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PSC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED EXTENDED AREA PHONE SERVICE

Public Service Commissioner Dave Fisher will conduct public hearings in Butte and Anaconda on December 11 to hear comments on US West Communications' proposals for telephone extended area service between Butte, Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS region will be local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS region must increase to recover EAS costs. US West has proposed three rate alternatives under which EAS, if approved by the PSC, could be provided to include Butte, Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall in one local calling area.

The hearings will be held at the following times and locations:
Anaconda - Wednesday, December 11, 2 p.m., Metcalf Senior Citizen Center, 115 E. Pennsylvania Avenue.

Butte - Wednesday, December 11, 7 p.m., Montana Tech student union building, Big Butte/Highlands room, 1300 West Park.

US West has proposed three rate options for EAS in the Butte region. If the PSC approves EAS, it must choose one of the options, or develop an alternative.

Option 1 - Increase local phone rates by \$2.62 per month in all exchanges in the state where EAS is implemented.

Option 2 - Increase local rates based on the total number of lines in the EAS region. Generally, the more lines in a region, the greater the rate increase. Under this option, Butte, Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall customers' local phone bills would increase by \$2.10 per month.

Option 3 - Increase local rates in individual exchanges based on the number of additional lines EAS makes available for local calling from those exchanges. Under the four alternatives of this option, the rate increase for Butte customers would be smaller than the rate increases for the outlying exchange customers.

The four alternatives are:

- a) a monthly increase of \$2.36 for Butte customers and \$4 for Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall;
- b) a monthly increase of \$2 for Butte customers and \$5.65 for Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall;
- c) a monthly increase of \$1.50 for Butte customers and \$7.93 for Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall;
- d) a monthly increase of \$1 for Butte customers and \$10.19 for Anaconda, Warm Springs, Deer Lodge and Whitehall.

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