

WUNC-TV Transition Plan Progress Report

The University of North Carolina (UNC-TV), Licensee of WUNC-TV, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a governmental agency entity of the State of North Carolina. As a state entity, it is legally required to comply with certain state requirements, restrictions, and policies regarding construction projects and the purchasing of goods and services. UNC-TV's repack transition project for 11 full-power television stations is no exception, and UNC-TV will be required to abide by the applicable construction, contracting, and purchasing requirements, restrictions, and policies for all 11 stations, including WUNC-TV. Significantly, as UNC-TV has previously reported—and bears reiteration here—while UNC-TV's project is considered 11 different projects by the FCC, to the State of North Carolina and its representative agencies it is considered one project. The two state government agencies that are extensively involved in UNC-TV's repack (the State Office of Purchasing and Contracts ["P&C"] and the State Construction Office ["SCO"]) are requiring UNC-TV to bundle together all 11 station repack transitions as one unitary project request to them.

To update the previous (third quarter 2018) transition report, UNC-TV's project designer, McKim & Creed, Inc., has completed the space plan and construction drawings package for the WUNC-TV site. The construction drawings include necessary electrical and mechanical modifications. That package has been submitted to SCO for review. As previously indicated, SCO approval is required under the law of the State of North Carolina before construction can proceed. (The design/SCO review process is similar to a county or city planning / permitting process, but it occurs at the state level because these are state facilities. With this SCO process, city and county permitting is not necessary.) UNC-TV expects to receive SCO's approval in or soon after January 2019.

Pursuant to the applicable State of North Carolina project guidelines, UNC-TV is in the process of bidding the general contractor work that's outlined in the project package developed by McKim & Creed. The opening of bid responses is scheduled for January 15, 2019, with construction expected to begin in early February 2019, weather permitting.

Two implementation challenges have recently been identified related to the WUNC-TV transition. The first implementation challenge is providing sufficient electrical power for both the pre- and post-transition main transmitters. The site's current electrical service has the load capacity to feed both transmitters but the main distribution panel has insufficient connection capacity to supply enough electrical power for the transmitters to operate at full power at the same time, which will be necessary during periods of equipment testing of the post-transition equipment. Replacement of the main electrical distribution system is not a viable option because it would result in significant and unacceptable disruption to site operations; instead, a plan has been developed to use a temporary electrical feed for testing the new post-transition main transmitter. A rental electrical generator will be used to supply sufficient electrical power for the requisite full power transmitter testing. Near the Phase 5 transition date the temporary electrical feed will be connected to the pre-transition transmitter and the permanent electrical feed connected to the post-transition transmitter. This will require reduced power operation (pursuant to STA if necessary) of the WUNC-TV pre-transition facility for an acceptably limited period of time.

The second implementation challenge is the installation of the new post-transition transmitter's heat exchangers in an area with proper ice protection. Ample outdoor space will be available after the pre-transition main transmitter is removed. The planned solution is to install the heat exchangers in a temporary location from which they can be easily relocated to the protected area once the pre-transition main transmitter is decommissioned and removed.

The transition plan calls for the tower work to be done in two parts. Part 1 will be (a) the removal of an existing auxiliary antenna (which cannot be retuned to WUNC-TV's post-transition channel) and (b) the installation of an interim antenna in the space previously occupied by the auxiliary antenna. The existing auxiliary transmission line will be reused to connect the new main transmitter to the interim antenna, which will allow WUNC-TV to timely transition to its post-transition channel using interim facility operations pursuant to STA. (UNC-TV will timely file for a CP extension on or prior to the June 10, 2019, deadline for doing so.) Part 2 will occur after the September 6, 2019, scheduled transition date. Part 2 will involve (a) the removal of the existing top mounted main antenna (which cannot be retuned to the post-transition channel) and (b) the installation of the permanent post-transition main antenna in the same location. The tower structural analysis for the two different load cases has been completed. Both cases meet the requirements of ANSI/TIA-22-G-2-2009 as required by the North Carolina Building Code.

The interim antenna system installation is currently scheduled for late February 2019, weather permitting. The main antenna system work will not occur until after post-transition operations have begun using the interim antenna system.

UNC-TV will be submitting additional budget updates for FCC Form 399. Among other things, these updates will reflect the general contractor costs, revisions for transmitter installation costs, costs associated with the electrical challenges, and revised professional services pricing. Further budget adjustments may be necessary as this project continues.

We believe, as of this early January 2019 filing, that the Phase 5 September 6, 2019, transition deadline remains achievable for WUNC-TV. To reiterate, WUNC-TV plans to begin its post-transition operations using an interim transmission system. This system will attempt to replicate as much as practically possible the population served by the proposed post-transition facility. When appropriate, UNC-TV will be submitting a request for special temporary authority for WUNC-TV to operate the interim transmission system for its initial post transition operations.

In short, UNC-TV's compound, complicated lodestar for this entire repack enterprise is timely completion of the repack with full compliance of all applicable state and federal regulation while—most importantly—keeping the station operating with as much coverage areas as possible with the least possible negative impact to viewers.