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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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**PSC Approves Verizon Service Quality Improvement Plan
— Telecommunications Company Agrees to Expand Broadband Service to 32,000
Customers, Helping to Fulfill Governor Cuomo’s Goal to Expand Broadband Service in
New York; Make Much-Needed Repairs to Existing Copper Service; Remove Unused
Telephone Poles to Improve Safety —**

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved a joint proposal filed by Verizon, Commission staff, the company’s union, and a leading consumer advocacy group, which would commit Verizon to improve customer service quality, including expanding broadband service, make repairs to existing copper service, and eliminate 64,000 existing double telephone poles.

“The joint proposal strikes the appropriate balance for consumers, Verizon, and its employees,” **Commission Chair John B. Rhodes said.** “The joint proposal builds upon and expands important customer protections previously approved by the Commission and it requires Verizon to expand its fiber network and invest in its copper network, both of which will result service improvements.”

Under the terms of the joint proposal, Verizon will expand its fiber and hybrid fiber-copper networks in areas of upstate New York, the Hudson Valley, and on Long Island. Verizon will also upgrade its existing copper system in numerous locations within New York City. These changes and others will result in the availability of higher quality, more reliable landline telephone service to currently underserved communities and will increase Verizon’s competitive presence in several economically important telecommunications markets in New York State.

The successful joint proposal is the result of two years of discussions between Verizon, Commission staff; the company’s union, Communication Workers of America; and the Public Utility Law Project of New York, Inc. Other parties in the proceeding, the Utility Intervention Unit of the Department of State; the City of Syracuse, and the Connect New York Coalition, did not oppose the joint proposal. In 2015, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo established the \$500 million New NY Broadband Program, the nation’s largest and most ambitious state investment in broadband expansion. When the New NY Broadband Program was launched, 30 percent of New Yorkers — approximately 2.42 million locations — lacked access to broadband.

Through implementation of the joint proposal, Verizon will extend its high-speed broadband network to pass approximately 32,000 additional premises. This build out will be divided between upstate areas for which Verizon was awarded Broadband Program Office (BPO) funding, and areas in Long Island and the Hudson Valley. Significantly, none of this new investment will be funded by BPO

awards. Verizon has been an active participant in Governor Cuomo's broadband buildout plan. Earlier this year, the company received a state broadband grant of \$70.7 million to extend its service coverage to 15,515 addresses in the Capital Region, Central NY, North Country, Southern Tier areas.

The Commission has also encouraged Verizon to deploy fiber and fiber-copper hybrid networks throughout its footprint. These hybrid fiber networks are more reliable and less prone to weather-related outages than traditional copper networks. They also provide high-speed broadband services (over 100 Mbps), that the traditional, often older vintage, copper networks cannot achieve or support reliably.

The joint proposal requires Verizon take steps to remediate problems within its aging copper network in areas where Verizon has indicated it will not currently be extending fiber network. In addition, Verizon will make investments to improve service quality in New York City. Verizon commits to identify 100 copper-fed buildings in New York City that have a high incidence of repair visits by technicians and will replace the existing copper facilities serving those locations with fiber optics, or hybrid fiber/copper equipment. These investments will ensure that some of New York City's most chronically underperforming system elements are replaced and that customers gain access to more reliable network and services.

Adoption of the joint proposal will result in Verizon removing 64,000 double pole conditions over a four-year period. While not strictly limited to service quality, the removal of double poles, including moving facilities to new poles which are likely stronger and more resistant to weather events will likely result in an improvement to service quality and provide less of a safety threat.

Verizon also committed to inspect and replace, as needed, batteries at remote terminal locations serving critical customers, such as hospitals, police and fire stations. This remediation will serve to improve service quality at the remote terminal, and for those customers served from such remote terminals, for which a battery replacement is necessary. Extended battery life mitigates the duration of outages caused by commercial power failure.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 16-C-0122 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.