



NEWS RELEASE

Florida, Illinois and Louisiana Approve Merger of CenturyTel and EMBARQ

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Support for Combining Companies Continues to Grow

MONROE, La. and OVERLAND PARK, Kan., March 31 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- CenturyTel, Inc. (NYSE: CTL) and EMBARQ (NYSE: EQ) today announced that CenturyTel's pending acquisition of EMBARQ has received approval from the Florida and Louisiana Public Service Commissions and the Illinois Commerce Commission. Florida, Illinois and Louisiana join Georgia, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, and Ohio, whose approval of the merger was previously announced.

"We are pleased to have received state approvals for our merger from Florida, Illinois and Louisiana, and remain focused on securing the remaining approvals needed to close the transaction," said Glen F. Post III, CenturyTel's chairman and chief executive officer. "We are confident that the combination of our two companies will create significant benefits for our customers and the communities we serve. We continue to expect a successful closing during the second quarter of 2009."

"We continue to receive tremendous support for this transaction," said Tom Gerke, EMBARQ's chief executive officer. "These state regulatory approvals demonstrate that the public interest standard has been met, and they are

clear validation of the consumer benefits that will result across our combined service areas."

Eighteen of the 33 states in which the combined company will operate do not require formal approval of the merger. In addition to the state regulatory approvals, CenturyTel and EMBARQ have already received the approvals of their respective shareholders, who overwhelmingly approved all proposals related to the merger on Jan. 27, 2009. On Nov. 24, 2008, the companies received early termination of the waiting period required under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act of 1976.

Combined, CenturyTel and EMBARQ will have approximately 7.7 million access lines, more than two million broadband customers and more than 400,000 video subscribers, based on data as of Dec. 31, 2008.

About CenturyTel

CenturyTel (NYSE: CTL - News) is a leading provider of communications, high-speed Internet and entertainment services in small-to-mid-size cities through our broadband and fiber transport networks. Included in the S&P 500 Index, CenturyTel delivers advanced communications with a personal touch to customers in 25 states. Visit us at www.centurytel.com.

About EMBARQ

Embarq Corporation (NYSE: EQ - News), headquartered in Overland Park, Kansas, offers a complete suite of communications services. EMBARQ has operations in 18 states and is in the Fortune 500(R) list of America's largest corporations. For consumers, EMBARQ offers an innovative portfolio of services that includes reliable local and long distance home phone service, high-speed Internet, wireless, and satellite TV from DISH Network(R) -- all on one monthly bill. For businesses, EMBARQ has a comprehensive range of flexible and integrated services designed to help businesses of all sizes be more productive and communicate with their customers. This service portfolio includes local voice and data services, long distance, Business Class High Speed Internet, wireless, satellite TV from DIRECTV(R), enhanced data network services, voice and data communication equipment and managed network

services. For more information, visit embarq.com.

Forward Looking Statements

Except for the historical and factual information contained herein, the matters set forth in this press release, including statements as to the expected benefits of the acquisition such as efficiencies, cost savings, enhanced revenues, growth potential, market profile and financial strength, and the competitive ability and position of the combined company, and other statements identified by words such as "estimates," "expects," "projects," "plans," and similar expressions are forward-looking statements within the meaning of the "safe harbor" provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements are subject to risks and uncertainties that may cause actual results to differ materially, including receipt of required approvals by regulatory agencies, the possibility that the anticipated benefits from the acquisition cannot be fully realized or may take longer to realize than expected, the possibility that costs or difficulties related to the integration of EMBARQ operations into CenturyTel will be greater than expected, the ability of the combined company to retain and hire key personnel, the impact of regulatory, competitive and technological changes and other risk factors relating to our industry as detailed from time to time in each of CenturyTel's and EMBARQ's reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). There can be no assurance regarding the timing of the consummation of the merger or that the proposed acquisition will in fact be consummated. You should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date hereof. Unless legally required, CenturyTel and EMBARQ undertake no obligation to update publicly any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

SOURCE CenturyTel, Inc.

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