



**NORTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC STAFF
UTILITIES COMMISSION**

March 20, 2001

LX-01-CAC336-1931

Mr. William H. McMurray, III, Chair
Mr. James R. Simeon, Executive Director
Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce
16 East Center Street
Post Office Drawer C
Lexington, North Carolina 27293

OFFICIAL COPY

Dear Mr. McMurray and Mr. Simeon:

This is in reference to your recent letter regarding the North Carolina Utilities Commission's proposals to provide area code relief in the 336 area code. In your letter, you discuss your views on the impact some of the options will have on the citizens of this state. Your support is for the overlay plan rather than the geographic split. Robert Gruber, Executive Director of the Public Staff of the North Carolina Utilities Commission has asked me to respond on his behalf.

As you have noted in your letter, existing customers experience no number change with an overlay option since they will retain the same area code currently affiliated with their telephone numbers. However, all local calls (basic local and expanded local) currently dialed using seven digits will have to be dialed using ten digits (area code + 7 digit telephone number). This dialing pattern is a requirement set out by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Also, ten-digit dialing under the overlay will not result in any change in the type of call or rates associated with the same calls previously dialed using seven digits. However, customers should not dial a 1 or 0 before the ten-digit number; such dialing could result in the calls being billed by the subscriber's intraLATA carrier as a toll call.

With a geographic split option, approximately one-half of the existing customers in the 336 area code would be assigned a new area code. While all calls made within the geographic area of each of the remaining 336 area code and the new area code would be dialed using seven digits, all local calls made going between the two area codes would require ten-digit dialing. Due to the extensive amount of seven-digit dialed local calling in the 336 area today, many of those routes would convert to ten-digit dialing as the result of implementing a geographic split. This difference in dialing patterns could potentially lead to customer confusion of having to decide when to dial seven or ten digits when making local calls within the geographic area previously covered by only the 336 area code.

Executive Director
733-2435

Communications
733-2810

Economic Research
733-2902

Legal
733-6110

Transportation
733-7766

Accounting
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Consumer Services
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Electric
733-2267

Natural Gas
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Water
733-5610

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Business customers, such as those you represent, generally prefer an overlay to avoid printing and advertising expense associated with changing their area code. Also, wireless or cellular providers generally prefer an overlay to avoid the expense of having to reprogram cellular phones for those customers affected by an area code change. It has been suggested that wireless providers be given their own area code. At this time, the FCC does not allow service specific (example, wireless service) area codes. The consensus of the residential customers who have contacted the Commission is to prefer a geographic split as opposed to having to dial all local calls using ten digits under an overlay.

As I am sure you are aware, more area codes will be needed in the future. The current expectation is that the 336 area code will exhaust or run out during the fourth quarter of 2002. It is currently projected that an overlay area code assigned to the 336 area code will provide sufficient numbers for approximately nine years before additional relief will be needed. There is also a very real concern about running out of area codes nationally in the next 12 to 15 years. At this time, the Commission is developing ways to extend the life of area codes by considering measures to conserve numbers and more efficiently utilize the numbers available.

We appreciate your taking the time to contact our offices. I am providing copies of your letter to the Public Staff's Legal and Communications Division for consideration in our preparation for this case. The original has been given to the Chief Clerk of the Commission for inclusion in the official file.

Sincerely,



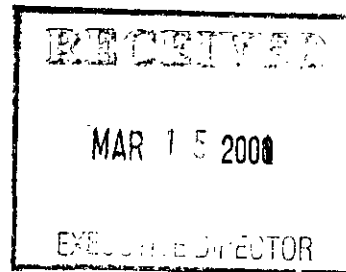
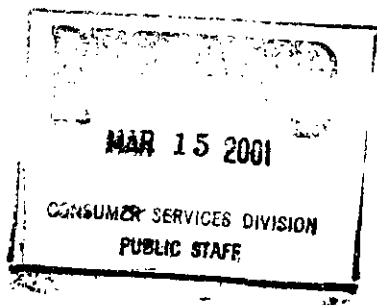
Carol Kimball Stahl, Director
Consumer Services Division

CS/

cc: Chief Clerk's Office – Docket P-100, Sub 137c
(w/ original letter)

Public Staff – Communications Division
(w/ copy of letter)

Public Staff – Legal Division
(w/ copy of letter)



March 13, 2001

Mr. Robert P. Gruber
Executive Director – Public Staff
4326 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4326

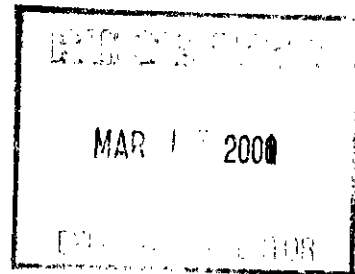
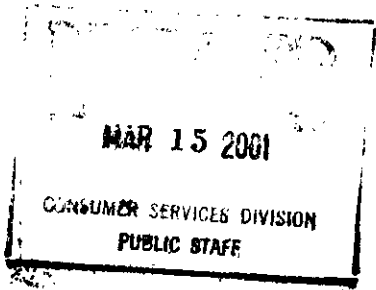
Dear Mr. Gruber:

We are writing on behalf of the Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce in support of the proposed “distributed overlay” relief plan for the 336 area code. After reviewing the available options, our Board of Directors on February 28 unanimously voted to recommend this plan to the Commission. This plan provides the most cost effective and efficient means to address the present and future needs of our community and the Piedmont Triad area. The advantages of this plan far outweigh the disadvantages; therefore, the Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce strongly recommend your full acceptance of the 336 area code “distributed overlay” plan before you at this time.

Sincerely,

William H. McMurray, III
William H. McMurray, III
Chair

James R. Simeon
James R. Simeon
Executive Director



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Mr. Robert P. Gruber
Executive Director – Public Staff
4326 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4326

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