

November 21, 2000

VIA EXPRESS MAIL

ORIGINAL

Blanca S. Bayo'  
Director, Records and Reporting  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Betty Easley Conference Center  
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Re: Docket No. 000121-TP - Investigation into the establishment of operations support systems permanent performance measures for incumbent local exchange telecommunications companies.

Dear Ms. Bayo':

Enclosed please find for filing the original and fifteen (15) copies of the Comments of Birch Telecommunications of the South, Inc. in the above-captioned docket. Also enclosed is an extra copy of this letter. Please date-stamp and return in the enclosed self-addressed, postage prepaid envelope.

Thank you for your assistance with this filing. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 919-562-3069.

Sincerely yours,

*Monica M. Barone / HCB*

Monica M. Barone  
Director, State Regulation  
Birch Telecommunications of the South,  
Inc.

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Enclosures  
cc: Timothy Vaccaro  
Parties of Record

*Done 11/28/00*

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**15107** NOV 22 8

FPSC-RECORDS/REPORTING

**BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

In re: Investigation into the establishment )  
of operations support systems permanent )  
performance measures for incumbent local )  
exchange telecommunications companies. )  
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Docket No. 000121-TP

**ORIGINAL**

Filed: November 21, 2000

**COMMENTS OF**  
**BIRCH TELECOMMUNICATIONS OF THE SOUTH, INC.**

COMES NOW Birch Telecommunications of the South, Inc. ("Birch") and files its Comments on the Florida Public Service Commission Staff's Proposal released on November 3, 2000, in the above-captioned docket.

Generally, Birch proposes changes to the performance measures that are consistent with Birch's experience and success in Texas. In Texas, competition has been greatly facilitated by performance measures and benchmarks that truly level the playing field of and accurately measure the key performance areas that indicate if real competition can exist. Birch's specific comments are outlined below.

**BENCHMARK FOR FOC TIMELINESS**

The Firm Order Confirmation (FOC) Date is the date an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier (ILEC) assigns to complete a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier's (CLEC) order. This response from BellSouth is very important to the CLEC as it is the date that will be communicated to the end-user for the service to be installed. The CLEC's ability to get an FOC date in a timely manner is paramount. Using an example of an end-user wanting new telephony service, if the end user calls an ILEC's Retail

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operation, it is Birch's experience that an install or FOC Date will be communicated to the end user in a short period of time. If the same end user calls a Florida CLEC, the CLEC is limited by the standards of the FOC Timeliness benchmarks. The benchmark for a partially mechanized Local Service Request (LSR)<sup>1</sup> is 85% returned within 10 hours. While Birch recognizes this as an improvement from a 24-hour benchmark, this 10-hour interval still leaves the CLEC at a competitive disadvantage to BellSouth's retail operations. In addition, leaving the FOC return percentage at 85 does not incite BellSouth to better performance. As a comparison, Southwestern Bell (SWBT) is held to 95% FOC timeliness within 5 hours for all electronically submitted LSRs. The benchmark for SWBT was established at a level that would support parity competition, not at levels that SWBT's OSS and service center processes could, at that time, operate. Since the FOC competition supporting benchmark was set, SWBT's OSS and service center processes have improved to operate consistently at that level. Setting the FOC benchmark at levels in Florida that support parity between the ILEC and CLEC will be the proper incentive for BellSouth to improve both OSS mechanization and LCSC processes.

#### **BENCHMARK FOR REJECT INTERVAL**

The Reject Interval is the amount of time that transpires between the CLEC submission of an LSR and BellSouth returning the LSR to the CLEC due to errors with the LSR. Because of the complexity of completing an LSR, the rapid changing rules relating to UNE ordering, and the sometimes inadequate documentation provided by

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<sup>1</sup> A partially mechanized order is one that is submitted electronically by the CLEC and due to limitations of BellSouth's Operations Support Systems (OSS) to provision the LSR electronically, is processed manually by BellSouth's Local Carrier Service Center (LCSC).

BellSouth, CLEC caused errors will happen. In Texas, where significant competition occurs, 24% of all LSRs submitted to SWBT are rejected back to the CLEC. BellSouth's own data for the month of September 2000 shows that 23% of UNE-P and 32% of UNE orders are rejected. Consequently, BellSouth's quick return of rejects for fast CLEC correction is critical. The current BellSouth benchmark offers a reject interval of 85% of partially mechanized Rejects to be returned to the CLEC within 10 hours. Similar to the FOC benchmark, Birch proposes that 95% of the partially mechanized rejects be returned within 5 hours. Leaving the benchmark at 85% within 10 hours does not allow the CLEC to compete successfully against BellSouth's Retail operation. Again, if established, this benchmark would be incentive for BellSouth to increase OSS mechanization, improve LCSC processes, and consequently, promote competition.

#### **BENCHMARK FOR FLOW THROUGH**

Flow Through measures how many CLEC LSRs pass through BellSouth's OSS and how many FOCs are returned without manual handling by BellSouth. This measure impacts competition very significantly. The ability of BellSouth's OSS to operate in a mechanical fashion will have a meaningful effect on a CLEC's ability to add new customers and to provide service to existing customers. When orders do not pass through BellSouth's OSS mechanically (partially mechanized), the CLEC's LSRs are subjected to longer time frames and human error as BellSouth service representatives will re-enter the CLEC LSRs so they can be accepted by BellSouth's legacy provisioning systems. As a comparison, BellSouth's Retail operation does not have another organization re-entering service orders as the LCSC does for CLEC orders, so the fact that CLEC LSRs are handled manually by BellSouth does not result in parity service for the CLEC. Birch

believes that BellSouth does not desire to have large volumes of orders falling out for manual handling, but the flow through standards need to be set at levels that require BellSouth to improve the situation and consequently promote competition. Additionally, the flow through measure is based on the eligibility of the LSR the CLEC submits to be processed mechanically. If the LSR is not designed by BellSouth to flow through, it is excluded from the measurement. Currently, the benchmarks are set at only 90% for Resale Residence and 80% for Resale Business and UNE orders that are eligible to flow through BellSouth's OSS. If LSRs are designed to be processed mechanically, the benchmark should be set at 98% for all order types. BellSouth should also be required to report on a diagnostic basis, the total flow through rate for all disaggregations, regardless of eligibility. This would give the Commission and CLECs the information needed to assess, over time, BellSouth's improvement of mechanization of all LSRs.

#### **DISAGGREGATION FOR FLOW THROUGH**

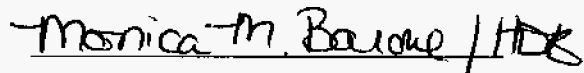
CLEC providers can choose many different network options to provide telephony service including resale, deployment of switches, UNE-P, or any combination of the three. Regardless of the network option chosen by the CLEC, parity service must be achieved to allow competition to flourish. With the level of disaggregation currently used for flow through, UNE-P providers do not experience the same service levels as BellSouth Retail nor the level of service provided to other CLECs using the Resale method of entry (80% for UNE and 90% for Resale). The Service Quality Measures O-1 through 4 should be appropriately disaggregated for UNE-P and BellSouth should be held to the same service levels for UNE-P as it provides to Resale CLECs and its own Retail operations. Further, when UNE-P results are mixed with other UNE products that may

have significantly higher volumes of orders, the UNE-P specific results are lost, reducing the ability, at the aggregate level, to measure whether parity exists for UNE-P providers.

### CONCLUSION

Birch urges the Commission to revisit the benchmarks and disaggregations used to measure BellSouth's performance. In particular, adopting the Birch proposed benchmarks for FOC Timeliness (95% within 5 hours for partially mechanized orders), Reject Interval (95% within 5 hours for partially mechanized orders), and Flow-Through (98% for all disaggregations) would assist in determining if BellSouth's OSS can support parity competition. Further, requiring BellSouth to report total flow through, regardless of the eligibility of the LSR, will encourage increased mechanization for all CLECs. Finally, BellSouth should provide appropriate disaggregation to enable CLECs and this Commission to determine whether UNE-P providers are receiving parity service from BellSouth.

Respectfully submitted this 21<sup>st</sup> day of November 2000.



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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE  
DOCKET 000121-TP

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was furnished via  
U.S. Mail or express mail \* to the following parties of record on this the 21st day of  
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