



NEWS RELEASE

Georgia, Mississippi, Minnesota, Nebraska and Ohio Approve Merger of CenturyTel and EMBARQ

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Support for Combining Companies Continues to Grow

MONROE, La. and OVERLAND PARK, Kan., March 3 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- CenturyTel, Inc. (NYSE: CTL) and EMBARQ (NYSE: EQ) today announced that the Georgia, Mississippi and Nebraska Public Service Commissions and the Minnesota and Ohio Public Utilities Commissions have each granted approval of CenturyTel's pending acquisition of EMBARQ.

"Obtaining the approvals of Georgia, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska and Ohio is an important step toward completing the merger," said Glen F. Post III, CenturyTel's chairman and chief executive officer. "The public interest benefits of this transaction are compelling, and we look forward to receiving additional state approvals in the coming weeks. The combination of CenturyTel and EMBARQ will better position us to deliver high-quality, reliable communications services for our customers and the communities we serve," said Glen F. Post III, CenturyTel's chairman and chief executive officer.

"This merger offers benefits for customers not only in the five states that have now granted approval, but in all of the 33 states where the combined company will operate as a local telecommunications provider," said Tom Gerke, EMBARQ's chief executive officer. "We will continue to work closely with CenturyTel to obtain the remaining needed approvals for this transaction."

On Jan. 27, CenturyTel and EMBARQ shareholders overwhelmingly approved all proposals related to the merger. On Nov. 24, 2008, the companies received early termination of the waiting period required under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Antitrust Improvements Act of 1976. Eighteen of the 33 states do not require formal approval of the merger.

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. The merger, announced Oct. 27, 2008, is expected to be completed during the second quarter of 2009.

About CenturyTel

CenturyTel (NYSE: CTL) 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), 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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