request by U.S. carriers for approval of arrangements that would permit lower calling rates for this border area.

Action by the Commission January 22, 2002, by Declaratory Ruling (FCC 02-14). Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps and Martin.

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