

WUNM-TV Transition Plan Progress Report

The Transition Phase for WUNM-TV, Jacksonville, NC, was changed in early-September 2019 from Phase 5 to Phase 7, which means that WUNM-TV's transition deadline is now January 17, 2020. Although WUNM-TV was originally assigned to Phase 5 and was ready, and willing to transition to its post-transition channel 28 on the extended deadline for Phase 5 (necessitated by Hurricane Dorian) of September 11, 2019, the licensee sought (and was granted) an emergency phase change (LMS File No. [0000080817](#)) as a result of actions taken by the other Phase 5 repack station on the tower, WYDO, Greenville, NC.

WUNM-TV, leases tower space from the operator of WYDO, the Sinclair Broadcast Group. WYDO is a downstream station to WUNM-TV. In other words, WYDO's post-transition channel is the same channel as WUNM-TV's pre-transition channel. Because of the co-location and repack dependencies, the tower and antenna work for both stations required—and continues to require—close coordination. UNC-TV agreed to use the same tower services company to perform WUNM-TV's antenna installation that was being used to perform the tower work required for WYDO, making that coordination much simpler for all parties and furthering the nationwide transition by not occupying the services of two tower services vendors at one repack site. In late August 2019, less than one week prior to the planned mobilization of the tower services company to the WYDO / WUNM-TV tower site, the tower services company notified WUNM-TV that WYDO had postponed their work and that they would not be able to install the WUNM-TV antenna as originally planned and meet the Phase 5 deadline. This left only one viable option that would allow WUNM-TV to remain on the air past the Phase 5 transition deadline: the emergency phase change request, which was closely coordinated with the Commission Staff.

The WUNM-TV transition plan has consistently called for work to be performed in 2 parts. Part 1 includes the work necessary for WUNM-TV to begin operating on its post-transition channel utilizing its main antenna facility. The transmitter portion of that work was completed before the initial Phase 5 deadline of September 6, 2019. WUNM-TV has been informed by the tower services company that they will be mobilizing to the site sometime the week of November 11, 2019, to perform antenna installation work for both WUNM-TV and WYDO. Based on this schedule, it is hoped that WUNM-TV will be able to begin operations on its post-transition channel prior to December 6, 2019.

Part 2 of the transition plan will occur after WUNM-TV commences operating on its post-transition channel 28. Part 2 includes the removal of the pre-transition main transmitter as well as the completion of the building infrastructure modifications. No definitive schedule has been provided by UNC-TV's contractors, but they have indicated that they hope to complete their work by the end of 2019. It is also obvious that their schedule depends on WUNM-TV's post-transition channel commencement date, which, again, is tied to WYDO's tower services company installation schedule.

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.

As of this early November 2019 filing, WUNM-TV is ready to begin operating on its post-transition channel once the tower services vendor performs the final, post-transition antenna installation. A copy of the project schedule / timeline for the WUNM-TV site is included with this transition report demonstrating that, as of the date of the filing of this Transition Progress Report, the Phase 7 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, WUNM-TV plans to begin its post-transition operations using its final main facility. When appropriate, UNC-TV will file, if necessary, a request for special temporary authority for WUNM-TV to operate an interim transmission system for a brief period to allow for the station's transition between pre- and post-transition channels without a significant period off the air.

It bears repeating that The University of North Carolina (UNC-TV), Licensee of WUNM-TV, Jacksonville, 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 is required to abide by the applicable construction, contracting, and purchasing requirements, restrictions, and policies for all 11 stations, including WUNE-TV. Significantly, as UNC-TV has previously reported 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. While the 11 repack projects (including WUNM-TV) have so far progressed in a manner that is consistent with the Commission's nationwide transition expectations, UNC-TV's position within the State Government of North Carolina should remain an important consideration for the Commission as these projects continue to progress toward completion.

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.