



STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Petition of T-Mobile Northeast, LLC)
pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 248a,)
requesting a Certificate of Public Good)
for a modification to a wireless)
Telecommunications facility in)
Sheldon, Vermont)

Case No. 25-____-PET

PROJECT NARRATIVE

I. Introduction

T-Mobile Northeast, LLC (“T-Mobile”) seeks approval from the Vermont Public Utility Commission (the “Commission”) to modify an existing telecommunications facility, located at 1298 Machia Road, Sheldon, VT (the “Property”). This petition is filed pursuant to the Commission’s “Order Adopting Revised Standards and Procedures Implementing 30 V.S.A. § 248a,” dated January 18, 2023 (the “Procedures Order”).

This proceeding is subject to the general authority and limitations of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, 47 U.S.C. § 332(c)(7)(A), as it involves a decision by the State of Vermont regarding the placement, construction, and modification of a personal wireless service facility. The Project also qualifies as an eligible facility request under the federal Spectrum Act, 47 U.S.C. §1455(a)(1), as it constitutes the modification of an existing wireless tower or base station that does not substantially change the physical dimensions of wireless tower or base station. Consequently, it is subject to a 60-day timeframe for review of the application pursuant to 47 C.F.R. § 1.40001(c). T-Mobile preserves its rights under the Telecommunications Act and the Spectrum Act to the extent necessary to proceed with the project.

II. Project Description

The existing facility at the Property is an existing 75’ farm silo (the “Facility”) at 1298 Machia Road, Sheldon, VT, with the base equipment to be located in a new, fenced equipment compound located at the base of the silo. Currently, T-Mobile has no antennas mounted on the silo. Because the new compound is not entirely within ten feet of the base of the silo, this project is considered to be a project of limited size and scope.

T-Mobile intends to make the following changes at the facility (collectively referred to below as the “Project”), as detailed on the enclosed Site Plans:

- (a) Install six (6) new antennas. Three (3) of the new antennas will measure approximately 75.8” x 11.3”, having a total facial surface area of approximately 17.84 square feet. Three (3) of

the new antennas will measure approximately 95.7" x 19.7", having a total facial surface area of approximately 39.28 square feet. See Sheet A-7 on the submitted Site Plans, "Project Information and Dimensions."

(b) Install six (6) reverse radio heads ("RRHs"). Three (3) of the new RRHs will measure approximately 21.8" x 15.7", having a total facial surface area of approximately 7.13 square feet. Three (3) of the new RRHs will measure approximately 19.6" x 15.7" having a total facial surface area of approximately 6.41 square feet. See Sheet A-7.

(c) The centerline of the new antennas will be approximately 52' above ground level ("AGL"), with the centerline of the new RRUs a few feet below that. See Sheet A-3.

(d) The existing facial surface area of the existing antennas and equipment is 0.00 sq. ft. See Sheet A-7. The proposed facial surface area of the new antennas and equipment is approximately 70.66 sq. ft, and therefore the change to the surface area of the faces of the equipment on the support structure is approximately 70.66 sq. ft. See Sheet A-7.

(e) As shown on Sheet A-3 of the Site Plans, no new antennas or equipment will extend vertically above the existing top of the silo. The maximum distance that the new antennas or RRHs extend horizontally from the existing silo is two feet two inches (2'2"), which is an increase of two feet two inches (2'2"). See Sheet A-7 of the Site Plans.

(f) The size and shape of the silo is not changing. There will be a new 10' x 20' concrete pad at the base of the silo to hold T-Mobile's base equipment. See Sheet A-2 of the Site Plans. T-Mobile will install two (2) equipment cabinets on the pad. (Please note, the site plans show the possible future location of two (2) additional equipment cabinets on the pad, in order to show that there is room to add cabinets in the future, but they are not being installed at this time and any future installation will be duly applied for; these future cabinets are shown on Sheet A-1 with the designation (F), and in lighter gray. There will also be an H-frame on the pad holding additional equipment boxes. There will also be a generator on the pad as well. There will be a weather canopy measuring 12'x 10' over part of the pad. There will be a short cable tray leading from the pad to the silo. The only new impervious surface as a result of the project is 200 sq ft as a result of the concrete pad. See Sheet A-7 of the Site Plans.

(g) Install ancillary improvements and appurtenances consisting of conduits and hardware necessary for the operation of the Facility.

Site plans depicting each feature of the Facility, and providing post-modification profiles and equipment information, are provided as **Exhibit 1**. Equipment Specifications are provided as **Exhibit 2**. It should be noted that this project was reviewed by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (the "NRPC") after its receipt of the advanced notice; the regional planning commission has issued a letter stating that the project conforms with the requirements of the regional plan. A copy of that letter is provided as **Exhibit 10**.

To the extent applicable, the construction plan will comply with the requirements of the Department of Environmental Conservation Low Risk Handbook for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control.

The Project qualifies as a "Project of Limited Size and Scope," as defined in 30 V.S.A. §

248a(b)(4)(A). A project of "limited size and scope" is defined as:

(i) a new telecommunications facility, including any ancillary improvements, that does not exceed 140 feet in height; or (ii) an addition, modification, replacement, or removal of telecommunications equipment at a lawfully constructed telecommunications facility or on an existing support structure and ancillary improvements, that would result in a facility of a total height less than 200 feet and does not increase the width of the existing support structure by more than 20 feet.

30 V.S.A. § 248(b)(4)(A).

To further constitute a project of limited size and scope, the Project “shall not disturb more than 10,000 square feet of earth. For purposes of this subdivision, ‘disturbed earth’ means the exposure of soil to the erosive effects of wind, rain or runoff.” 30 V.S.A. § 248a(b)(4)(B). “[T]emporary earth disturbance associated with construction activities” is not included in calculating earth disturbance. Procedures Order at § II.

Based upon the record evidence, the Facility is a project of “limited size and scope,” as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 248a. The Project does not entail a new tower or any structure over 140 feet high. The Project will not increase the width of the support structure by more than 20 feet, nor will it result in a telecommunications facility that exceeds 200 feet AGL. The total earth disturbance will not exceed 10,000 square feet.

III. Project Objective and Public Good (30 V.S.A. § 248a and §202(b))

The Project will promote the general good of the state, consistent with 30 V.S.A. §202(b), insofar as the Project will improve wireless service coverage in the Town of Sheldon, and the surrounding area. Propagation maps depicting T-Mobile’s existing coverage in Sheldon and showing the effect of the proposed Project are attached as **Exhibit 3**.

IV. Environmental Criteria (30 V.S.A. §248a (c)(1) and Public Safety

The Project will not have an undue adverse effect on the reduced scope of Section 248a criteria for projects of limited size and scope under Section IV(H)(2) of the Procedures Order, regarding floodways, aesthetics, historic sites, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, endangered species, and necessary wildlife habitat. T-Mobile has considered the criteria and submits that the Project to construct and operate the Facility complies with each of the criteria, as discussed more fully below.

A. Floodways

The Facility is not situated in a floodway or outstanding resource water. The Project is a collocation upon an existing wireless telecommunications tower.

B. Scenic Beauty, Historic Sites, and Natural Areas

The Project will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area or aesthetics. The two-pronged approach set forth in Quechee Lakes for addressing aesthetic effects is settled law and applies in reviewing this 248a petition.

The Commission must determine whether the proposed Project will have an adverse effect. In making this determination, the Commission considers whether the proposed project will be in harmony with its surroundings or “fit” the context within which it will be located, considering the nature of the project’s surroundings, the compatibility of the project’s design with those surroundings, the suitability for the project’s context of the colors and materials selected for the project, the locations from which the project can be viewed and the potential impact of the project on open space. If the project fits the context, it will not have an adverse effect. See Petition of Central Vermont Public Service Corporation, Docket No. 7788, Order of 2/16/12, at 16—17 (outlining the elements of the Quechee test).

The Facility fits the context of the area insofar as the Project involves collocating antennas on an existing monopole tower. There is already an existing equipment compound. While the compound is being slightly enlarged, the “monopine” appearance of the tower, ie, the tree camouflage, is being maintained and preserved and therefore the modified Facility will be very similar as the existing facility appears today. Accordingly, T-Mobile submits that the Project will not have an adverse effect on aesthetics.

The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on any historic sites, given the minimal changes to the physical dimension and appearance of the Facility.

The Project involves no earth disturbance outside of the slight enlargement of the compound. There will be no impacts to wetlands, wildlife habitat, endangered species or headwaters. No natural areas will be affected by the Project.

C. Public Health and Safety

The Project will not have an undue adverse impact on public health and safety. As shown by the Structural Report attached as **Exhibit 4** the existing tower is fully capable of supporting the new antennas and equipment.

The Project will not cause unreasonable congestion or unsafe traffic conditions with respect to the use of highways or other means of transportation. The Project does not involve the on-site storage of hazardous material, and will not generate any waste. The Project will not endanger public investments or cause an unreasonable burden on the ability of local governments to provide municipal or governmental services, including educational services. The Project will not utilize water, sewer or solid waste disposal facilities, and will not affect demands on recreational or school facilities.

V. Municipal Impacts: Town Plan and Compliance, 30 V.S.A. §248a (c) (2)

There is little question that, as with many Vermont communities, the Town of Sheldon highly values and wishes to protect the scenic, environmental and natural resources of the Town, as well as the historic sites. Much of the Town Plan addresses those issues, and two of its utility policies state: “All telecommunications facilities shall respect the integrity of residential neighborhoods, aesthetic impacts, and have no undue adverse impact on natural resources,” and

“Telecommunications facilities shall be co-located with other towers or structures when feasible.” However, the Town Plan also recognizes that “Telecommunications have become increasingly important to the security and economic success of residents and businesses in the northwest region of Vermont, as well as in all other sections of the State. Telecommunication towers and related infrastructure require careful consideration. Proper siting is necessary to protect the Town’s historic character, rural nature, and aesthetic beauty. Much of Sheldon now has service from at least one of the major cellphone companies. However, there remain significant areas that lack coverage...” An excerpt of the Town Plan, In the entire telecommunication amendment, is submitted as **Exhibit 5**.

T-Mobile believes that this project is in accordance with the town plan. T-Mobile is adding to the telecommunication infrastructure of the town by providing additional coverage from an additional carrier, and is doing so through colocation upon an existing structure. The silo itself is not being extended or changed. The only “impact” here is the new equipment compound that is not strictly within ten feet of the base of the silo. The immediate area on the host property is already well-developed. The project meets all of the criteria of a limited size and scope project. The project will help expand broadband internet and cell phone services (and give consumers additional choices in carriers) while at the same time co-locating upon a camouflaged facility so as to minimize the number of towers and minimize the visual impact.

VI. Regional Impacts: Regional Plan and Recommendation, 30 V.S.A. § 248a(c)(2)

The relevant section of the draft of the newest Northwest Regional Planning Regional Plan is submitted as **Exhibit 6**. As stated previously, this project was reviewed by the NRPC after its receipt of the advanced notice; the NRPC has issued a letter stating that T-Mobile’s project conforms with the requirements of the regional plan. See **Exhibit 10**.¹ As with the Town Plan, as a whole the Regional Plan recognizes the importance of preserving and protecting the region’s natural, historic and environmental resources. However, the Regional Plan also sets out a policy which has as its goal to “Develop and maintain a high-quality, affordable telecommunications infrastructure that provides the most efficient and effective as well as the least obtrusive system possible.” The plan also recognizes that a telecommunications infrastructure can “enhance[] employment and business opportunities, high-quality education, lifelong learning opportunities and telehealth.”

The proposed project here by T-Mobile fits with the requirements of the Regional Plan. The proposed colocation will provide exactly the type of broadband and internet connectivity and communication services, for voice and data, that the Regional Plan recognizes is so important to the region. The Project does so while using an existing structure thus avoiding the need for a new tower and minimizing the visual impact.

It should be noted that no party which received an advanced notice for the Project raised any concerns or objections to the Project during the sixty day advance notice timeframe.

¹ It is not clear whether the NRPC reviewed the project under the regional plan currently in effect or the draft plan anticipated to take effect in 2026. However, the letter cites to one of the policy goals which is in the draft report and therefore this narrative relies upon that version. It seems extremely unlikely that that policy will not be adopted in the final version of the regional plan.

VII. Co-location (30 V.S.A. § 248(a)(c)(3))

The Project does not involve building a new tower. In this case, T-Mobile is not proposing a new facility but is seeking to co-locate the antennas on an existing farm silo. The purpose of a co-location requirement is to avoid building new towers where a carrier can install its antennas on an existing tower or structure. Here, T-Mobile is doing exactly that by co-locating on an existing tower.

VIII. Compliance with Existing Permits (30 V.S.A 248a (d))

The Facility is subject to the Existing Permits as identified on the Existing Permits document submitted herewith and marked as **Exhibit 7**.

The Project is consistent with the conditions set forth in the above-mentioned permits and approvals.

IX. Compliance with Notice Requirements

A list of the names and addresses of all adjoining property owners, as compiled from the Town's Grand List, is included at **Exhibit 8**. As described in the "Certification of Advance Notice" included as **Exhibit 9**, T-Mobile has complied with the advance notice requirements under Section 248a and the Procedures Order.