

# Toll-free talking

Telephone companies to offer expanded billing options for residential, business customers

By TOM PARKS  
Staff Writer

Beginning March 31 students will be able to use one of four billing options for long distance calls made to Triangle cities.

Mark Collins of Southern Bell said the company's customers would be notified of the change by mail in late February. Southern Bell provides telephone service for the University.

Three of the five phone companies that serve the Triangle will offer similar options on an 18-month trial basis. After the trial period, the N.C. Utilities Commission will either drop the plans or continue them, possibly with alterations.

Dennis Benfield of Centel, the company that serves Hillsborough, said the final decision would be made by the utilities commission.

"The commission says to do so-and-so or don't do so-and-so, and we (telephone companies) comply," Benfield said.

Collins said customers would not be obligated to use any of the new options. Customers can choose to continue their service as it is, and Triangle calls outside Chapel Hill's exchange will be charged as long distance calls.

Customers who decide to use one of the new services will have several options from which to choose. Three options will be available to residents and two to businesses, Collins said.

Two options, the Metro Discount and Message Rate services, will be available to both residents and businesses. Businesses will be charged twice the residential rate for the options.

The Metro Discount service is available for a \$3 monthly charge. Residential customers with this service will be billed 50 percent less than regular rates for long distance calls to certain cities in the Triangle.

The Message Rate service is available for a \$4.50 monthly charge, and Southern Bell will charge residential customers 25 cents per long distance call to the same cities.

The Message Rate and Metro Discount services will apply to calls made from Chapel Hill to Raleigh, Durham, Hillsborough, Cary and the parts of Orange County served by Mebane Home Phone Company.

The third option available is one that would charge residential customers a monthly fee that would allow them to call certain Triangle cities toll free. This option is not available to businesses.

Toll-free calling between Wake, Durham and Orange counties is an option the utilities commission may consider as the permanent plan. If the commission chooses this plan, the service would be mandatory for all Triangle customers.

This type of service is usually universal and two-way, with all exchanges able to call all other exchanges toll-free.

Pamela Davison, economic development director of Triangle J Council of Governments, said, "We think the ideal service is the metropolitan-wide local service, i.e. toll-free calling for Wake, Durham and Orange Counties."

Four of the five phone companies that serve the Triangle have submitted projected costs for this service to the utilities commission.

Southern Bell projected that Chapel Hill residential customers would have to pay an extra \$7.55 for the service. Centel projected a \$9.45 increase for Hillsborough users.

But Southern Bell residential customers in Raleigh would face an increase of only \$1.07, and customers in Cary a \$1.16 increase.

With the increase, residential service in Chapel Hill would cost \$18.32. Raleigh service would cost \$13.58.

Collins said one factor in the projected higher rates for Chapel Hill was the cost of extra equipment needed to implement the area-wide service in town. Wake County residents served by Southern Bell already call each other toll-free.

Also, in a study of the seven Triangle cities served by Southern Bell, Chapel Hill was the only exchange where at least 50 percent of the customers made at least one long distance call to the Triangle in a month, Collins said.

Davison said the projected costs may not reflect what the real cost of the service would be if the utilities commission puts it into effect. The projected figures are preliminary and could be quite high, she said.

"It will take a couple of months before the public will see numbers that reflect what they will have to pay," Davison said.

The utilities commission is the final judge of how much the companies could charge for the service and whether the toll-free service will be offered.

Along with Southern Bell, GTE South and Centel will be introducing experimental plans for the 18-month trial period.

GTE South, which serves Creedmoor and Durham, will charge all calls to Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough and Cary on a local per call basis.

Bob Albright, a GTE rate design manager, said calls to these cities would cost 60 to 70 percent less than they do now, depending on the time of day and the destination of the call.

Benfield said Centel will give callers in Hillsborough lower rates on calls made to Chapel Hill and Durham for a monthly charge.

But, he said, "This is totally optional."

# Commission to propose special property tax for local merchants

By DANIEL CONOVER  
Staff Writer

Downtown merchants will pay an additional tax — seven cents per hundred dollars of property value — if a Downtown Commission (DTC) proposal is approved by local governments.

DTC co-director Debbie Dibbert will present the tax proposal at the Chapel Hill Town Council meeting on Feb. 13 and the Carrboro Board of Aldermen meeting Feb. 14. DTC co-director Margie Haber said Wednesday.

The special district tax would be levied on property owners in downtown Chapel Hill and Carrboro. Revenues would be used to operate two trolleys, fund downtown events and provide capital for an exterior improvement loan fund, Haber said.

A Feb. 3 letter from Dibbert to the mayors of Chapel Hill and Carrboro said the tax would be moderate compared to similar taxes in other areas and would cost average businesses between \$10 and \$15 a month.

The tax will raise about \$65,000 from merchants in 1989-1990, based

on a property tax base of \$91.6 million, the letter said.

The rest of the DTC budget — about \$85,000 — will be raised through private donations and donations from Chapel Hill, Carrboro and UNC.

Chapel Hill will donate \$37,500, Carrboro will donate \$12,000 and the University will contribute \$10,000. The DTC expects \$25,000 in private donations.

The revenues from the new tax would more than compensate for the \$42,000 budget increase from 1988-89. The 1989-1990 budget includes plans to spend \$30,000 to operate a trolley downtown from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Other major expenditure items include administration, \$28,101; a revolving loan fund for exterior improvements, \$20,000; special events, \$17,453; and capital improvements, \$10,000.

Chapel Hill Town Council member Art Werner said Chapel Hill's contribution to the DTC is a significant investment which requires proof that the money is used effectively.

"We need to take a hard look at

*"I think we have to face the fact that the downtown may require more resources than other parts of town."*  
— Julie Andresen

spending," Werner said. "Do we need a downtown commission? How are they doing? Do we need a new tax?"

But council member Julie Andresen, who also serves as vice president of the DTC, supported the proposal.

"I think we have to face the fact

that the downtown may require more resources than other parts of town," Andresen said. "The council will look very carefully at this budget. The DTC has a great challenge to prove they're worth the money. That's the beauty part of this request."

Carrboro alderman Judith Wegner

said she would seek the opinions of Carrboro business people before deciding on the special district proposal.

Wegner said she also wants the special district proposal to include a process for those who pay the tax to have input into how it is spent.

"I want to have my mind set to rest on how fairly they'll spend the money," Wegner said. "My sense right now is that Carrboro's downtown is in much better shape than Chapel Hill's."

Wegner said she will also examine the structures established to raise, administer and spend the tax money — particularly the legal relationships

between the DTC and the two towns.

"I think that's a line of questioning we'll get into," she said. "Where's the accountability? We have to be careful not to let that box us in in the future."

Haber said the district tax has received cautiously optimistic support among downtown merchants and an endorsement from the board of directors of the Chapel Hill Downtown Merchants Association.

One merchant has contacted the DTC to express opposition to the plan, Haber said.

"Obviously, you're not going to make every single person happy every single time," she said.

## Professor

World War II and the Korean Conflict, Pollitt said. The late U.S. Senator John East, R-N.C., also a Marine, tried to get a presidential pardon for Thornton, Pollitt said.

In cases concerning threatening letters to the president, the court must look at the form, content and context of the statement, Pollitt said. The court did not look at the whole record in Thornton's case, he said.

According to federal law, to convict someone of threatening to harm the president, the threat has to be stated so that a reasonable person would interpret it as a serious intention to inflict bodily harm or

take the life of the president.

Pollitt said he enjoyed cases like this. "I always feel I should use my skills to help out the state in civil liberties."

In addition to Thornton's case, Pollitt is handling another civil liberties case, which concerns the right to free speech, he said. A N.C. law prohibits picketing within 100 feet of a courthouse, and protesters of executions who hold vigils at the governor's mansion in Raleigh have been ordered to disperse because they are within 100 feet of the state Supreme Court building across the

street, he said.

A professor at UNC since 1957, Pollitt received his undergraduate degree from Wesleyan College in Connecticut, and his law degree from

Cornell University. He concentrates in constitutional and labor law, and is a founding member of the N.C. branch of the American Civil Liberties Union.

## Removal

do not comply.

"This is a quarantine situation and students who are not immunized are not supposed to be on campus for two weeks. This is not a University thing, but a legal action by the county. We hope everyone involved will cooperate with us, that everyone appreciates the seriousness of the situation and will do their part to help."

The county health department has power under a state statute to close the campus if officials feel the University has not complied with the quarantine, Lanier said.

Students who cannot get the shot for reasons such as pregnancy, fever

or allergy to eggs, will not be allowed in class unless a measles titer test shows they have immunity to measles.

Students who are waiting for the results of the test will also not be allowed in class. "Having the test will not gain entrance to class. Only a card showing immunity or proof of immunization will," said Reimer. "They may be exempt from getting the shot, but not exempt from the provisions of the quarantine order."

Students may get a measles titer test for \$36 at the Student Health Services laboratory. The test is also available at Triangle Women's Health for \$49.95, with results available in 24 hours.

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