

WUNF-TV Transition Plan Progress Report

The University of North Carolina (UNC-TV), Licensee of WUNF-TV, Asheville, 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 WUNF-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.

Site #1

To update the previous (fourth quarter 2018) transition report, the proposed site #1 for WUNF-TV is a new site for the station and is managed by Vertical Bridge Holdings, LLC. The North Carolina Department of Administration's State Property Office continues to work with Vertical Bridge Holdings, LLC to complete the lease agreement.

Pursuant to the applicable State of North Carolina project guidelines, Heartland Contracting Inc. has been awarded the contract to be the general contractor for the WUNF-TV site. As such, Heartland Contracting is responsible for providing the services as necessary to modify the building, electrical, and mechanical elements as necessary to implement the repack channel transition for WUNF-TV. To the extent warranted, Heartland Contracting will also be responsible for overseeing its own subcontractors (if any) at the site. A necessary aspect of Heartland Contracting's service as GC will also include coordination of its services with UNC-TV's other vendors (such as GatesAir) who will be performing critical services in furtherance of the timely completion of WUNF-TV's repack project.

Since the WUNF-TV Site #1 is a new site, this will allow the installation of both the main and auxiliary transmitters in one installation mobilization.

A structural analysis on the tower structure is required prior to any work commencing on the tower. The site owner / management company has requested a change in the structural engineering contractor hired to perform the structural analysis. We are working with the new structural engineering contractor to complete the requisite analysis. We expect the analysis will confirm that the tower structure meets the requirements of ANSI/TIA-22-G-2-2009 ("Rev G") as required by the North Carolina Building Code. The work plan calls for the installation of the new main and auxiliary antenna systems at the same time, assuming the analysis confirms that the requirements of Rev G will be met. That installation work will be allowed to begin in late June 2019.

Progress continues to be made with the extension of the UNC-TV transmission network infrastructure to this new site for WUNF-TV. As previously reported, UNC-TV has been able to obtain access rights to a number of state owned communications sites that will allow UNC-TV to implement the required microwave radio link infrastructure without constructing additional communications sites. The FCC licenses for those microwave systems have been granted. The quote for the necessary equipment was received in late March and is currently under review. The purchase contract for that equipment should be finalized in April 2019.

Site #2

Fortunately, UNC-TV is able to handle the repack of WUNF-TV Site #2 a bit differently from Site #1. Site #2 is located on tribal land owned by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The work at this site is able to be done as a “like-for-like” replacement, which simplifies and expedites the equipment and services acquisition process. At this time, UNC-TV believes, based on discussions with relevant authorities, the repack work at WUNF-TV Site #2 can be done without any permits.

The transition plan for this site is to install and begin using the new broadband antenna while still operating on the pre-transition channel. Because the new antenna’s directional azimuth pattern varies slightly from the current authorized antenna, UNC-TV has submitted an Engineering Special Temporary Authority (STA) request for WUNF-TV Site #2 to operate using the new antenna. This request (LMS File No. 0000068280) was submitted on March 5, 2019 and of this early April filing remains pending.

Once that STA is granted, the new antenna and transmitter will be installed and will begin operating on the current pre-transition channel. With only a few minor changes to the transmitter (which will cause only a very brief discontinuation of operations), operation on the post-transition channel can begin on the scheduled transition date.

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, and revised professional services pricing. Further budget adjustments may be necessary as this project continues.

We believe, as of this early April 2019 filing, that the Phase 5 September 6, 2019, transition deadline remains achievable for WUNF-TV, albeit using interim facilities. A copy of the project schedule / timeline for the WUNF-TV site is included with this transition report demonstrating that, as of the date of the filing of this Transition Progress Report, the transition deadline is achievable. Of course, UNC-TV reserves the right to update the project schedule / timeline as warranted to account for changes that may occur during this fluid process.

To reiterate, WUNF-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 WUNF-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 regulations while—most importantly—keeping the station operating with as much coverage areas as possible with the least possible negative impact to viewers.