

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS.

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.1. Purpose and Scope.

- (a) Purpose.
- (b) Scope.

§21.3. Definitions.

§21.5. Representative Appearances.

- (a) Generally.
- (b) Change in authorized representative.
- (c) Lead counsel.
- (d) Change in information required for notification or service.

§21.7. Standards of Conduct.

- (a) Standards of conduct for parties.
- (b) Communications.
- (c) Standards for recusal of presiding officers.
- (d) Motions for disqualification or recusal of a presiding officer.
- (e) Subsequent proceedings.

§21.9. Computation of Time.

- (a) Counting days.
- (b) Extensions.

§21.11. Suspension of Rules and Good Cause Exceptions.

- (a) Suspension.
- (b) Good cause exception.

SUBCHAPTER B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.31. Filings of Pleadings, Documents, and Other Materials.

- (a) Applicability.
- (b) File with the commission filing clerk.
- (c) Receipt by the commission.
- (d) No filing fee.
- (e) Office hours of Central Records.

- (f) Filing deadline.

§21.33. Formal Requisites of Pleadings and Documents to be filed with the Commission.

- (a) Applicability.
- (b) Requirements of form.
- (c) Format.
- (d) Citation.
- (e) Signature.
- (f) Page limits.
- (g) Hard copy filing standards.
- (h) Electronic filing standards
- (i) External storage for digital media.
- (j) File format standards.

§21.35. Service of Pleadings and Documents.

- (a) Pleadings and Documents submitted to a presiding officer.
- (b) Methods of service.
- (c) Evidence of service.
- (d) Certificate of service.

§21.37. Examination and Correction of Pleadings and Documents.

- (a) Construction of pleadings and documents.
- (b) Procedural sufficiency of pleadings and documents.
- (c) Additional requirements.

§21.39. Amended Pleadings.

- (a) Filing amended pleadings.
- (b) Amendments to conform to issues tried at hearing without objection.

§21.41. Motions.

- (a) General requirements.
- (b) Time for response.
- (c) Rulings on motions.
- (d) Motions for continuances and extensions.
- (e) Deadlines for motions for continuance.
- (f) Modification of deadlines.

SUBCHAPTER C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS

§21.61. Threshold Issues and Certification of Issues to the Commission.

- (a) Threshold issues.
- (b) Certification.

§21.63. Interim Issues and Orders.

§21.65. Interlocutory Appeals.

§21.67. Dismissal of a Proceeding.

- (a) Motions for dismissal.
- (b) Withdrawal of application.

§21.69. Summary Decision.

- (a) Motion for summary decision.
- (b) Filing and contents of motion.
- (c) Response to motion.
- (d) Hearing on the motion.
- (e) No further hearing.

§21.71. Sanctions.

- (a) Causes for imposition of sanctions.
- (b) Types of sanctions.
- (c) Imposition of sanctions by the commission.
- (d) Procedure.

§21.73. Consolidation of Dockets, Consolidation of Issues, and Joint Filings.

- (a) Consolidation of dockets.
- (b) Consolidation of issues.
- (c) Joint filings or joinder.

§21.75. Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration.

- (a) Motions for clarification.
- (b) Motions for reconsideration.

§21.77. Confidential Material.

- (a) General.
- (b) Disputes.
- (c) Exemption from disclosure.
- (d) Material provided to parties.
- (e) Review by parties.
- (f) Acknowledgment.
- (g) Disposition of confidential information.
- (h) Use in other proceedings.

SUBCHAPTER D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

§21.91. Mediation.

- (a) Request for mediation.
- (b) Mediator.
- (c) Procedure.
- (d) Mediation and formal dispute resolution.

§21.93. Voluntary Alternative Dispute Resolution.

§21.95. Compulsory Arbitration.

- (a) Request for arbitration.
- (b) Response.
- (c) Selection and replacement of presiding officer.
- (d) Participation.
- (e) Prehearing conference; challenges.
- (f) Notice.
- (g) Record of hearing.
- (h) Hearing procedures.
- (i) Applicable rules.
- (j) Authority of presiding officer.
- (k) Discovery.
- (l) Time for hearing.
- (m) Evidence.
- (n) Sanctions.
- (o) Decision Point List (DPL) and witness list.

- (p) Cross-examination.
- (q) Clarifying questions
- (r) Briefs.
- (s) Time for decision.
- (t) Decision.
- (u) Distribution.
- (v) Implementation.
- (w) Motions for reconsideration.

§21.97. Approval of Negotiated Agreements.

- (a) Application.
- (b) Notice.
- (c) Proceedings.
- (d) Comments.
- (e) Issues.
- (f) Authority of presiding officer.
- (g) Filing of agreement.

§21.99. Approval of Arbitrated Agreements.

- (a) Application.
- (b) Parties' comments.
- (c) Commission approval.
- (d) Effective date.
- (e) Filing of agreement.

§21.101. Approval of Amendments to Existing Interconnection Agreements.

- (a) Application.
- (a) Application.
- (b) Notice.
- (c) Proceeding.
- (d) Comments.
- (e) Issues.
- (f) Authority of presiding officer.
- (g) Effective date.
- (h) Formal approval.

(i) Filing of agreement.

§21.103. Approval of Agreements Adopting Terms and Conditions Pursuant to Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §252(i).

- (a) Application.
- (b) Provisions incorporated from §21.101 of this title (relating to the Approval of Amendments to Existing Interconnection Agreements).

SUBCHAPTER E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION

§21.121. Purpose.

§21.123. Informal Settlement Conference.

- (a) Filing a request.
- (b) The settlement conference.
- (c) Conduct.
- (d) Results of settlement conference.
- (e) Both formal dispute resolution and informal settlement request.

§21.125. Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding.

- (a) Initiation of formal proceeding.
- (b) Response to the petition.
- (c) Reply to response to complaint.
- (d) Provisions incorporated from §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration).
- (e) Number of copies to be filed.
- (f) Participation.
- (g) Notice and hearing.
- (h) Authority of presiding officer.
- (i) Discovery.
- (j) Prefiled evidence and witness list.
- (k) Arbitration award.
- (l) Filing of agreement.
- (m) Motions for reconsideration.

§21.127. Request for Expedited Ruling.

- (a) Purpose.
- (b) Filing a request.
- (c) Response to complaint.

- (d) Hearing.
- (e) Decision Point List (DPL) and witness list.
- (f) Decision.
- (g) Motions for reconsideration.

§21.129. Request for Interim Ruling Pending Dispute Resolution.

- (a) Purpose.
- (b) Filing a request.
- (c) Service.
- (d) Response.
- (e) Hearing.
- (f) Evidence.
- (g) Consideration.
- (h) Ruling.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.1. Purpose and Scope.

- (a) **Purpose.** This chapter establishes procedures for approving interconnection agreements and resolving open issues pursuant to the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §252.
- (b) **Scope.**
 - (1) This chapter shall govern the initiation, conduct, and determination of dispute resolution proceedings, whether instituted by order of the commission, order of the presiding officer, or by request of a party.
 - (2) This chapter shall not be construed so as to enlarge, diminish, modify, or otherwise alter the jurisdiction, powers, or authority of the commission, commission staff, or the substantive rights of any person.
 - (3) To the extent that any provision of this chapter is in conflict with any statute or substantive rule of the commission, the statute or substantive rule shall control.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.3. Definitions.

The following terms, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the context or specific language of a section clearly indicates otherwise:

- (1) **Administrative review** — Process under which an application may be approved without a formal hearing.
- (2) **Affected person** — The definition of affected person is that definition given in the Public Utility Regulatory Act, §11.003(1).
- (3) **Application** — A written application, petition, complaint, notice of intent, appeal, or other pleading that initiates a proceeding.
- (4) **Arbitration** — A form of dispute resolution in which each party presents its position on any unresolved issues to an impartial third person(s) who renders a decision on the basis of the information and arguments submitted.
- (5) **Arbitration hearing** — The hearing conducted by an arbitrator to resolve any issue submitted to the arbitrator. An arbitration hearing is not a contested case under the Administrative Procedure Act, Texas Government Code §§2001.001, et. seq.
- (6) **Arbitration team** — Employees of the commission assigned to serve as arbitrators in a dispute resolution proceeding. One or more members of the arbitration team may serve as the presiding officer(s) of a dispute resolution proceeding. The Arbitration team does not include commission employees specifically assigned to advise commissioners.
- (7) **Arbitrator** — The commission, any commissioner, or any commission employee selected to serve as the presiding officer in a compulsory arbitration hearing.
- (8) **Authorized representative** — A person who enters an appearance on behalf of a party, or on behalf of a person seeking to be a party or otherwise to participate, in a proceeding. The appearance may be entered in person or by subscribing the representative's name upon any pleading filed on behalf of the party or person seeking to be a party or otherwise to participate in the proceeding. The authorized representative shall be considered to remain a representative of record unless a statement or pleading to the contrary is filed or stated in the record.
- (9) **Commission** — The Public Utility Commission of Texas.
- (10) **Commissioner** — One of the members of the Public Utility Commission of Texas.
- (11) **Complainant** — A person who files a complaint intended to initiate a dispute resolution proceeding.
- (12) **Compulsory arbitration** — The arbitration proceeding conducted by the commission or its designated arbitrator pursuant to the commission's authority under FTA §252.
- (13) **Contested case** — A proceeding, including a ratemaking or licensing proceeding, in which the legal rights, duties, or privileges of a party are to be determined by a state agency after an opportunity for adjudicative hearing.
- (14) **Control number** — Number assigned by the commission's Central Records to a docket, project, or tariff.
- (15) **Days** — Calendar days, not working days, unless otherwise specified by this chapter or the commission's substantive rules.
- (16) **Decision Point List (DPL)** — A matrix established before the submittal of testimony that includes the specific issues to be decided in a dispute resolution proceeding.
- (17) **Dispute resolution proceeding** — A proceeding conducted by a presiding officer or commission employee in accordance with this chapter. A dispute resolution proceeding is not a contested case subject to the Administrative Procedure Act, Texas Government Code §§2001.001, et. seq. A dispute resolution proceeding may include formal or informal proceedings.
- (18) **Docket** — A proceeding under this chapter.
- (19) **FTA** — The federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, Public Law Number 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996), (codified at 47 U.S.C. §§151 et seq.).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

- (20) **Hearing** — Any proceeding at which evidence is taken on the merits of the matters at issue, not including prehearing conferences.
- (21) **Informal settlement conference** — One or more optional, informal meetings between parties to an interconnection agreement and commission staff in which commission staff assist the parties to reach settlement as to all or some of the disputed issues.
- (22) **Mediation** — A voluntary dispute resolution process in which a neutral third party, including, but not limited to, a member of the commission staff, assists the parties in reaching agreement. The mediator does not have the authority to impose a resolution.
- (23) **Party** — A party to negotiations under Subchapter D Dispute Resolution or a party to an agreement under Subchapter E Post-Interconnection Dispute Resolution.
- (24) **Person** — An individual, partnership, corporation, association, governmental subdivision, entity, or public or private organization.
- (25) **Petition** — A written document complying with §21.33 of this title (relating to Formal Requisites of Pleadings and Documents to be Filed with the Commission) intended to initiate a dispute resolution proceeding with the commission.
- (26) **Petitioner** — A person who files a petition intended to initiate a dispute resolution proceeding with the commission.
- (27) **Pleading** — A written document submitted by a party, or a person seeking to participate in a proceeding, setting forth allegations of fact, claims, requests for relief, legal argument, and/or other matters relating to a proceeding.
- (28) **Prehearing conference** — Any conference or meeting of the parties, prior to the hearing on the merits, on the record and presided over by the presiding officer.
- (29) **Presiding officer** — The commission, any commissioner, any hearings examiner or administrative law judge, or arbitrator presiding over a proceeding or any portion thereof.
- (30) **Proceeding** — Any hearing, investigation, inquiry or other fact-finding or decision-making procedure, including the denial of relief or the dismissal of a complaint, conducted by the commission.
- (31) **Project** — A rulemaking or other proceeding that is not a docket or a tariff.
- (32) **PURA** — The Public Utility Regulatory Act, Texas Utilities Code, Title 2, as it may be amended from time to time.
- (33) **Respondent** — A person against whom a petition has been filed.
- (34) **Working day** — A day on which the commission is open for the conduct of business.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.5. Representative Appearances.

- (a) **Generally.** Any person may appear before the commission or in a hearing in person or by authorized representative. The presiding officer may require a representative to submit proof of authority to appear on behalf of another person. The authorized representative of a party must specify the particular persons or classes of persons the representative is representing in the proceeding.
- (b) **Change in authorized representative.** Any person appearing through an authorized representative must provide written notification to the commission and all parties to the proceeding of any change in that person's authorized representative. A copy of the notification must be filed with the commission's Central Records Division under the applicable control number for each affected proceeding and must include the authorized representative's name, address, telephone number, email address, and facsimile number.
- (c) **Lead counsel.** A party represented by more than one attorney or authorized representative in a matter before the commission may be required by the presiding officer to designate a lead counsel who is authorized to act on behalf of all the party's representatives. All other attorneys or authorized representatives for the party may take part in the proceeding in an orderly manner, as ordered by the presiding officer.
- (d) **Change in information required for notification or service.** Any person or authorized representative appearing before the commission in any proceeding must provide written notification to the commission and all parties to the proceeding of any change in their address, telephone number, facsimile number, or email address within ten working days of the change. A copy of the notification must be filed with the commission's Central Records Division under the applicable control number for each affected proceeding.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.7. Standards of Conduct.

(a) **Standards of conduct for parties.**

- (1) Every person appearing in any proceeding shall comport himself or herself with dignity, courtesy, and respect for the commission, presiding officer, and all other persons participating in the proceeding. Professional representatives shall observe and practice the standard of ethical and professional conduct prescribed for their professions. In particular, lawyers are reminded of their responsibilities under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, §§3.01, 3.02, 3.03 and 3.04.
- (2) Upon a finding of a violation of paragraph (1) of this subsection, any party, witness, attorney, or other representative may be excluded by the presiding officer from the proceeding in which the violation transpired for such period and upon such conditions as are just, or may be subject to sanctions in accordance with §21.71 of this title (relating to Sanctions). A decision by a presiding officer to exclude a party, witness, attorney, or other representative shall be subject to immediate appeal to the commission.

(b) **Communications.**

- (1) **Ex parte communications.** Unless required for the disposition of ex parte matters authorized by law, a presiding officer assigned to render a decision may not communicate, directly or indirectly, in connection with any substantive issues currently the subject of a dispute resolution proceeding before that presiding officer with any person, party, or their representatives, except on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. Members of the commission or a presiding officer assigned to render a decision may communicate ex parte with employees of the commission who have not participated in any hearing in the case for the purpose of utilizing the special skills or knowledge of the commission and its staff in evaluating the evidence.
- (2) **Communications between presiding officers and Commissioners and employees of the commission acting as advisors to Commissioners.** Unless required for the disposition of ex parte matters authorized by law, a presiding officer assigned to render a decision may not communicate, directly or indirectly, in connection with any substantive issues currently the subject of a dispute resolution proceeding before that presiding officer with any commissioner, or with an employee of the commission acting as an advisor to the commission, except on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate.
- (3) **Application to arbitration team.** As used in this section, the term "presiding officer" includes all members of the arbitration team.

(c) **Standards for recusal of presiding officers.** Presiding officers shall disqualify themselves or shall recuse themselves on the same grounds and under the same circumstances as specified in the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 18b.

(d) **Motions for disqualification or recusal of a presiding officer.**

- (1) Any party may move for disqualification or recusal of a presiding officer stating with particularity the grounds why the presiding officer should not preside. The grounds may include any disability or matter, not limited to those set forth in subsection (c) of this section. The motion shall be made on personal knowledge, shall set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence, and shall be verified by affidavit.
- (2) The motion shall be filed within five working days after the facts that are the basis of the motion become known to the party. The motion shall be served on all parties by hand delivery, facsimile transmittal, or overnight courier delivery.
- (3) Written responses to motions for disqualification or recusal shall be filed within three working days after the receipt of the motion. The presiding officer may require that responses be made orally at a prehearing conference or hearing.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

- (4) The presiding officer shall not rule on any issues that are the subject of a pending motion for recusal or disqualification. The commission shall appoint another presiding officer to preside on all matters that are the subject of the motion for recusal until the issue of disqualification is resolved.
 - (5) The parties to a proceeding may waive any ground for recusal or disqualification after it is fully disclosed on the record, either expressly or by their failure to take action on a timely basis.
 - (6) If the presiding officer determines that a motion for disqualification or recusal was frivolous or capricious, or filed for purposes of delaying the proceeding, sanctions may be imposed in accordance with §21.71 of this title.
 - (7) Disqualification or recusal of a presiding officer, in and of itself, has no effect upon the validity of rulings made or orders issued prior to the time the motion for recusal was filed.
- (e) **Subsequent proceedings.** A commission employee who has participated as a mediator under §21.91 of this title (relating to Mediation), a presiding officer under §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration), or a staff member designated as an advisor to the presiding officer under §21.95 of this title may not participate as an advisor to Commissioners in any subsequent commission proceedings concerning the review and approval of the resulting agreement pursuant to the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §252(e), except in cases where two or more of the Commissioners act as the presiding officer. In a proceeding to approve an arbitrated agreement pursuant to §21.99 of this title (relating to Approval of Arbitrated Agreements), the commission or the presiding officer may call upon an employee who has participated on the arbitration team under this chapter to the extent necessary to explain the arbitration team's final decision.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.9. Computation of Time.

(a) **Counting days.**

- (1) Except for computation of the arbitration window under Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA), in computing any period of time prescribed or allowed by this chapter, by order of the commission or any presiding officer, or by any applicable statute, the period shall begin on the day after the act, event, or default in question. The period shall conclude on the last day of the designated period unless that day is a day the commission is not open for business, in which event the designated period runs until the end of the next day on which the commission is open for business. The commission shall not be considered to be open for business on state holidays on which only a skeleton crew is required.
- (2) In computing the window for arbitration under FTA, the arbitration window shall be computed inclusive of the 135th and 160th day of the party's receipt of a request for negotiation under FTA §252.

(b) **Extensions.**

- (1) **Documents or pleadings.** Unless otherwise provided by statute, the time for filing any documents or pleadings may be extended by the presiding officer, upon a written filing or an oral request on the record made prior to the expiration of the applicable period of time, showing that there is good cause for such extension of time and that the need for the extension is not caused by the neglect, indifference, or lack of diligence of the party making the motion.
- (2) **Decisions.** The time for issuing any decision by a presiding officer or the commission may be extended by the presiding officer in a written order for good cause unless the decision deadline is prescribed by FTA. The time for issuing a decision may not be extended by more than 30 working days unless agreed by the parties. Decision deadlines pursuant to FTA may be waived or extended by parties' written agreement or oral agreement on the record.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter A. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§21.11. Suspension of Rules and Good Cause Exceptions.

- (a) **Suspension.** The commission may suspend the operation of one or more of the sections in this chapter if there exists a public emergency or imperative public necessity and the commission ascertains that suspension will best serve the public interest and will not prejudice the rights of any party.
- (b) **Good cause exception.** Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter or Chapter 22 of this title (relating to Practice and Procedure), except where prohibited by statute, the presiding officer or the commission may grant exceptions to any requirement in this chapter or in a commission-prescribed form for good cause.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.31. Filing of Pleadings, Documents, and Other Materials.

- (a) **Applicability.** This section applies to all pleadings as defined in §21.3 of this title (relating to Definitions) and the following documents:
- (1) letters or memoranda relating to any item with a control number;
 - (2) discovery requests and responses; and
 - (3) Decision Point List (DPL) filings.
- (b) **File with the commission filing clerk.** All pleadings and documents required to be filed with the commission must be filed with the commission's Central Records Division and must state the control number in the heading, if known.
- (c) **Receipt by the commission.** Pleadings and any other documents are deemed filed when received by the commission's Central Records Division. Central Records will accept pleadings and documents if the person seeking to make the filing is in line by the time the pleading or document is required to be filed.
- (d) **No filing fee.** No filing fee is required to file any pleading or document with the commission.
- (e) **Office hours of Central Records.**
- (1) For the purpose of filing documents, the office hours of Central Records are from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, on working days, except on Fridays, when Central Records will close for all purposes from noon to 1:00 p.m.
 - (2) Central Records will open at 8:00 a.m. on open meeting days. With the exception of paragraph (3) of this subsection, no filings will be accepted between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.
 - (3) On open meeting days, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., the presiding officer, a commissioner, or the Office of Policy and Docket Management (OPDM) may file items related to the open meeting on behalf of the commission or an individual commissioner. The presiding officer or OPDM will provide the parties of record a copy of each document filed under this paragraph as soon as possible after filing. To the extent practicable, the existence of a document filed under this paragraph will be announced prior to the discussion on the noticed item at the open meeting. In addition to providing copies via mail or facsimile, staff may transmit the documents to the parties of record by electronic transmission or via hand-delivery at the open meeting.
- (f) **Filing deadline.** All documents must be filed by 3:00 p.m. on the date due, unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.33. Formal Requisites of Pleading and Documents to be Filed with the Commission.

- (a) **Applicability.** This section applies to all pleadings as defined in §21.3 of this title (relating to Definitions) and the following documents:
- (1) Letters or memoranda relating to any item with a control number;
 - (2) Reports required under commission rules or requested by the commission;
 - (3) Discovery requests; and
 - (4) Decision Point List (DPL) filings.
- (b) **Requirements of form.**
- (1) **Style.**
 - (A) All requests for dispute resolution or arbitration must be styled as follows: Petition of {Party} for {Compulsory Arbitration or Post-Interconnection Dispute Resolution} with {Party} under FTA relating to {concise description of major issue}. All responses to requests for dispute resolution or arbitration must be styled as follows: Response of {Party} to Petition of {Party} for {Compulsory Arbitration or Post-Interconnection Dispute Resolution} under FTA relating to {concise description of major issues}.
 - (B) Requests for dispute resolution pursuant to §21.131 of this title (relating to Request for Expedited Ruling) and §21.133 of this title (relating to Request for Interim Ruling Pending Dispute Resolution) must also include such specific requests, as appropriate, in the pleading style, as follows: Petition of {Party} for {Compulsory Arbitration or Post-Interconnection Dispute Resolution} and Request for {Expedited Ruling or Request for Interim Ruling} with {Party} under FTA relating to {concise description of major issues}.
 - (2) Unless otherwise authorized or required by the presiding officer or this chapter, documents must:
 - (A) include the style and control number of the docket or project in which they are submitted, if available;
 - (B) identify by heading the nature of the document submitted and the name of the party submitting the same; and
 - (C) be signed by the party or the party's representative.
 - (3) Whenever possible, all documents should be provided on 8.5 by 11 inch paper. However, any log, graph, map, drawing, or chart submitted as part of a filing will be accepted on paper larger than provided in subsection (g) of this section, if it cannot be provided legibly on letter-size paper. The document must be able to be folded to a size no larger than 8.5 by 11 inches. Documents that cannot be folded may not be accepted.
- (c) **Format.** Any filing with the commission, other than the DPL, must:
- (1) have double-spaced or one and one-half times spaced print with left margins not less than one inch wide, except that any letter may be single-spaced;
 - (2) indent and single-space any quotation of 50 words or more in block quote format; and
 - (3) be printed or formatted in not less than 12-point type for text and 10-point type for footnotes.
- (d) **Citation.**
- (1) **Form.** Any party filing with the commission should endeavor to comply with the rules of citation set forth, in the following order of preference, by: the commission's "Citation Guide;" the most current edition of the "Texas Rules of Form," published by the University of Texas Law Review Association (for Texas authorities); and the most current edition of "A Uniform System of Citation," published by The Harvard Law Review Association (for all other authorities). Neither Rule 1.1 of the Uniform System nor the comparable portion of the "Texas Rules of Form" are applicable in proceedings.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

- (2) **Copies.** When a party cites to authority other than PURA and other Texas state statutes, commission rules, reported Texas cases, an FCC decision, the United States Code, the Texas Administrative Code, the Code of Federal Regulations, or a document on file with the commission, such party must provide a copy of the cited authority to the presiding officer and all parties of record. Copies of authority may be provided to the presiding officer and all parties of record electronically.
- (e) **Signature.** Every pleading and document must be signed by the party or the party's authorized representative, and must include the party's address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address. If the person signing the pleading or document is an attorney licensed in Texas, the attorney's State bar number must be provided.
- (f) **Page limits.** Unless otherwise authorized by the presiding officer, page limits must be in accordance with the following standards:
- (1) With the exception of DPLs and discovery responses, no pleading or brief relating to interconnection agreements may exceed 50 pages, excluding exhibits.
 - (2) Prefiled direct testimony must not exceed 75 pages in length per witness, excluding exhibits or attachments. A party may request the presiding officer to establish a larger page limit and must provide support on relevant factors pursuant to paragraph (4) of this subsection.
 - (3) The page limitation does not apply to copies of legal authorities provided pursuant to subsection (d)(2) of this section.
 - (4) A presiding officer may establish a larger or smaller page limit. In establishing parties' page limits, the presiding officer will consider such factors as which party has the burden of proof, the number of parties opposing a party's position, alignment of parties, the number and complexity of issues, the number of witnesses per party, and demonstrated need.
- (g) **Hard copy filing standards.** Hard copies of each document may be filed with the commission in accordance with the requirements set forth in paragraphs (1)-(4) of this subsection.
- (1) Each document must be typed or printed on paper measuring 8.5 by 11 inches. Oversized documents being filed on larger paper pursuant to subsection (b)(3) of this section must be filed as separate referenced attachments. Except for responses to discovery, each document must consist of the same paper size.
 - (2) A copy of each document must be filed without bindings, staples, tabs, or separators.
 - (A) This copy must be printed on both sides of the paper or, if it cannot be printed on both sides of the paper, every page of the copy must be single sided.
 - (B) All pages of the copy filed under this paragraph, starting with the first page of the table of contents, must be consecutively numbered through the last page of the document, including attachments, if any.
 - (3) For documents for which an electronic filing is required, all non-native figures, illustrations, or objects must be filed as referenced attachments. Non-native figures, illustrations, or objects must not be embedded in the text of the document. "Non-native figures" means tables, graphs, charts, spreadsheets, illustrations, drawings and other objects which are not electronically integrated into the text portions of a document.
 - (4) Unless otherwise provided by §21.31 of this title, this section, or the applicable commission rule under this title, all documents and copies must be printed on both sides of the paper.
- (h) **Electronic filing standards.** Any document may be filed, and all documents containing more than ten pages must be filed, electronically in accordance with the requirements of paragraphs (1)-(7) of this subsection. Electronic filings are registered by submission of the relevant electronic documents via external storage for digital media or the internet, in accordance with transfer standards available in the commission's central records office or on the commission's website, and, as applicable, the

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

submission of the required number of copies to the commission under the provisions of this section and §21.31 of this title (relating to Filing of Pleadings, Documents and Other Materials).

- (1) All non-native figures, illustrations, or objects must be filed as referenced attachments. No non-native figures, illustrations, or objects may be imbedded in the text of the document. "Non-native figures" means tables, graphs, charts, spreadsheets, illustrations, drawings and other objects which are not electronically integrated into the text portions of a document.
 - (2) Oversized documents must not be filed in electronic media, but must be filed as referenced attachments.
 - (3) Each document that has five or more headings or subheadings must have a table of contents that lists the major sections of the document, the page numbers for each major section and the name of the electronic file that contains each major section of the document. Discovery responses are exempt from the requirements of this paragraph.
 - (4) Each document must have a list of file names that are included in the filing and must be referenced in a text file.
 - (5) The table of contents and list of file names must be placed at the beginning of the document.
 - (6) Each external storage device for digital media must be labeled with the control number, if known, and the name of the person submitting the document.
 - (7) Any information submitted under claim of confidentiality should not be submitted in electronic format.
- (i) **External storage for digital media.** Each document that is submitted to the commission on an external storage device for digital media may be password-protected but must be made accessible to commission staff. In addition to the applicable requirements of subsection (h) of this section, each external storage device for digital media provided to the commission must be accompanied by:
- (1) a statement indicating the contents of the device'
 - (2) the docket number in which each document on the device is to be filed; and
 - (3) a statement indicating which documents are to be filed confidentially.
- (j) **File format standards.**
- (1) Electronic filings must be made in accordance with the current list of preferred file formats published by the commission's Central Records Division on the commission's website.
 - (2) Electronic filings that are submitted in a format other than that required by paragraph (1) of this subsection will not be accepted until after successful conversion of the file to a commission-approved standard.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.35. Service of Pleadings and Documents.

(a) **Pleadings and Documents submitted to a presiding officer.** At or before the time any document or pleading regarding a proceeding is submitted by a party to a presiding officer, a copy of such a document or pleading must be filed with the commission filing clerk and served on all parties. These requirements do not apply to documents which are offered into evidence during a hearing or which are submitted to a presiding officer for in camera inspection; provided that the party submitting documents for in camera inspection must file and serve notice of the submission upon the other parties to the proceeding. Pleadings and documents submitted to a presiding officer during a hearing, prehearing conference, or open meeting must be filed with the commission filing clerk as soon as is practicable.

(b) **Methods of service.** Except as otherwise expressly provided by order, rule, or other applicable law, service on a party may be made by delivery of a copy of the pleading or document to the party's authorized representative or attorney of record either in person; by agent; by courier receipted delivery; by first class mail; by certified mail, return receipt requested; by registered mail to such party's address of record; or by facsimile transmission to the recipient's current facsimile machine. Service of a pleading or document under this paragraph may also be made by electronic mail.

- (1) Service by mail is complete upon deposit of the document, enclosed in a wrapper properly addressed, stamped and sealed, in a post office or official depository of the United States Postal Service, except for state agencies. For state agencies, mailing must be complete upon deposit of the document with the General Services Commission.
- (2) Service by agent or by courier receipted delivery is complete upon delivery to the agent or courier.
- (3) Service by facsimile transmission is complete upon actual receipt by the recipient's facsimile machine.
- (4) Service by electronic mail is complete upon issuance by the sender's electronic mail account.
- (5) Unless otherwise established by the receiving party, if service is made by hand delivery, facsimile transmission, or electronic mail, it is presumed that all pleadings are received on the day filed.
 - (A) If service is made by overnight delivery, it is presumed that pleadings are received on the day after filing.
 - (B) If service is made by regular mail, it is presumed that pleadings are received on the third day after filing.
 - (C) Service after 5:00 p.m. local time of the recipient will be deemed served on the following day.

(c) **Evidence of service.** A return receipt or affidavit of any person having personal knowledge of the facts is evidence of the facts relating to service. A party may present other evidence to demonstrate facts relating to service.

(d) **Certificate of service.** Every document required to be served on all parties in accordance with subsection (a) of this section must contain the following or similar certificate of service: "I, (name) (title) certify that a copy of this document was served on all parties of record in this proceeding on (date) in the following manner: (specify method). Signed, (signature)." The list of the names and addresses of the parties on whom the document was served, should not be appended to the document.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.37. Examination and Correction of Pleadings and Documents.

- (a) **Construction of pleadings and documents.** All documents shall be construed so as to do substantial justice.
- (b) **Procedural sufficiency of pleadings and documents.** All pleadings and documents that do not comply in all material respects with other sections of this chapter shall be conditionally accepted for filing. Upon notification by the presiding officer of a deficiency in a pleading or document, the responsible party shall correct or complete the pleading or document in accordance with the notification. If the responsible party fails to correct the deficiency, the pleading or document may be stricken from the record and the proceeding may be subject to dismissal under §21.67 of this title (relating to Dismissal of a Proceeding).
- (c) **Additional requirements.** Additional requirements as set forth in §21.39 of this title (relating to Amended Pleadings) apply.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.39. Amended Pleadings.

(a) Filing amended pleadings.

- (1) A pleading may be amended without leave of the presiding officer, provided that the amended pleading is served upon all parties, is filed no later than ten days after the initial pleading was filed, and does not seek relief for which notice in accordance with this chapter has not been provided. The filing of an amended pleading shall restart the time in which a party may respond to the filing.
- (2) A party must seek authorization to file an amended pleading if the amended pleading seeks a new type of relief for which notice in accordance with this chapter has not been provided.
- (3) Any amended pleading offered for filing more than ten days after the initial pleading was filed will be considered by the presiding officer only if there is a showing of good cause for such filing and that consideration of such filing will not unduly delay the proceeding by injecting issues to which the remaining parties may be entitled to respond. If additional notice is required or additional time needed for opposing parties to respond to the proposed pleading, the presiding officer may order such additional notice or time as is reasonable under the circumstances.

- (b) Amendments to conform to issues tried at hearing without objection.** When issues not raised by the pleadings are tried or otherwise heard or argued at hearing by express or implied consent of the parties, upon a determination by the presiding officer that no prejudice to any of the parties will occur, the issues shall be treated in all respects as if they had been raised in the pleadings. Amendment of the pleadings to conform them to the evidence may be made with leave of the presiding officer upon any party's motion until the close of evidence, but failure to so amend shall not affect whether the issues may be properly considered by the presiding officer.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

§21.41. Motions.

- (a) **General requirements.** A motion must be in writing, unless the motion is made on the record at a prehearing conference or hearing. It must state the relief sought and the specific grounds supporting a grant of relief. If the motion is based upon alleged facts that are not a matter of record, the motion must be supported by an affidavit. Written motions must be served on all parties in accordance with §21.35 of this title (relating to Service of Pleadings and Documents).
- (b) **Time for response.** Unless otherwise provided by the presiding officer, commission rule, or statute, a responsive pleading, if made, must be filed by a party within five working days after receipt of the pleading to which the response is made.
- (c) **Rulings on motions.** The presiding officer must serve orders ruling on motions upon all parties, unless the ruling is made on the record in a hearing or prehearing conference open to the public.
- (d) **Motions for continuances and extensions.**
 - (1) **Generally.** Motions for continuance and for extension of a deadline must set forth the specific grounds for which the moving party seeks a continuance or an extension and must reference all other motions for continuance or extension filed by the moving party in the proceeding.
 - (2) **Standard of Review.** The moving party must show good cause with respect to the need for the continuance or extension.
 - (A) **Motions for Continuance.** The moving party must show good cause with respect to the need for a continuance. Motions for continuance will not be granted based on the need for discovery if the party seeking the continuance previously had the opportunity to obtain or compel discovery from the person from whom discovery is sought, except when necessary due to discovery abuses, surprise or discovery of facts or evidence which could not have been discovered previously through reasonably diligent effort by the moving party.
 - (B) **Motions for Extension.** Unless otherwise provided by statute, the time for filing any documents may be extended, upon the filing of a motion, prior to the expiration of the applicable period of time, showing that there is good cause for such extension of time and that the need for the extension is not caused by the neglect, indifference, or lack of diligence of the party making the motion.
 - (3) **Granting of motion.** The presiding officer may grant timely filed motions for continuance or extension agreed to by all parties provided that any applicable statutory deadlines are extended as necessary.
- (e) **Deadlines for motions for continuance.**
 - (1) Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer, motions for continuance of a prehearing conference, informal settlement conference, or discovery conference must be in writing and must be filed no less than two working days prior to the conference or hearing.
 - (2) Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer, motions for continuance of the hearing on the merits must be in writing and must be filed not less than three working days prior to the hearing. In addition to the requirements in paragraph (1) of this subsection, motions for continuance must state proposed dates for a rescheduled hearing.
 - (3) Untimely motions for continuance will be presumed to be denied. The moving party has the burden to show good cause for untimely filing.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter B. PLEADINGS, DOCUMENTS, AND OTHER MATERIALS.

(f) **Modification of deadlines.**

- (1) Notwithstanding the requirements of subsections (b), (d), and (e) of this section, the deadlines for responses, objections and motions to compel may be modified by agreement of the affected parties, by filing a letter or other document evidencing the agreement no later than the date the responses, objections or motions to compel are due.
- (2) In the event the parties' agreed modification of a discovery deadline affects a scheduled discovery conference, parties must also comply with subsection (e) of this section.
- (3) Unless the parties show good cause for untimely filing of a modified deadline, the presiding officer may impose the original deadlines for subsequent filings.
- (4) In no event will the modification of discovery deadlines by agreement be allowed if such modification would affect a statutory deadline, unless the parties' agreed modification is accompanied by a written waiver and is approved by the presiding officer.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.61. Threshold Issues and Certification of Issues to the Commission.

- (a) **Threshold issues.** Threshold issues are legal or policy issues that the presiding officer determines to be of such significance that the issues must be addressed prior to proceeding with the other issues in the docket. Threshold issues include issues to be certified to the commission in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.
- (1) Threshold issues may be identified by the presiding officer or by motion of a party to the proceeding.
 - (A) The presiding officer will establish a reasonable timeframe to raise or challenge a threshold issue.
 - (B) Parties must raise any threshold issues as well as challenges to the arbitrability of any issue at the first prehearing conference. If such challenges are not raised at the first prehearing conference, they will be deemed waived by the parties.
 - (C) The presiding officer will provide the parties an opportunity to brief the question of threshold issues. At the discretion of the presiding officer, reply briefs may be permitted. Any determination on threshold issues by the presiding officer will be made in a written order.
 - (2) Once a presiding officer has determined that there are one or more threshold issues in a proceeding, the presiding officer may certify each issue in accordance with subsection (b) of this section. A decision on a threshold issue is subject to a motion for reconsideration and is eligible for appeal. For purposes of this paragraph the term “motion for reconsideration” and “appeal” are interchangeable.
- (b) **Certification.** Certified issues will be addressed by the commission.
- (1) **Issues for certification.** The presiding officer may certify to the commission a significant issue that involves an ultimate finding in the proceeding. Issues appropriate for certification include:
 - (A) the commission’s interpretation of its rules and applicable statutes;
 - (B) which rules or statutes are applicable to a proceeding; or
 - (C) whether commission policy should be established or clarified as to a substantive or procedural issue of significance to the proceeding.
 - (2) **Procedure for certification.** The presiding officer will file the certified issue and issue notice to the parties. The certified issue will be placed on the commission’s agenda to be considered at the earliest time practicable. Parties may file briefs on the certified issue within five working days from the date the presiding officer files the certified issue.
 - (3) **Abatement.**
 - (A) In a compulsory arbitration proceeding, the presiding officer may abate all or a part of the proceeding while a certified issue is pending only if agreed to by the parties.
 - (B) In a post-interconnection dispute proceeding, the presiding officer may abate all or a part of the proceeding while a certified issue is pending at the presiding officer’s discretion.
 - (4) **Commission action.** The commission will issue a written decision on the certified issue no later than six working days after the open meeting at which the issue is decided by the commission, unless extended for good cause. A commission decision on a certified issue is not subject to a motion for reconsideration or appeal. For purposes of this paragraph the term “motion for reconsideration” and “appeal” are interchangeable.

**CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.63. Interim Issues and Orders.

The presiding officer may issue interim orders addressing motions, procedural and discovery matters, requests for interim relief, and such other matters as may aid in the conduct of the hearing and the efficient and fair disposition of the proceeding. Interim orders may be written or stated orally on the record.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.65. Interlocutory Appeals.

The commission may consider an appeal of an interlocutory or interim order only when it clearly appears from specific facts shown by affidavit or by a verified complaint that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result from enforcement of the order, and when the appellant clearly shows that it is entitled to preservation of the status quo pending issuance of a final arbitration order. As a condition to granting interlocutory relief, the commission may require the appellant to provide security in an amount and form (*e.g.*, bond or escrow) to be determined by the commission.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.67. Dismissal of a Proceeding.

(a) **Motions for dismissal.**

- (1) Upon the motion of the presiding officer or the motion of any party, the presiding officer may dismiss, with or without prejudice, any proceeding, or claim within a proceeding, without an evidentiary hearing, for any of the following reasons:
 - (A) lack of jurisdiction;
 - (B) moot questions or obsolete petitions;
 - (C) res judicata;
 - (D) collateral estoppel;
 - (E) unnecessary duplication of proceedings;
 - (F) failure to prosecute;
 - (G) failure to state a claim for which relief can be granted; or
 - (H) other good cause shown.
- (2) The party that initiated the proceeding shall have five working days from the date of receipt to respond to a motion to dismiss. If a hearing on the motion to dismiss is held, that hearing shall be confined to the issues raised by the motion to dismiss.
- (3) If the presiding officer determines that the proceeding, or any claim within the proceeding, should be dismissed, the presiding officer shall issue an order dismissing the proceeding or claim within the proceeding.
- (4) An order dismissing a proceeding, or claim within a proceeding, under paragraph (3) of this subsection may be appealed pursuant to §21.75 of this title (relating to Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration).

(b) **Withdrawal of application.**

- (1) A party that initiated a proceeding may withdraw its application, petition, or complaint, without prejudice to refiling of same, at any time before that party has filed its direct testimony.
- (2) After the filing of its direct testimony, a party may withdraw its application, petition, or complaint, without prejudice to refiling of same, only upon a finding of good cause by the presiding officer.
- (3) In the absence of a finding of good cause, a party, after the filing of its direct testimony, may withdraw its application, petition, or complaint, with prejudice to refiling of same.
- (4) Alternatively, in the absence of a finding of good cause, a party, after the filing of its direct testimony, may withdraw its application, petition, or complaint without prejudice if all parties agree. If parties do not agree, the withdrawing party may be allowed to withdraw without prejudice only upon the payment of the other parties' reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.
- (5) If withdrawal of an application is approved, the presiding officer shall issue an order of dismissal with or without prejudice, as appropriate.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.69. Summary Decision.

- (a) **Motion for summary decision.** The presiding officer may grant a motion for summary decision on any or all issues to the extent that the pleadings, affidavits, materials obtained by discovery or otherwise, admissions, matters officially noticed, or evidence of record show that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the moving party is entitled to a decision in its favor, as a matter of law, on the issues expressly set forth in the motion.
- (b) **Filing and contents of motion.** Any party to a proceeding may move for summary decision on any or all of the issues. The motion may be filed at any time before the close of the hearing on the merits. The party filing the motion shall demonstrate that the issue or issues may be resolved by summary decision in accordance with the standard set forth in subsection (a) of this section. Affidavits in support of the motion shall be based on personal knowledge and shall set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence. A motion for summary decision shall specifically describe the facts upon which the request for summary decision is based, the information and materials which demonstrate those facts, and the laws or legal theories that entitle the movant to summary decision.
- (c) **Response to motion.** Any response to a motion for summary decision shall be filed within the time set by the presiding officer. A party opposing the motion shall show, by affidavits, materials obtained by discovery or otherwise, admissions, matters officially noticed, or evidence of record, that there is a genuine issue of material fact for determination at the hearing, or that summary decision is inappropriate as a matter of law.
- (d) **Hearing on the motion.** If appropriate, the presiding officer shall set the motion for hearing.
- (e) **No further hearing.** No further evidentiary hearing shall be held on issues for which summary decision has been granted. The presiding officer will issue a decision or interim order on the issues recommended to be resolved by summary decision. Parties may file motions to reconsider and replies to motions to reconsider recommending resolution of issues by summary decision within the time set by the presiding officer. An order granting or denying partial summary decision is appealable to the commission.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.71. Sanctions.

- (a) **Causes for imposition of sanctions.** A presiding officer, on his or her own motion or on the motion of a party, after notice and an opportunity for a hearing, may impose appropriate sanctions against a party or its representative for:
- (1) filing a motion or pleading that was brought in bad faith, for the purpose of harassment, or for any other improper purpose, such as to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of the proceeding;
 - (2) abusing the discovery process in seeking, making or resisting discovery;
 - (3) failing to obey an order of the presiding officer or the commission.
- (b) **Types of sanctions.** A sanction imposed under subsection (a) of this section may include, as appropriate and justified, issuance of an order:
- (1) disallowing further discovery of any kind or a particular kind by the disobedient party;
 - (2) charging all or any part of the expenses of discovery against the offending party or its representative;
 - (3) holding that designated facts be deemed admitted for purposes of the proceeding;
 - (4) refusing to allow the offending party to support or oppose a designated claim or defense or prohibiting the party from introducing designated matters in evidence;
 - (5) disallowing in whole or in part requests for relief by the offending party and excluding evidence in support of such requests;
 - (6) punishing the offending party or its representative for contempt to the same extent as a district court;
 - (7) requiring the offending party or its representative to pay, at the time ordered by the presiding officer, the reasonable expenses, including attorney's fees, incurred by other parties because of the sanctionable behavior; and
 - (8) striking pleadings or testimony, or both, in whole or in part, or staying further proceedings until the order is obeyed.
- (c) **Imposition of sanctions by the commission.** In addition to the sanctions listed in subsection (b) of this section that may be imposed by a presiding officer, except for subsection (b)(6) of this section, the commission, after notice and opportunity for hearing, may impose sanctions including:
- (1) disallow the disobedient party's rights to participate in the proceeding;
 - (2) dismiss the application with or without prejudice;
 - (3) institute civil action; or
 - (4) impose any other sanction available to the commission by law.
- (d) **Procedure.** A motion for sanctions may be filed at any time during the proceeding or may be initiated *sua sponte* by the presiding officer.
- (1) A motion to compel discovery is not a prerequisite to the filing of a motion for sanctions.
 - (2) A motion should contain all factual allegations necessary to apprise the parties and the presiding officer of the conduct at issue, should request specific relief, and shall be verified by affidavit. To the extent that expenses, including attorney's fees, are requested as relief, the requesting party shall provide detailed billing records.
 - (3) A motion shall be served on all parties. Upon receipt of the motion, a hearing shall be held on the motion.
 - (4) Any order regarding sanctions issued by a presiding officer shall be appealable. Any sanction imposed by the presiding officer shall be automatically stayed to allow the party to appeal the imposition of the sanction to the commission.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.73. Consolidation of Dockets, Consolidation of Issues, and Joint Filings.

- (a) **Consolidation of dockets.** The commission or presiding officer may on its own motion or upon a motion from a party, to the extent practical, consolidate separate dispute resolution proceedings and the approval proceedings pursuant to this chapter.
- (b) **Consolidation of issues.** The commission or presiding officer may on its own motion or upon the motion of a party, to the extent practical, consolidate similar issues from separate dispute resolution and approval proceedings pursuant to this chapter.
- (c) **Joint filings or joinder.**
 - (1) **Joint filings.** Parties may jointly file dispute resolution and approval proceedings when there are common issues of law or fact.
 - (2) **Joinder.** A person may request joinder when there are common issues of law or fact and shall agree to be bound by any judgment rendered as to the common issues.
 - (3) **Factors to be considered.** The commission or presiding officer shall determine whether the proceedings should be maintained as a joint proceeding or be severed or should be consolidated in whole or in part. In making this determination the commission or presiding officer shall consider:
 - (A) administrative burden on the parties and the commission;
 - (B) whether there are issues of fact or law common to the proceedings;
 - (C) whether separate proceedings would create a risk of inconsistent resolutions; and
 - (D) whether allowing joinder or consolidation would result in undue delay of the proceedings or prejudice any party.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.75. Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration.

- (a) **Motions for clarification.** This subsection only applies to motions for clarification of arbitration awards. Motions for clarification of an arbitration award may be made to the presiding officer requesting that an ambiguity be clarified or an error, other than an error of law, be corrected.
- (1) **Procedure.** A motion for clarification must be filed within ten working days of the issuance of the presiding officer's decision or order. The motion for clarification must be served on all parties by hand delivery, facsimile transmission, electronic mail, or by overnight courier delivery. Responses to a motion for clarification must be filed within five working days of the filing of the motion.
 - (2) **Content.** A motion for clarification must specify the alleged ambiguity or error and, as appropriate, include proposed language that corrects the alleged ambiguity or error.
 - (3) **Denial or granting of motion.** The presiding officer will grant or deny the motion within ten working days of the filing of the motion. If the motion is granted, the presiding officer will issue a decision or revised order within 15 working days of the filing of the motion.
- (b) **Motions for reconsideration.** Motions for reconsideration, appeals, or motions for rehearing must be styled accordingly and will be presented directly to the commission. For purposes of dispute resolution and approval proceedings the terms "motion for reconsideration," "appeal," and "motion for rehearing," are interchangeable.
- (1) **Limitations.**
 - (A) Only parties to the negotiation in a compulsory arbitration under §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration) may file motions for reconsideration.
 - (B) In a proceeding under §21.97 of this title (relating to Approval of Negotiated Agreements), only parties to the negotiated agreement may file motions for reconsideration. Issues subject to motions for reconsideration are limited to modifications made to the agreement.
 - (C) In a proceeding under §21.99 of this title (relating to Approval of Arbitrated Agreements), only parties to the arbitrated agreement may file motions for reconsideration.
 - (D) In a proceeding under §21.125 of this title (relating to Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding), only parties to the agreement may file motions for reconsideration. Issues subject to motions for reconsideration are limited to interpretations of and modifications made to the negotiated agreement.
 - (E) In a proceeding under §21.101 of this title (relating to Approval of Amendments to Existing Interconnection Agreements), only parties to the amended agreement may file motions for reconsideration. Issues subject to motions for reconsideration are limited to amendments or modifications made to the agreement.
 - (F) Any motions for reconsideration not filed by parties will be considered as a comment filed by an interested party.
 - (2) **Procedure.** A motion for reconsideration must be filed within 20 days of the issuance of the order under consideration. The motion for reconsideration must be served on all parties by hand delivery, facsimile transmission, or by overnight courier delivery, or by electronic mail. Responses to a motion for reconsideration must be filed within ten days of the filing of the motion.
 - (3) **Content.** A motion for reconsideration must specify the reasons why the order is unjustified or improper. If the moving party objects to contract language recommended by the presiding officer, then the motion must contain alternative contract language along with an explanation of why the alternative language is appropriate.
 - (4) **Commission Agenda.** Upon filing a motion for reconsideration, the commission will determine whether the motion will be placed on an open meeting agenda and considered at an open meeting. The commission will notify the parties by facsimile or electronic mail

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

whether any commissioner, by individual ballot, has added the motion to an open meeting agenda, but will not identify the requesting commissioner.

- (5) **Denial or granting of motion.**
- (A) The motion is deemed denied if, after five working days of the filing of a motion, the parties have not been notified that the motion has been placed on an open meeting agenda.
 - (B) If the commission determines that ruling on the motion is necessary, the motion will be placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled open meeting or such other meeting as determined by the commission.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

§21.77. Confidential Material.

- (a) **General.** If any party believes that any material it files with the commission or provides to the presiding officer during any proceeding under this chapter should be exempt from disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), it may designate such material as confidential information and submit the information under seal, pursuant to the requirements of §22.71(d) of this title (relating to Filing of Pleadings, Documents and Other Materials). Material is presumed to be subject to disclosure under the TPIA unless designated as confidential.
- (b) **Disputes.** In the event that a presiding officer believes that the material is not confidential, the presiding officer shall, unless waived by the party challenging the declassification, hold a hearing regarding declassification of the material. In the event a party disputes another party's designation of material as confidential, such party shall file a motion challenging the designation at least 15 working days before the hearing on the merits. The challenge shall include a statement as to why the material should not be held to be confidential under current legal standards, or that the party asserting confidentiality did not allow counsel to review such materials. The presiding officer shall notify the party of his belief that the material is not confidential at least ten days before the hearing on the merits. The party asserting confidentiality has three working days after the presiding officer notifies the party of his belief that the material is not confidential, or after another party's challenge is filed, to respond and bears the burden of proof on confidentiality. In determining whether material is exempt from disclosure, the presiding officer shall consider whether the material is considered to be confidential under the TPIA. Any presiding officer's decision relating to whether or not material is confidential is subject to motion for reconsideration to the commission. A party shall have three working days from the date of the presiding officer's decision to file a motion for reconsideration. The commission's decision shall be deemed a final administrative decision.
- (c) **Exemption from disclosure.** Material received by the commission or by a presiding officer in accordance with this procedure shall be treated as exempt from public disclosure until and unless such confidential information is determined to be public information pursuant to a specific provision in the TPIA, an Open Records Decision by the Attorney General, an order of the presiding officer entered after notice to the parties and hearing, or an order of a court having jurisdiction.
- (d) **Material provided to parties.** Material claimed to be confidential information must be provided to the other parties to the arbitration hearing provided they agree in writing to treat the material as confidential information. One copy of the material shall be provided to each party. The receiving party shall keep the confidential information properly secured during all times when the documents are not being reviewed by a person authorized to do so. The receiving party shall only make copies of the confidential information as permitted by the protective order in place in the proceeding.
- (e) **Review by parties.** Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties or ordered by the presiding officer, each receiving party may designate no more than eight individuals associated with the party who will be allowed access to the confidential information. The individuals who may have access to the confidential information shall be limited to the receiving party's counsel of record, regulatory personnel acting at the direction of counsel, and subject matter experts and outside consultants employed by the receiving party. These individuals may use the confidential information only for the purpose of presenting or responding to matters raised in the arbitration hearing during the course of that proceeding. These individuals shall not disclose the confidential information to any person who is not authorized under this section, or the protective order in effect for that proceeding, to view this information.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter C. PRELIMINARY ISSUES, ORDERS, AND PROCEEDINGS.

- (f) **Acknowledgment.** Each individual who is provided access to the confidential information shall sign a notarized statement affirmatively stating that the individual has personally reviewed this section and the protective order in the proceeding and understands and will observe the limitations upon the use and disclosure of confidential information. By signing such statements a party may not be deemed to have acquiesced in the designation of the material as confidential information or to have waived any rights to contest such designation or to seek further disclosure of the confidential information.
- (g) **Disposition of confidential information.** Upon the completion of commission proceedings to review the arbitration agreement pursuant to FTA §252 and any appeals thereof, confidential information received by the parties shall be returned to the producing party. Any notes or work product prepared by the receiving party which were derived in whole or in part from the confidential information shall be destroyed at that time. Material filed with the commission will remain under seal at the commission and will continue to be treated as confidential information under this chapter. The commission may destroy confidential information in accordance with its records retention schedule.
- (h) **Use in other proceedings.** Any confidential information produced pursuant to this section may not be used in any other proceedings before the commission. However, this section does not prevent the discovery or admissibility of any material otherwise discoverable, merely because the material was presented in the course of an arbitration hearing under this section.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.91. Mediation.

- (a) **Request for mediation.** Any party negotiating a request for interconnection, services, or network elements under the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §251 may request, in writing, at any time, that the commission assist the parties by mediating any differences that have arisen in the negotiations. The request shall identify the parties involved in the negotiations, the potential issues for which mediation may be needed and, if possible, an estimate of the time period during which mediation will be pursued.
- (b) **Mediator.** Upon receipt of a request for mediation, the commission shall notify the parties of the commission employee who is assigned to serve as a mediator. The commission employee assigned to serve as a mediator may not participate in arbitration or review and approval proceedings initiated under this chapter. The mediator will work with the parties to establish an appropriate schedule and procedure for mediating any disputes. The mediator's role is limited to assisting the parties in attempting to reach an agreed resolution of the issues.
- (c) **Procedure.** Mediation proceedings shall not be transcribed and only parties to the negotiation may participate in the mediation proceeding.
- (d) **Mediation and formal dispute resolution.** In the event a party negotiating a request for interconnection, services, or network elements under FTA has requested both formal dispute resolution and mediation, and the responding party has agreed to mediation, the mediation will precede formal dispute resolution and any procedural deadlines applicable to formal dispute resolution are tolled for the duration of the mediation proceedings, including time needed for commission approval of a mediated agreement. To the extent parties do not successfully mediate all matters at issue, the formal dispute resolution proceeding shall not be reinitiated until the parties jointly file an update of unresolved issues and a revised procedural schedule.

**CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.93. Voluntary Alternative Dispute Resolution.

In order to facilitate negotiated resolutions of any dispute concerning a request for interconnection, services or network elements pursuant to the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §251, the parties are encouraged, but not required, to pursue any method of alternative dispute resolution agreeable to them, including, without limitation, mediation or private binding arbitration, in which the commission is not a direct participant. Agreements reached through the parties' use of alternative dispute resolution methods will be considered as equivalent to negotiated agreements, and will be processed for review and approval pursuant §21.97 of this title (relating to Approval of Negotiated Agreements).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.95. Compulsory Arbitration.

(a) **Request for arbitration.**

- (1) Any party to negotiations concerning a request for interconnection, services or network elements in accordance with the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §251 may request arbitration by the commission by filing with the commission a petition for arbitration. The petitioner must send a copy of the petition and any documentation to the negotiating party with whom agreement cannot be reached the date the petition is filed with the commission.
- (2) The petition must be received by the commission during the period from the 135th to the 160th day after the date the negotiating party received the request for negotiation. The commission will perform a sufficiency review of the petition. To the extent that a petition is determined to be insufficient, the commission will file a notice of insufficiency within five working days of receipt of the petition. In the absence of a notice of insufficiency, the petition will be presumed sufficient.
- (3) Where a petition for arbitration is found insufficient, the presiding officer may consider dismissal without prejudice in accordance with §21.67 of this title (relating to Dismissal of a Proceeding) and order the petitioner to refile.
- (4) A petition that is procedurally sufficient must be filed with the commission by the 160th day after the date on which petitioner requested negotiation.
- (5) In addition to the requirements of form specified in §21.33 of this title (relating to Formal Requisites of Pleadings and Documents to be Filed with the Commission) the petition for arbitration must include:
 - (A) the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each party to the negotiations and the party's designated representative;
 - (B) a description of the parties' efforts to resolve their differences by negotiation, including the dates of the request for negotiation and the projected timeline for compliance under FTA deadlines;
 - (C) a Decision Point List (DPL) that includes a list of any unresolved issues and the position of each party on each issue;
 - (D) the proposed contract language from each party, as applicable, for each unresolved issue;
 - (E) all contract language agreed upon by the parties;
 - (F) if the arbitration request concerns a request for interconnection under §26.272 of this title (relating to Interconnection), the material required by §26.272(g) of this title;
 - (G) the current version of the interconnection agreement being negotiated by the parties, if any, containing both the agreed language and the disputed language of both parties; and
 - (H) a certificate of service that complies with the requirements of §21.35 of this title (relating to Service of Pleadings and Documents).

- (b) **Response.** Any non-petitioning party to the negotiation must respond to the request for arbitration by filing the response with the commission and serving a copy on each party to the negotiation. In accordance with FTA §252(b)(3) the response must be filed within 25 days after the commission received the request for arbitration. The response must indicate any disagreement with the matters contained in the petition for arbitration, including a detailed response to the DPL and alternative proposed contract language, and may provide additional information the party wishes to present.

(c) **Selection and replacement of presiding officer.**

- (1) Upon receipt of a complete petition for arbitration, the commission may delegate authority to a presiding officer to hear the arbitration. The parties will be notified of the commission-

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

designated presiding officer or whether the commission will hear the arbitration directly by electronic mail or in writing. The presiding officer and designated commission staff will act as an arbitration team. The presiding officer may be advised on legal and technical issues by members of the arbitration team. The commission staff members included in the arbitration team will be identified to the parties.

- (2) If at any time a presiding officer is unable to continue presiding over a case, a substitute presiding officer will be appointed who will perform any remaining functions without the necessity of repeating any previous proceedings. The substitute presiding officer will read the record of the proceedings that occurred prior to their appointment before issuing an arbitration award or other decision.
- (d) **Participation.** Only parties to the negotiation may participate as parties in the arbitration hearing. The presiding officer may allow interested persons to file a statement of position to be considered in the proceeding.
- (e) **Prehearing conference; challenges.** As soon as is practicable after selection, the presiding officer will schedule a prehearing conference with the parties to the arbitration. At the prehearing conference, parties may raise any challenges to the appointment of the presiding officer or to the inclusion of any issue identified for arbitration in the petition and responses.
 - (1) The presiding officer may establish criteria for waiver of issues, including threshold issues, identified for arbitration. If a challenge to the appointment of the presiding officer is not raised at the first prehearing conference, such a challenge will be deemed waived by the parties.
 - (2) The presiding officer will serve parties with the orders ruling on challenges within ten working days of the first prehearing conference.
 - (3) The presiding officer may schedule additional prehearing conferences to consider discovery, procedural schedules, clarification of issues, amending pleadings, stipulations, evidentiary matters, requests for interim relief, and any other matters that assist the disposition of the proceedings in a fair and efficient manner.
- (f) **Notice.** The presiding officer will establish a procedural schedule for the arbitration hearing, which may not be scheduled earlier than 35 days after the commission receives a complete request for arbitration. The presiding officer will notify the parties, not less than ten days before the hearing, of the date, time, and location of the hearing.
- (g) **Record of hearing.** The arbitration hearing will be open to the public. If any party requests it, a stenographic record will be made of the hearing by an official court reporter appointed by the commission. It is the responsibility of the party ordering the stenographic record to request that the commission have an official reporter present. A party may purchase a copy of the transcript from the official reporter at rates set by the commission. The court reporter must provide the transcript and exhibits in a hearing to the presiding officer at the time the transcript is provided to the requesting party. If no court reporter is requested by a party, the presiding officer will record the proceedings and maintain the official record and exhibits. Each party to the arbitration hearing is responsible for its own costs of participation in the arbitration process.
- (h) **Hearing procedures.**
 - (1) The parties to the arbitration are entitled to be heard, to present evidence, and to cross-examine witnesses appearing at the hearing.
 - (2) Redirect examination may be allowed at the discretion of the presiding officer, provided that parties have reserved time for redirect.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (3) The presiding officer may temporarily close the arbitration hearing to the public to hear evidence containing information filed as confidential under §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Material). The presiding officer will close the hearing only if there is no other practical means of protecting the confidentiality of the information.
 - (4) Each party, as applicable, must provide a copy of all exhibits or must pay the court reporter costs associated with the production of any copies the party asks the court reporter to provide.
- (i) **Applicable rules.** The rules of privilege and exemption recognized by Texas law apply to arbitration proceedings under this subchapter. The Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, Texas Rules of Civil Evidence, Texas Administrative Procedure Act §2001.081, and Chapter 22 of this title (relating to Procedural Rules) may be used as guidance in proceedings under this chapter.
 - (j) **Authority of presiding officer.**
 - (1) **Generally.** The presiding officer has broad discretion in conducting the arbitration hearing, including the authority given to a presiding officer under §22.202 of this title (relating to Presiding Officer). In addition, the presiding officer has broad discretion to ask clarifying questions and to direct a party or a witness to provide information at any time during the proceeding, as provided by subsection (q) of this section.
 - (2) **Subpoenas.**
 - (A) **Issuance of Subpoenas.** In accordance with Texas Government Code §2001.089, the presiding officer may issue a subpoena for the attendance of a witness or for the production of books, records, papers, or other objects. Motions for subpoenas to compel the production of books, records, papers, or other objects must describe with reasonable particularity the objects desired and the material and relevant facts sought to be proved by them.
 - (B) **Service and return.** A subpoena may be addressed to the sheriff or any constable, who may serve the subpoena in any manner authorized by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure; and service thereof may be accepted by any witness by a written memorandum, signed by such witness, attached to the subpoena, or by any other method authorized by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure.
 - (C) **Fees.** Subpoenas must be issued by the presiding officer only after sums have been deposited to ensure payment of expense fees incident to the subpoenas. Payment of any such fees or expenses must be made in the manner prescribed by Texas Government Code §2001.089 and §2001.103.
 - (D) **Motions to quash.** Motions to quash subpoenas must be filed within five working days after the issuance of the subpoena, unless the party ordered to respond to the subpoena shows that it was justifiably unable to file objections at that time.
 - (k) **Discovery.** In accordance with subsection (j) of this section, the presiding officer has broad discretion regarding discovery. Except as modified in paragraphs (1) - (3) of this subsection, Chapter 22, Subchapter H of this title (relating to Discovery Procedures) must serve as guidance for all discovery conducted under this chapter.
 - (1) **Scope.** The presiding officer will permit only such discovery as the presiding officer determines is essential, considering public policy, the needs of the parties and the commission, the commission's deadlines under FTA §252(b)(4)(C), and considering the desirability of making discovery effective, expeditious and cost effective. The presiding officer will be the judge of the relevance and materiality of the discovery sought.
 - (2) **Limits.** Parties may obtain discovery relevant to the arbitration by submitting requests for information (RFIs), requests for inspection and production of documents (RFPs), requests for admissions (RFAs), and depositions by oral or written examination. RFIs, RFPs and RFAs must contain no more than 40 requests (subparts are counted as separate requests). The

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

presiding officer, upon a motion filed by a party, may permit a party to propound more than 40 requests provided that the moving party has made a clear demonstration of the relevance of and the need for the additional requests. Factors to be considered by the presiding officer in determining whether to allow additional requests include: the number of unresolved issues, the complexity of the unresolved issues, and whether the proceeding addresses costs or cost studies.

- (3) **Timing.** Discovery may commence upon the filing of the petition for arbitration. Parties must file a proposed discovery schedule that accommodates the commission's deadlines under FTA §252(b)(4)(C), taking into consideration relevant commission regulatory timeframes. The presiding officer may impose a discovery schedule that accommodates the commission's deadlines under FTA §252(b)(4)(C). If any party requests an extension that will affect the ability to complete the proceeding within the commission's deadlines under FTA §252(b)(4)(C), all parties must agree to the extension and file a joint waiver to extend such deadlines.
- (l) **Time for hearing.** The arbitration hearing will be conducted expeditiously and in an informal manner. The presiding officer is authorized to impose reasonable time limits on the arbitration hearing. The presiding officer may continue an arbitration hearing from time to time and place to place. Unless additional time is allowed by the commission or additional information is requested by the presiding officer, the hearing may not exceed five working days.
- (m) **Evidence.**
 - (1) **Relevance.** The parties may only offer such evidence as is relevant and material to a proceeding and must provide such evidence as the presiding officer deems necessary. The presiding officer will be the judge of the relevance and materiality of the evidence offered.
 - (2) **Conformity to rules.** The presiding officer will have the authority to decide whether to apply strict rules of evidence or any other rules as to the admissibility, relevance, or weight of any material tendered by a party on any matter of fact or expert opinion. The presiding officer will provide notice of this decision prior to the deadline for filing direct testimony.
 - (3) **Exhibits.** The offering of exhibits is governed by §22.226 of this title (relating to Exhibits).
 - (4) **Offers of proof.** Offers of proof are governed by §22.227 of this title (relating to Offers of Proof).
 - (5) **Stipulation of facts.** Stipulation of facts are governed by §22.228 of this title (relating to Stipulation of Facts).
 - (6) **Prefiled evidence.**
 - (A) Parties to the hearing must file their direct case at least 15 working days prior to the hearing unless the presiding officer establishes a different deadline. A copy of the direct case and notice of filing must be provided to each of the other parties to the hearing the same day the direct case is filed with the commission.
 - (B) The prepared direct case must include all of the party's direct evidence on all DPL issues in the proceeding, including written direct testimony of all of its witnesses and all exhibits that the party intends to offer as part of its direct case. The prepared case must present the entirety of the party's direct evidence on each of the issues in controversy and must serve as the party's complete direct case.
 - (C) Prefiled evidence must include, to the extent allowed or requested by the presiding officer, prefiled rebuttal testimony and exhibits and must be filed not less than eight working days prior to the hearing unless the presiding officer establishes a different deadline.
 - (7) **Public Information.** Except as provided in §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Information), all materials filed with the commission or provided to the presiding officer will be considered public information under the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), Texas Government Code, §552.001, *et. seq.*

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (n) **Sanctions.** Whenever a party fails to comply with a presiding officer's order or commission rules in a manner deemed material by the presiding officer, the presiding officer will establish a reasonable period of time for compliance. If the party does not comply within that time period, then after notice and opportunity for a hearing, the presiding officer may impose a remedy as set forth in §21.71 of this title (relating to Sanctions).
- (o) **Decision Point List (DPL) and witness list.**
 - (1) Ten days after the filing of the response to the petition, the parties must file a revised DPL that is jointly populated to the extent practicable, taking into consideration the status of discovery.
 - (2) Parties must file a jointly populated DPL in a format approved by the presiding officer, no later than five working days before the commencement of the hearing. An electronic copy of the DPL must also be provided. The DPL must identify all issues to be addressed, the witnesses who will address each issue, and a short synopsis of each witness's position on each issue, with specific citation to the parties' testimony relevant to that issue. The DPL must also provide the parties' competing contract language. Except as provided in §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Material), all materials filed with the commission or provided to the presiding officer will be considered public information under the TPIA, Texas Government Code, §552.001, *et. seq.*
- (p) **Cross-examination.** Each witness presenting written prefiled testimony must be available for cross-examination by the other parties to the arbitration. The presiding officer will judge the credibility of each witness and the weight to be given their testimony based upon their response to cross-examination. If the presiding officer determines that the witness's responses are evasive or non-responsive to the questions asked, the presiding officer may disregard the witness's testimony on the basis of a lack of credibility.
- (q) **Clarifying questions.** The presiding officer or an arbitration team member, at any point during the proceeding, may ask clarifying questions and may direct a party or a witness to provide additional information as needed to fully develop the record of the proceeding. This has no effect on a party's responsibility to meet its burden of proof. If a party fails to present information requested by the presiding officer, the presiding officer will render a decision based on the best information available. Moreover, failure to provide requested information may subject a party to sanctions, as set forth in §21.71 of this title.
- (r) **Briefs.** The presiding officer may require the parties to submit post-hearing briefs or written summaries of their positions. The presiding officer will determine the filing deadline and any limitations on the length of such submissions. Reply briefs are not permitted unless the presiding officer determines that they would aid in the resolution of the proceeding, after consideration of applicable deadlines.
- (s) **Time for decision.** The presiding officer will endeavor to issue a proposal for award on the arbitration within 30 days after the filing of any post-hearing briefs.
 - (1) If post-hearing briefs are not filed, the presiding officer will endeavor to issue the proposal for award within 30 days after the conclusion of the hearing.
 - (2) The arbitration team must issue an arbitration award not later than nine months after the date on which a party receives a request for negotiation under FTA, unless the parties have waived the nine-month deadline in writing or orally on the record.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

(t) **Decision.**

- (1) **Proposal for award.** The proposal for award will be based upon the record of the arbitration hearing. The presiding officer may agree with the positions of one or more of the parties on any or all issues or may offer an independent resolution of the issues. The presiding officer is the judge of whether a party has met its burden of proof. The proposal for award will include:
 - (A) a ruling on each of the issues presented for arbitration by the parties, including specific contract language;
 - (B) a statement of any conditions imposed on the parties to the agreement in order to comply with the provisions of FTA §252(c);
 - (C) a statement of how the final decision meets the requirements of FTA §251, including any regulations adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in accordance with FTA §251;
 - (D) the rates for interconnection, services, or network elements established in accordance with FTA §252(d);
 - (E) a schedule for implementation of the terms and conditions by the parties to the agreement;
 - (F) a narrative report explaining the rulings included in the proposal for award, unless the arbitration is conducted by two or more of the commissioners acting as the presiding officers; and
 - (G) to the extent that a ruling establishes a new or different price for an unbundled network element, combination of unbundled network elements, or resold service, a statement requiring that all certificated carriers be notified of such price either through web posting, mass mailing, or electronic mail within ten days of the date the ruling becomes final.
- (2) **Exceptions to the proposal for award.** Within ten working days of the issuance of the proposal for award the parties must file any exceptions to the proposal for award specifying any alleged ambiguities or errors. To the extent that a party objects to contract language within the proposal for award, the party's exceptions to the proposal for award must include alternative contract language along with an explanation of why the alternative language is appropriate, with citation to the record.
- (3) **Arbitration award.** The arbitration award will be based upon the record of the arbitration hearing. The presiding officer will endeavor to issue the arbitration award within ten working days of the receipt of parties' exceptions to the proposal for award. The presiding officer may agree with the positions of one or more of the parties on any or all issues or may offer an independent resolution of the issues. The presiding officer is the judge of whether a party has met its burden of proof. The arbitration award will include:
 - (A) a ruling on each of the issues presented for arbitration by the parties, including specific contract language;
 - (B) a statement of any conditions imposed on the parties to the agreement in order to comply with the provisions of FTA §252(c), if any;
 - (C) a statement of how the final decision meets the requirements of FTA §251, including any regulations adopted by the FCC in accordance with FTA §251;
 - (D) the rates for interconnection, services, or network elements established according to FTA §252(d), as appropriate;
 - (E) a schedule for implementation of the terms and conditions by the parties to the agreement;
 - (F) a narrative report explaining the presiding officer's rationale for each of the rulings included in the final decision, unless the arbitration is conducted by a majority of the commissioners acting as the presiding officers; and

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (G) to the extent that a ruling establishes a new or different price for an unbundled network element; combination of unbundled network elements; or resold service, a statement requiring that all certificated carriers be notified of such price either through a web posting, mass mailing, or electronic mail within ten days of the date the ruling becomes final.

- (u) **Distribution.** The proposal for award and arbitration award will be filed with the commission as a public record and will be mailed by first class mail, or transmitted via facsimile to all parties of record in the arbitration. On the same day that a decision is issued, the presiding officer will notify the parties by facsimile or electronic mail that a decision has been issued. If a decision involves 9-1-1 issues, the presiding officer will also notify the Commission on State Emergency Communications by facsimile or electronic mail on the same day.

- (v) **Implementation.** Unless modified, implementation of the terms and conditions of the arbitration award must comply with §21.99 of this title (relating to Approval of Arbitrated Agreements).

- (w) **Motions for reconsideration.** No motions for reconsideration of the proposal for award are permitted. Motions for reconsideration of the arbitration award must be filed in accordance with §21.75 of this title (relating to Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.97. Approval of Negotiated Agreements.

- (a) **Application.** Any agreement adopted by negotiation shall be submitted to the commission for review and approval and may be submitted by any one of the parties to the agreement, provided that all parties to the agreement seek approval. The parties requesting approval shall submit an application for approval of the agreement with the commission's filing clerk and must serve a copy on each of the parties to the agreement. Any agreement submitted to the commission for approval is a public record and no portion of the agreement may be treated as confidential information under §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Material). An application for approval of a negotiated agreement shall include:
- (1) a complete and unredacted copy of the negotiated agreement;
 - (2) the name, address, and telephone number of each of the parties to the agreement;
 - (3) an affidavit by each of the signatory parties explaining how the agreement is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, including all relevant requirements of state law; and
 - (4) to the extent that an agreement adopted by negotiation establishes a new or different price for an unbundled network element, combination of unbundled network elements, or resold service, a verified statement that all certificated carriers will be notified of such price either through web posting, mass mailing or electronic mail within ten days of the date the ruling becomes final.
- (b) **Notice.** The presiding officer may require the parties to the agreement to provide reasonable notice of the filing of the agreement. The presiding officer may require publication of the notice in addition to direct notice to affected persons. At the presiding officer's discretion, notice may be provided by direct notice, electronic mail or a web posting, provided all affected persons are made aware of the website. The presiding officer shall determine the appropriate scope and wording of the notice to be provided.
- (c) **Proceedings.**
- (1) **Administrative review.** The commission delegates its authority to the presiding officer to administratively approve or deny any negotiated interconnection agreements. Notice of approval or denial shall be issued within 15 days of the filing of the application. If a notice of denial is filed, the notice of denial without prejudice shall include written findings indicating any deficiencies in the agreement. An application considered under this section shall be administratively reviewed by the presiding officer unless the presiding officer determines that a formal review of the application is appropriate pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection. Additionally, at the presiding officer's discretion, approval can be referred directly to the commission should the presiding officer determine that there is an issue(s) more appropriately decided by the commission that does not necessarily require formal resolution.
 - (2) **Formal resolution.** If the presiding officer determines that an application for approval of a negotiated agreement should not be approved administratively, a formal review may be conducted and may require formal resolution under §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration) or §21.125 of this title (relating to Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding), as appropriate.
- (d) **Comments.** An interested person may file comments on the negotiated agreement by filing the comments with the commission's filing clerk and serving a copy of the comments on each party to the agreement within five days of filing of the application. The comments shall include the following information:

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (1) a detailed statement of the person's interests in the agreement, including a description of how approval of the agreement may adversely affect those interests;
 - (2) specific allegations that the agreement, or some portion thereof:
 - (A) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier that is not a party to the agreement; or
 - (B) is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or
 - (C) is not consistent with other requirements of state law; and
 - (3) the specific facts upon which the allegations are based.
- (e) **Issues.** In any proceeding conducted by the commission pursuant to subsection (c)(2) of this section, the commission will consider only evidence and argument concerning whether the agreement, or some portion thereof:
- (1) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier that is not a party to the agreement; or
 - (2) is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or
 - (3) is not consistent with other requirements of state or federal law.
- (f) **Authority of presiding officer.** The presiding officer has broad discretion in conducting the formal resolution, including the authority given to a presiding officer pursuant to §22.202 of this title (relating to Presiding Officer) and pursuant to §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration). Discovery shall be governed by §21.95(k) of this title. In addition, in a formal resolution proceeding, the presiding officer has broad discretion to ask clarifying questions and to direct a party or a witness to provide information, at any time during the proceeding, as set out in §21.95(q) of this title.
- (g) **Filing of agreement.** Once the presiding officer approves the agreement, then the parties to the agreement shall file two copies, one unbound, of the complete agreement with the filing clerk within 15 working days of the presiding officer's decision. The copies shall be clearly marked with the control number assigned to the proceeding and the language "Complete interconnection agreement as approved (or modified and approved) on (insert date)." Also within 15 working days of the approval of the agreement, the incumbent local exchange company (ILEC) shall post notice of the approved interconnection agreement on its website in a separate, easily identifiable area of the website. The ILEC website shall provide a complete list of approved interconnection agreements, listed alphabetically by carrier, including docket numbers and effective dates. In addition, the ILEC website shall provide a direct link to the commission's website.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.99. Approval of Arbitrated Agreements.

- (a) **Application.** Any interconnection agreement resulting from arbitration must be submitted to the commission for approval and filed in the same proceeding within 30 days of the date of the presiding officer's arbitration award, unless otherwise provided. Following the issuance of the presiding officer's arbitration award under §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration), the parties must jointly file with the commission a copy of the final interconnection agreement, incorporating all contract language ordered by the presiding officer. Any interconnection agreement submitted to the commission for approval is a public record and no portion of the interconnection agreement may be treated as confidential information under §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Material). The application for approval of an arbitrated agreement must be accompanied by:
- (1) a complete and unredacted copy of the arbitrated interconnection agreement including any portions of the agreement that were not the subject of arbitration;
 - (2) the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each of the parties to the agreement; and
 - (3) to the extent that an agreement adopted by arbitration establishes a new or different price for an unbundled network element, combination of unbundled network elements, or resold service, a verified statement that all certificated carriers will be notified of such price either through web posting, mass mailing or electronic mail within ten days of the date the ruling becomes final.
- (b) **Parties' comments.** Any party wishing to file comments on the interconnection agreement incorporating the contract language ordered by the presiding officer as required in subsection (a) of this section, must do so within five calendar days following the filing of the application under subsection (a) of this section. Any reply comments must be filed within three calendar days of any initial comments.
- (c) **Commission approval.** The commission will issue its final decision on an agreement adopted by arbitration within 30 calendar days following the filing of the application under subsection (a) of this section. The commission's final decision may reject, approve, or modify the agreement, and will provide written findings as to any deficiencies. If the commission does not act to approve or reject the agreement adopted by arbitration within 30 days after submission by the parties under subsection (a) of this section, the agreement will be deemed approved.
- (d) **Effective date.** An interconnection agreement approved by arbitration becomes effective within ten calendar days from the date that the commission's order approving the interconnection agreement is signed by all commissioners unless otherwise specified in the order approving the agreement.
- (e) **Filing of agreement.** Following the commission's approval of the agreement, the parties to the interconnection agreement must file a copy of the complete agreement with the commission within ten working days of the commission's decision. The copy be clearly marked with the control number for the proceeding and the language "Complete interconnection agreement (as modified) and approved on (insert date)." Also within 15 working days of the approval of the agreement, the incumbent local exchange company (ILEC) must post notice of the approved interconnection agreement on its website in a manner that is easily identifiable. The ILEC website must provide a complete list of commission-approved interconnection agreements, listed alphabetically by carrier, including docket numbers and effective dates. In addition, the ILEC website must provide a direct link to the commission's website.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.101. Approval of Amendments to Existing Interconnection Agreements.

- (a) **Application.** Any amendments, including modifications, to a previously approved interconnection agreement must be submitted to the commission for review and approval. Any one party to the agreement may file the application for approval of the amendments, provided that all parties to the agreement seek approval. The parties requesting approval must file a copy with the commission serve a copy on each of the other parties to the agreement as applicable. An application for approval of an amended agreement must include:
- (1) a complete and unredacted copy of the amended portions of the interconnection agreement, along with any other relevant portions to place the amendments in context;
 - (2) the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each of the parties to the agreement;
 - (3) an affidavit by each of the signatory parties explaining how the agreement is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, including all relevant requirements of state law; and
 - (4) to the extent that an amendment to previously approved interconnection agreement establishes a new or different price for an unbundled network element, combination of unbundled network elements, or resold service, a verified statement that all certificated carriers will be notified of such price either through web posting, mass mailing or electronic mail within ten days of the date the ruling becomes final.
- (b) **Notice.** The commission may require the parties to the agreement to provide reasonable notice of the filing of the agreement. The commission may require publication of the notice in addition to direct notice to affected persons. At the commission's discretion, direct notice may be provided by electronic mail or a website, provided all affected persons are made aware of the website. The commission will determine the appropriate scope and wording of the notice to be provided.
- (c) **Proceeding.**
- (1) **Administrative review.** The commission delegates its authority to the presiding officer to administratively approve or deny any interconnection agreement amendments. Notice of approval or denial will be issued within 15 days of the filing of the application. If a notice of denial is filed, the notice of denial without prejudice will include written findings indicating any deficiencies in the agreement. Amendments to interconnection agreements will be administratively reviewed by the presiding officer unless the presiding officer determines that a formal review of the amendments is appropriate in accordance with paragraph (2) of this subsection. At the presiding officer's discretion, approval can be referred directly to the commission should the presiding officer determine that there is an issue that is more appropriately decided by the commission that does not necessarily require formal resolution.
 - (2) **Formal resolution.** If the presiding officer determines that an application for approval of an amendment to an interconnection agreement cannot be administratively approved, a formal review may be conducted and may require formal resolution under §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration) or §21.125 of this title (relating to Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding), as appropriate.
- (d) **Comments.** An interested person may file comments on the amended agreement by filing the comments with the commission's filing clerk and serving a copy of the comments on each party to the agreement within five days of the filing of the application. The comments must include the following information:
- (1) a detailed statement of the person's interests in the agreement, including a description of how approval of the agreement may adversely affect those interests;

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (2) specific allegations that the agreement, or some portion thereof:
 - (A) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier that is not a party to the agreement; or
 - (B) is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or
 - (C) is not consistent with other requirements of state law; and
 - (3) the specific facts upon which the allegations are based.
- (e) **Issues.** In any proceeding conducted by the commission in accordance with subsection (c)(2) of this section, the commission will consider only evidence and argument concerning whether the agreement, or some portion thereof:
- (1) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier that is not a party to the agreement; or
 - (2) is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or
 - (3) is not consistent with other requirements of state law.
- (f) **Authority of presiding officer.** The presiding officer has broad discretion in conducting the proceeding, including the authority given to a presiding officer under §22.202 of this title (relating to Presiding Officer) and §21.95 of this title. Discovery is governed by §21.95(k) of this title. In addition, the presiding officer has broad discretion to ask clarifying questions and to direct a party or a witness to provide information, at any time during the proceeding, as set out in §21.95(q) of this title.
- (g) **Effective date.** Any amendment to an existing interconnection agreement is effective upon issuance by the commission of a notice of approval.
- (h) **Formal approval.** When an amendment to an existing interconnection agreement is subject to the formal review process as proposed in subsection (c) of this section, the commission will issue its final decision on the amendment within 90 days following the filing of the application. The commission may reject, approve, or modify the amendment, or the commission may remand the agreement to the presiding officer for further proceedings. If the commission rejects the amendment, the final decision will include written findings indicating any deficiencies in the amendment.
- (i) **Filing of agreement.** If the presiding officer approves the amendments to the agreement, the parties to the agreement must file a copy of the complete amended interconnection agreement with the commission's filing clerk within ten working days of the presiding officer's decision. The filed copy must be clearly marked with the control number assigned to the proceeding and the language "Amended interconnection agreement as approved (or modified and approved) on (insert date)." Within 15 working days of the approval of the agreement, the incumbent local exchange company (ILEC) must post notice of the approved interconnection agreement on its website in a separate, easily identifiable area of the website. The ILEC website must provide a complete list of approved interconnection agreements, listed alphabetically by carrier, including docket numbers and effective dates. In addition, the ILEC website must provide a direct link to the commission's website.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter D. DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.103. Approval of Agreements Adopting Terms and Conditions Pursuant to Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §252(i).

- (a) **Application.** Under the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) §252(i), a local exchange carrier must make available within 15 working days of receipt of request, any interconnection, service, or network element provided under a previously approved interconnection agreement to which it is a party to any other requesting telecommunications carrier upon the same terms and conditions as those provided in the agreement. Any agreement adopting terms and conditions of a previously approved interconnection agreement in accordance with FTA § 252(i) must be submitted to the commission for review and approval. Any or all of the parties to the agreement may file the application for approval. The parties requesting approval must file a copy of the application with the commission's filing clerk and serve a copy on each of the other parties to the agreement as applicable. An application for approval of an agreement adopting terms and conditions in accordance with FTA § 252(i) must include:
- (1) a complete and unredacted copy of the agreement;
 - (2) the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each of the parties to the agreement;
 - (3) the identity of the previously approved interconnection agreement from which the agreement is taken, including specific docket number and contract effective date and term; and
 - (4) an affidavit from the requesting telecommunications carrier explaining how the agreement is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, including all relevant requirements of state law.
- (b) **Provisions incorporated from §21.101 of this title (relating to the Approval of Amendments to Existing Interconnection Agreements).** Applications for approval filed under this section will be processed according to the following provisions of §21.101 of this title, which are incorporated by reference into this section: §21.101(b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.121. Purpose.

This subchapter establishes procedures for commission resolution of disputed issues arising under or pertaining to interconnection agreements approved by the commission pursuant to its authority under the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA). The disputed issues may include, but are not limited to, matters not explicitly addressed in the interconnection agreement. The dispute resolution procedures are intended to resolve disputes concerning:

- (1) proper interpretation of terms and conditions in the interconnection agreements;
- (2) implementation of activities explicitly provided for, or implicitly contemplated in, the interconnection agreements, including, but not limited to, interim rates and terms expiring before the contract expiration date; and
- (3) enforcement of terms and conditions in such interconnection agreements.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.123. Informal Settlement Conference.

- (a) **Filing a request.** Either party to an interconnection agreement may request an informal settlement conference by filing a written request with the commission and, on the same day, delivering a copy of the request either by hand delivery, electronic mail, or by facsimile to each party, including the party to the interconnection agreement from which the dispute arises. The written request should include:
- (1) The name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each party to the interconnection agreement and the requesting party's designated representative;
 - (2) A description of the parties' efforts to resolve their differences by negotiation;
 - (3) A list of the discrete issues in dispute, with a cross-reference to the area or areas of the agreement applicable or pertaining to the issues in dispute; and
 - (4) The requesting party's proposed solution to the dispute.
- (b) **The settlement conference.** The commission staff conducting the informal settlement conference will notify the parties of the time, date, and location of the settlement conference which, if held, will be held no later than ten working days from the date the request was filed. The commission staff may require each party to file a response to the request. The parties should provide the appropriate personnel with authority to discuss and to resolve the disputes at the settlement conference. If the parties are in disagreement as to the need for a settlement conference, the presiding officer may deny the request for good cause.
- (c) **Conduct.** The settlement conference will be conducted as an informal meeting and will not be transcribed. Only parties to the interconnection agreement may participate as parties to the settlement conference.
- (d) **Results of settlement conference.** The settlement conference may result in an agreement on the resolution of the dispute described in the request. If an agreement is reached, the agreement will be binding on the parties. If the parties do not reach an agreement as a result of the settlement conference, either party may utilize other procedures for dispute resolution provided in this subchapter. The commission staff conducting the informal settlement conference may participate in a subsequent dispute resolution proceeding involving the parties to the informal settlement conference.
- (e) **Both formal dispute resolution and informal settlement request.** In the event a party negotiating a request for interconnection, services, or network elements under the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (FTA) has requested both formal dispute resolution and an informal settlement conference, the informal settlement conference will precede formal dispute resolution. If agreed to by both parties, any procedural deadlines applicable to formal dispute resolution will be tolled for the duration of the informal settlement proceedings, including time needed for commission approval of an informal settlement agreement. To the extent parties do not settle all matters at issue in the informal settlement conference, the formal dispute resolution proceeding will not be initiated until the parties jointly file an update of unresolved issues and a revised procedural schedule.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.125. Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding.

- (a) **Initiation of formal proceeding.** A formal proceeding for dispute resolution under this subchapter will commence when a party files a petition with the commission and, on the same day, delivers a copy of the petition either by hand delivery, electronic mail, or by facsimile to each party, including the other party to the interconnection agreement from which the dispute arises (respondent).
- (1) The petition must comply with §21.33 of this title (relating to Formal Requisites of Pleadings and Documents to be Filed with the Commission). The petition must include:
 - (A) the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address of each party to the interconnection agreement and the petitioner's designated representative;
 - (B) a description of the parties' efforts to resolve their differences by negotiation, such as through an informal settlement conference in accordance with §21.123 of this title (relating to Informal Settlement Conference);
 - (C) a detailed list of the discrete issues in dispute, with a cross-reference to the area or areas of the parties' most current interconnection agreement, identified by docket number, applicable or pertaining to the issues in dispute;
 - (D) an identification of pertinent background facts and relevant law or rules applicable to each disputed issue;
 - (E) the petitioner's proposed solution to the dispute;
 - (F) proposed modified contract language, if any; and
 - (G) a certificate of service.
 - (2) To the extent applicable, the petitioner may also include in the petition a request for an expedited ruling under §21.127 of this title (relating to Request for Expedited Ruling) or an interim ruling under §21.129 of this title (relating to Request for Interim Ruling Pending Dispute Resolution).
 - (3) The commission will perform a sufficiency review of a petition. To the extent that a petition is determined to be insufficient, the commission will file a notice of insufficiency within five working days of receipt of the petition. In the absence of a notice of insufficiency, the petition will be presumed sufficient.
 - (4) Where a request for formal dispute resolution found insufficient, the presiding officer may consider dismissal without prejudice in accordance with §21.67 of this title (relating to Dismissal of a Proceeding) and order the party to refile.
- (b) **Response to the petition.** Unless §21.127 or §21.129 of this title apply, the respondent must file a response to the petition within ten days after the filing of the petition. On the response filing date, the respondent must serve a copy of the response on the petitioner. The response must specifically affirm or deny each allegation in the petition. The response must include the respondent's position on each issue in dispute, a cross-reference to the area or areas of the parties' most current interconnection agreement, identified by docket number, applicable or pertaining to the issue in dispute, and the respondent's proposed solution on each issue in dispute. In addition, the response also must:
 - (1) stipulate to any undisputed facts; and
 - (2) identify relevant law or rules applicable to each disputed issue.
- (c) **Reply to response to complaint.** Unless §21.127 or §21.129 of this title apply, the petitioner may file a reply within five days after the filing of the response to the petition and serve a copy on respondent on the same day. The reply must be limited solely to new issues raised in the response to the petition.
- (d) **Provisions incorporated from §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration).** Except as specified otherwise in this subchapter, the following provisions of §21.95 of this title are

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

incorporated by reference into this subchapter: §21.95(c)-(i) and (k)-(r), except that any discovery schedule must take into consideration the 50-day deadline in subsection (g) of this section.

- (e) **Number of copies to be filed.** Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding officer, parties must file a copy of each pleading subject to this subchapter with the commission.
- (f) **Participation.** Only parties to the interconnection agreement may participate as parties in the dispute resolution proceeding subject to this subchapter.
- (g) **Notice and hearing.** Unless §21.127 or §21.129 of this title apply, the presiding officer will hold the hearing to address the petition no later than 50 days after filing of the complaint. If the parties' joint procedural schedule sets a hearing more than 50 days after the filing of the petition, then approval of the joint procedural schedule will be conditioned upon the parties filing a joint waiver of the 50-day deadline. The presiding officer will notify the parties, not less than 15 days before the hearing, of the date, time, and location of the hearing. The hearing will be transcribed by a court reporter designated by the presiding officer.
- (h) **Authority of presiding officer.** The presiding officer has broad discretion in conducting the dispute resolution proceeding, including the authority given to a presiding officer in accordance with §22.202 of this title (relating to Presiding Officer) and in accordance with §21.95 of this title (relating to Compulsory Arbitration). The presiding officer also has the authority to award remedies or relief deemed necessary by the presiding officer to resolve a dispute subject to the procedures established in this subchapter. The authority to award remedies or relief includes the award of prejudgment interest, specific performance of any obligation created in or found by the presiding officer to be intended under the interconnection agreement subject to the dispute, issuance of an injunction, or imposition of sanctions for abuse or frustration of the dispute resolution process subject to this subchapter and Subchapter D of this chapter (relating to Dispute Resolution), except that the presiding officer does not have authority to award punitive or consequential damages.
- (i) **Discovery.** Parties may obtain discovery by submitting requests for information (RFIs), which include requests for inspection and production of documents, requests for admissions, and depositions by oral examination, as provided by §22.141(b) of this title (relating to Form and Scope of Discovery), and as allowed within the discretion of the arbitrator.
- (j) **Prefiled evidence and witness list.** The arbitrator must require the parties to file a direct case and a joint Decision Point List (DPL) on or before the commencement of the hearing. The arbitrator must require the parties to file their direct cases under the same deadline. The prepared direct case must include all of the party's direct evidence, including written direct testimony of all of its witnesses and all exhibits that the party intends to offer. The DPL must identify all issues to be addressed, the witnesses who will be addressing each issue, and a short synopsis of each witness's position on each issue. Except as provided in §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Information), all materials filed with the commission or provided to the arbitrator must be considered public information under the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), Texas Government Code, §552.001, *et seq.*
- (k) **Arbitration award.**
 - (1) The presiding officer will endeavor to issue a final decision on the dispute resolution within 30 days after the filing of any post-hearing briefs in the dispute resolution proceeding. If no post-hearing briefs are filed, the presiding officer will endeavor to issue a final decision within 30 days of the close of the hearing.
 - (2) The arbitration award will be filed with the commission as a public record and will be mailed by first-class mail to all parties of record in the dispute resolution proceeding. On the same day that the arbitration award is issued, the presiding officer will notify the parties in writing

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

by electronic mail or facsimile that it has been issued. If the decision involves 9-1-1 issues, the presiding officer will also notify the Commission on State Emergency Communications by facsimile on the same day.

- (3) The arbitration award will be based upon the record of the dispute resolution hearing, and will include a specific ruling on each of the disputed issues presented for resolution by the parties. The presiding officer may agree with the positions of one or more parties on any or all issues or may offer an independent resolution of the issues. The presiding officer is the judge of whether a party has met their burden of proof. The presiding officer may provide for later implementation of specific provisions as addressed in the presiding officer's decision. The decision may also contain the items addressed in §21.95(t)(1) to the extent deemed necessary by the presiding officer to explain or support the decision.
 - (4) Within five working days from the date the arbitrator's decision is issued, any commissioner may place the presiding officer's decision on the agenda for the next available open meeting. The decision will be stayed until the commission affirms or modifies the decision, but such stay will not stay any order of interim relief already in effect in the proceeding
 - (5) If no commissioner places the arbitrator's decision on the open meeting agenda within five working days, the arbitrator's decision is final and effective on the expiration of that fifth working day. The arbitrator must notify the parties when the arbitrator's decision is deemed final under this paragraph.
- (l) **Filing of agreement.** Where modifications are ordered, the parties to the interconnection agreement must file in the same docket a copy of the complete agreement with the filing clerk within five working days of approval. The copy must be clearly marked with the control number assigned to the proceeding and the language "Complete interconnection agreement as approved (or modified and approved) on (insert date)." Also within 15 working days of the approval of the agreement, the incumbent local exchange company (ILEC) must post notice of the approved interconnection agreement on its website in a manner that is easily identifiable. The ILEC website must provide a complete list of commission-approved interconnection agreements, listed alphabetically by carrier, including docket numbers and effective dates. In addition, the ILEC website must provide a direct link to the commission's website.
- (m) **Motions for reconsideration.** Motions for reconsideration are governed by §21.75 of this title (relating to Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.127. Request for Expedited Ruling.

- (a) **Purpose.** This section establishes procedures pursuant to which a party who files a complaint to initiate a dispute resolution under this subchapter may request an expedited ruling when the dispute directly affects the ability of a party to provide uninterrupted service to its customers or precludes the provisioning of any service, functionality, or network element. The presiding officer has the discretion to determine whether the resolution of the complaint may be expedited based on the complexity of the issues or other factors deemed relevant. Except as specifically provided in this section, the provisions and procedures of §21.125 of this title (relating to Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding) apply.
- (b) **Filing a request.** Any request for expedited ruling shall be filed at the same time and in the same document as the complaint filed pursuant to §21.125 of this title. The complaint shall be entitled "Complaint and Request for Expedited Ruling." In addition to the requirements listed in §21.125(a) of this title, the complaint shall also state the specific circumstances that make the dispute eligible for an expedited ruling.
- (c) **Response to complaint.** The respondent shall file a response to the complaint within five working days after the filing of the complaint. In addition to the requirements listed in §21.125(b) of this title, the respondent shall state its position on the request for an expedited ruling. The respondent shall serve a copy of the response on the complainant by hand-delivery or facsimile on the same day as it is filed with the commission.
- (d) **Hearing.** After reviewing the complaint and the response, the presiding officer will determine whether the complaint warrants an expedited ruling. If so, the presiding officer shall make arrangements for the hearing, which shall, to the extent practicable, commence no later than 20 days after the filing of the complaint. The presiding officer shall notify the parties, not less than three working days before the hearing of the date, time, and location of the hearing. If the presiding officer determines that the complaint is not eligible for an expedited ruling, the presiding officer shall so notify the parties within five days of the filing of the response.
- (e) **Decision Point List (DPL) and witness list.** Parties shall file a jointly populated DPL and witness list, in a format approved by the presiding officer, no later than five days before the commencement of the hearing. The presiding officer shall require the parties to file their DPL under the same deadline. The DPL shall identify all issues to be addressed, the witness, if any, who will be addressing each issue, and a short synopsis of each witness's position on each issue. If the schedule accommodates the filing of prefiled testimony, parties' DPL shall include specific citation to the parties' testimony relevant to that issue. Except as provided in §21.77 of this title (relating to Confidential Material), all materials filed with the commission or provided to the presiding officer shall be considered public information under the Texas Public Information Act, Texas Government Code, §552.001, *et seq.*
- (f) **Decision.** The presiding officer shall issue a written decision on the petition within 15 days after the close of the hearing. On the day of the issuance, the presiding officer shall notify the parties by facsimile that the decision has been issued. If the decision involves 9-1-1 issues, the presiding officer shall also notify the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) by facsimile on the same day.
- (g) **Motions for reconsideration.** Motions for reconsideration shall be governed by §21.75 of this title (relating to Motions for Clarification and Motions for Reconsideration).

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

§21.129. Request for Interim Ruling Pending Dispute Resolution.

- (a) **Purpose.**
- (1) This section establishes procedures pursuant to which a party who files a petition to initiate a dispute resolution under either §21.125 of this title (relating to Formal Dispute Resolution Proceeding) or §21.127 of this title (relating to Request for Expedited Ruling) may also request an interim ruling on whether the party is entitled to relief pending the resolution of the merits of the dispute.
 - (2) This section is intended to provide an interim remedy when the dispute compromises the ability of a party to provide uninterrupted service or precludes the provisioning of any service, functionality or network element (including issues of pricing and/or payment for any service functionality, or network element when such pricing and/or payment issues effect provisioning).
 - (3) However, in no event may a party obtain interim relief to avoid payment of undisputed amounts. The party seeking an interim ruling on payment issues bears the burden of proof to demonstrate what amounts are not disputed and what payments have been made pursuant to applicable contract provisions.
- (b) **Filing a request.** Any request for an interim ruling shall be filed at the same time and in the same document as the petition filed pursuant to §21.125 or §21.127 of this title. The heading of the petition shall include the phrase "Request for Interim Ruling." The petition shall set forth the specific grounds supporting the request for interim relief pending the resolution of the dispute, as well as a statement of the potential harm that may result if interim relief is not provided. A petition that includes a request for interim ruling shall be verified by affidavit. Such petition must list the contact person, address, telephone number, facsimile number, and email address for both the petitioner and respondent.
- (c) **Service.** The petitioner shall serve a copy of the petition and request for an interim ruling on the respondent by hand-delivery or facsimile on the same day as the pleading is filed with the commission. The petitioner shall certify on the pleading filed with the commission that service has been accomplished in compliance with this section.
- (d) **Response.** The respondent shall file a response to the petition within three working days of the filing of the request for an interim ruling.
- (e) **Hearing.** Within six working days of the filing of a petition and request for interim ruling, the presiding officer selected under this subchapter shall conduct a hearing to determine whether interim relief should be granted during the pendency of the dispute resolution process. The presiding officer will notify the parties of the date and time of the hearing by facsimile within three working days of the filing of a petition and request for interim ruling. The parties should be prepared to present their positions and evidence on factors including but not limited to: the type of service requested; the economic and technical feasibilities of providing that service; and the potential harm in providing the service.
- (f) **Evidence.** The presiding officer will issue an interim ruling on the request based on the evidence provided at the hearing. Evidence to support a request for interim ruling shall be provided by affidavit or shall be verified.

CHAPTER 21. INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Subchapter E. POST-INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION.

- (g) **Consideration.** The presiding officer may, after notice and opportunity for hearing, grant a request for interim relief only on a showing of good cause. In determining whether good cause exists, the presiding officer shall consider:
- (1) whether there is a substantial likelihood of success on the merits of the movant's claims;
 - (2) whether there is a substantial threat that the movant will suffer irreparable injury if interim relief is not granted;
 - (3) whether the threatened injury to the movant outweighs any harm that the other party might suffer if interim relief is granted, including consideration of both parties' ability to compete;
 - (4) the need for relief prior to the reasonably anticipated date of a final decision in the proceeding; and
 - (5) any other relevant factors as determined by the presiding officer.
- (h) **Ruling.** The presiding officer shall issue a written ruling on the request for interim relief within five working days of the close of the hearing and will notify the parties by facsimile of the ruling. If the decision involves 9-1-1 issues, the presiding officer shall also notify the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) by facsimile on the same day. The interim ruling will be effective throughout the dispute resolution proceeding until a final decision is issued pursuant to this subchapter, unless overturned by the presiding officer or otherwise determined by the commission upon appeal.