

Media Advisory

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PSC to Receive Update on Deployment of Rural Broadband Funding

What: Presentation on receipt and use of “Universal Service Funds”
When: Thursday, August 31, 1:00 pm
Where: PSC Business Office, 1701 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT 59601
Livestream: <http://psc.mt.gov/video.asp>

On Thursday, The Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) will conduct a public meeting to receive a progress report from Blackfoot Communications and Nemont Telephone Cooperative on the receipt and use of federal high-cost funding.

The meeting will take place on **Thursday, August 31, 1:00 pm at the PSC Business Office, 1701 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT 59601.**

Each October, the PSC is charged with re-certifying eligible telecommunications carriers (ETC) to receive approximately \$100 million in federal subsidies to support the build out of broadband and voice networks in high-cost areas, predominately rural communities.

The funding comes from the Federal Communication Commission’s Universal Service Fund to improve communication infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas across the country.

Blackfoot, based in Missoula, elected to receive an alternative form of subsidy from the FCC last year, while Nemont, headquartered in Scobey, receives subsidies based on the legacy system of support.

Thursday’s presentation is part of an ongoing effort by the Commission to ensure that high-cost funds are spent appropriately.

Chairman Brad Johnson, R-East Helena, said, "hearing from two companies with different business models, located in two different parts of the state, will give the PSC a more comprehensive view toward the state of rural broadband in Montana."

Members of the public are invited to attend and provide oral comment at the meeting.

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Made up of five elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.