

DT 99-165

BELL ATLANTIC/RHYTHMS LINKS, INC.

Order Nisi Approving Interconnection Agreement

O R D E R N O. 23,380

January 6, 2000

On October 28, 1999, New England Telephone and Telegraph Company (Bell Atlantic) and Rhythms Links, Inc. (Rhythms) jointly filed with the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) a negotiated Interconnection Agreement (Agreement). The Agreement was filed for approval pursuant to section 252(e) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (TAct).

The agreement filed adopts the terms and conditions of the interconnection agreement between Bell Atlantic and xDSL Networks, Inc. (xDSL) which was approved by Commission Order No. 23,265 dated July 26, 1999. The initial term of the agreement expired on December 31, 1999. The agreement remains in effect beyond the initial term after which a ninety day notice is required to terminate the agreement.

This Agreement provides, inter alia, for transmission/routing of exchange service traffic and exchange access traffic, transmission/termination of other types of traffic and joint network configuration. It further provides for unbundled access, resale, collocation, number portability,

dialing parity, access to rights of way, access to data bases, and directory assistance service. The parties will exchange technical and traffic information which will be kept proprietary; each party will maintain facilities within its own network and will not interfere with the other party's systems.

This Agreement is a comprehensive set of terms and conditions that will facilitate the entry of Rhythms as a competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) in New Hampshire. The parties agree to jointly engineer, plan and operate a diverse transmission system with which they will interconnect their respective networks. The Agreement specifies the designation of interconnection points, provides for a joint grooming plan, and provides for the physical interface of facilities.

The interoffice facilities are priced on an unbundled basis to allow for use with other unbundled network elements, thus creating numerous facilities-based and/or resale options to Rhythms in the provisioning of exchange and exchange access services. The Agreement also includes detailed unbundling of local outside plant and central office facilities that would allow Rhythms to provide digital and other high-tech services with minimal future negotiating or

"grooming" of the Agreement. Prices in this filing are virtually the same as those in previously approved non-cellular interconnection agreements for the services/elements that are common. Staff points out that the TAct does not require that a telecommunications company sell each service/element for the same price or terms to each requesting party. A CLEC can request the entire agreement of another CLEC as demonstrated by this filing.

A Statement of Generally Available Terms (SGAT) was filed by Bell Atlantic on July 11, 1997 and took effect October 20, 1997 per order 22,692 (August 25, 1997) subject to continued review pursuant to section 252(f)(4) of the TAct. This allows Rhythms and other competitors to purchase services or unbundled elements that may not be covered by their interconnection agreement.

The Staff has recommended approval of the Agreement between Rhythms and Bell Atlantic based on a review of the petition, the Agreement and verbal clarification provided by Bell Atlantic.

We have reviewed the filing and find it meets the standards of section 252(e)(2)(A) of the TAct for approval of a negotiated Agreement. The Agreement does not appear to be discriminatory to any carrier not a party to the negotiations

and is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity. We will approve it on a nisi basis in order to provide any interested party an opportunity to submit comments or request a hearing pursuant to RSA 374:26.

We note that as new competitors enter the market, greater pressure is put on the 603 area code, so long as today's antiquated number assignment process remains in effect. Accordingly, we will require that Rhythms request and use numbers responsibly and conservatively, and to join in exploring alternative mechanisms to use existing numbers as efficiently as possible and thereby avert the need for a new area code. We further note that the Commission intends to issue further orders concerning this matter which Rhythms will be required to follow.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that the Interconnection Agreement negotiated between Rhythms and Bell Atlantic is approved; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that Rhythms will notify the Commission within ten days of making their first facility-based commercial call in any exchange that has not already been opened to a "fresh look opportunity" as ordered in Docket DE 96-420. The recommended method of notifying the Commission

is to provide a copy of the "Confirmation of Code Activation Form" which is used to notify the North American Numbering Code Administrator.

FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petitioner shall cause a copy of this Order Nisi to be published once in a statewide newspaper of general circulation, such publication to be no later than January 13, 2000 and to be documented by affidavit filed with this office on or before January 20, 2000; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this petition be notified that they may submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing on this matter before the Commission no later than January 24, 2000; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this Order Nisi shall be effective January 28, 2000, unless the Commission provides otherwise in a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New
Hampshire this sixth day of January, 2000.

Douglas L. Patch
Chairman

Susan S. Geiger
Commissioner

Nancy Brockway
Commissioner

Attested by:

Thomas B. Getz
Executive Director and Secretary