



Rhode Island Energy™  
a PPL company

# STOP SERVICE 3 STUDY

Report prepared by Daniel Grinberg, Senior UX Researcher

February 26, 2024



# CONTENTS

- 1 Research Overview Slide 3
- 2 Improvements Slide 7
- 3 New Insights Slide 13
- 4 Insights and Recommendations Summary Slide 17

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

# PARTICIPANTS

The study consisted of 6 remote moderated video interviews with National Grid customers in Massachusetts and New York. They were recruited through UserZoom. All participants made decisions about their utility accounts and had used their online accounts in at least the last six months.

Participant	Online account uses	Stopped service before?	Stop service method	Comfort with digital media
1	Pay bill, check usage, compare usage	Yes	Phone	Comfortable
2	Pay bill, check usage, look for promotions	Yes	Phone	Comfortable
3	Check usage	No	N/A	Comfortable
4	Check bill	Yes	Phone	Comfortable
5	Pay bill, check usage	Yes	Phone	Comfortable
6	Pay bill, report a gas leak	Yes	Phone	Comfortable

The insights in this report use the following key:

One: 1 participant  
Some: 2-3 participants  
Most: 4-5 participants  
All: 6 participants



# SESSION DETAILS

This study was a follow-up to a [Stop Service study](#) from May 2023 and a [Stop Service 2 study](#) from January 2024. In this study, we tested the updated designs to validate improvements made after the prior studies and identify issues resulting from the addition of the final bill proration requirement.

During the sessions, the researcher instructed participants to stop their gas service at their current residence. They were told to choose whichever bill option (estimated or exact) they would choose in real life. The researcher then sought feedback on the designs to understand how they could be clarified or improved. He conducted the sessions remotely via video in February 2024 and the participants used mobile phones. The estimated bill and exact bill for inside meter prototype can be viewed [here](#). The exact bill screen for outside meter can be viewed [here](#).

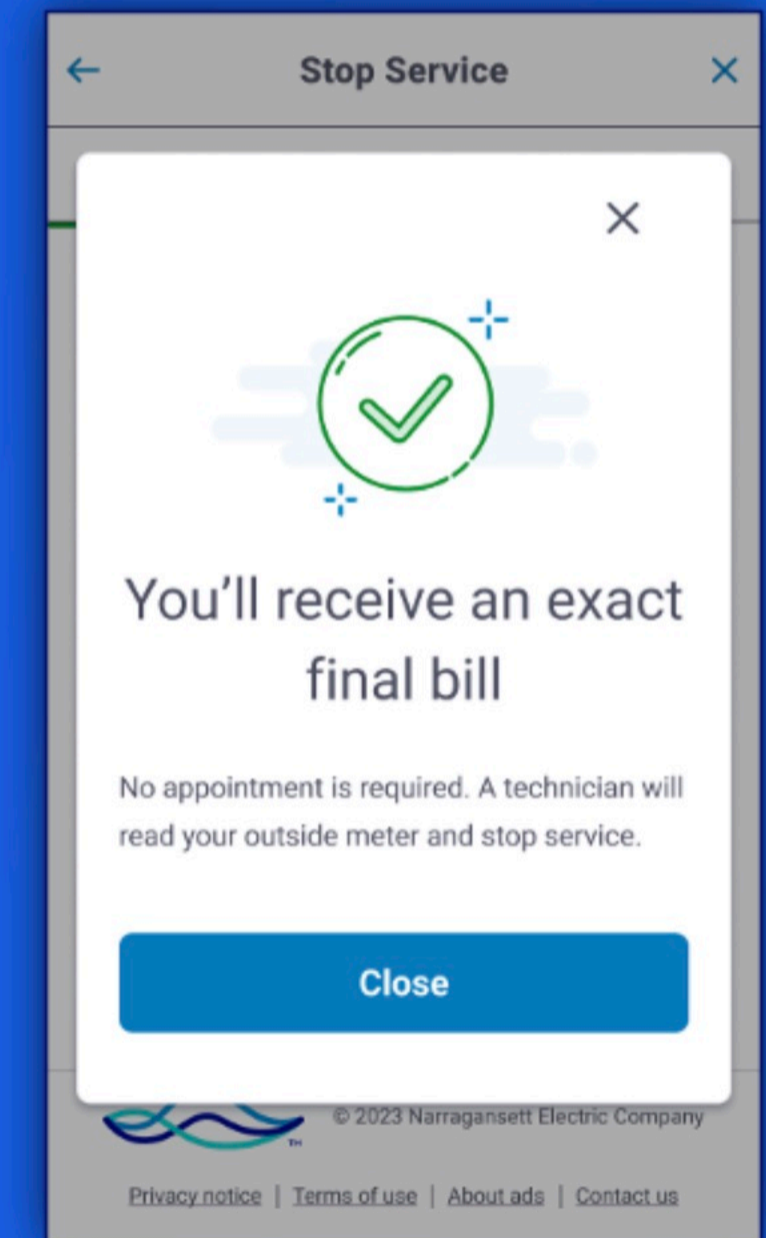
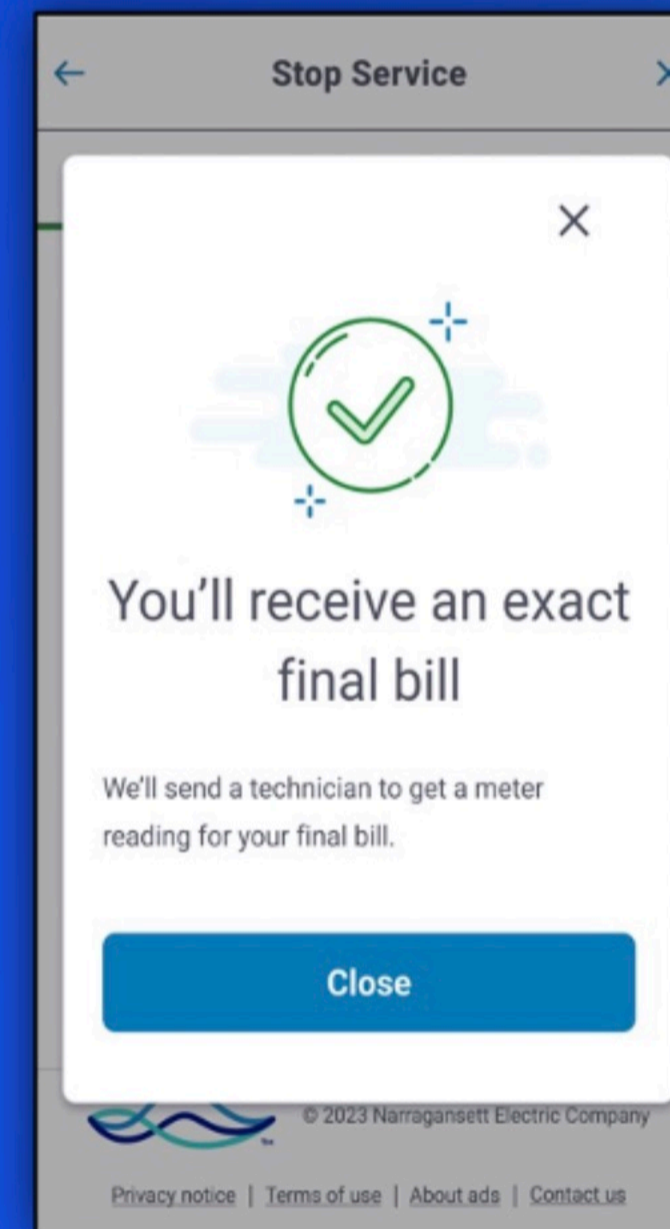
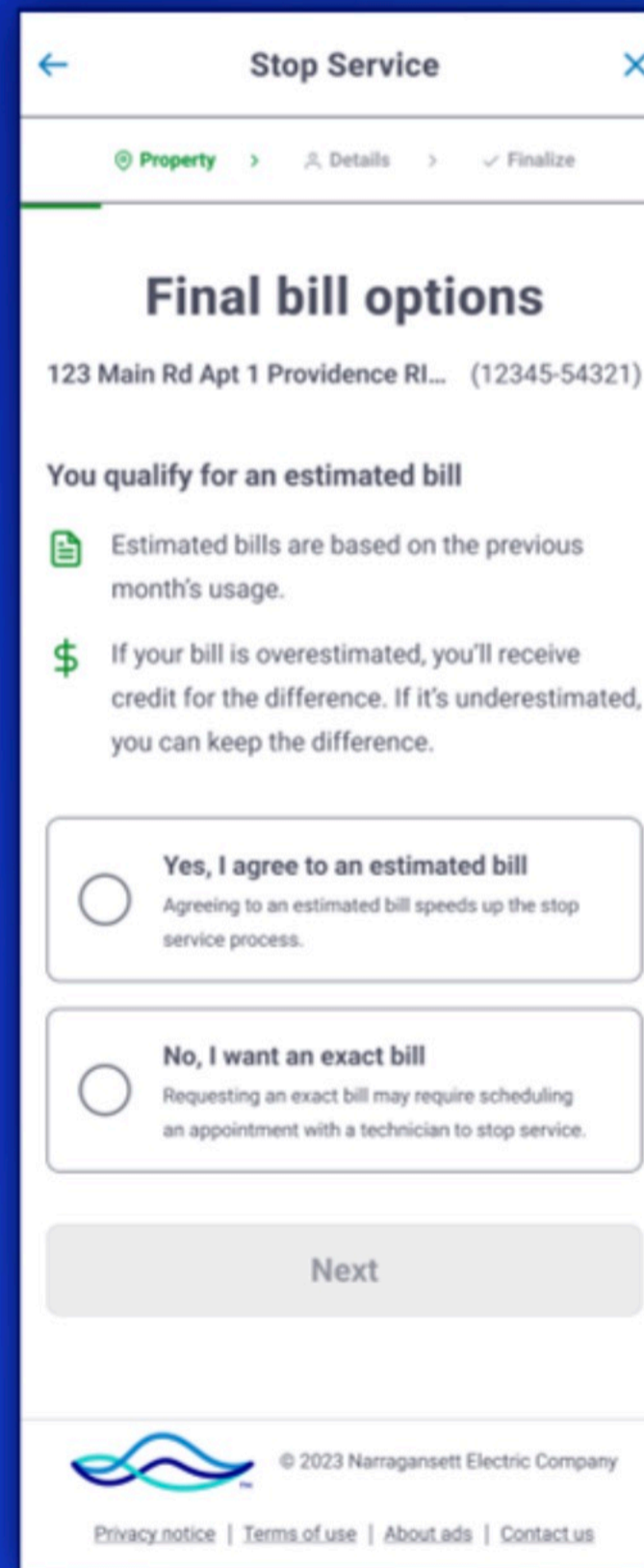
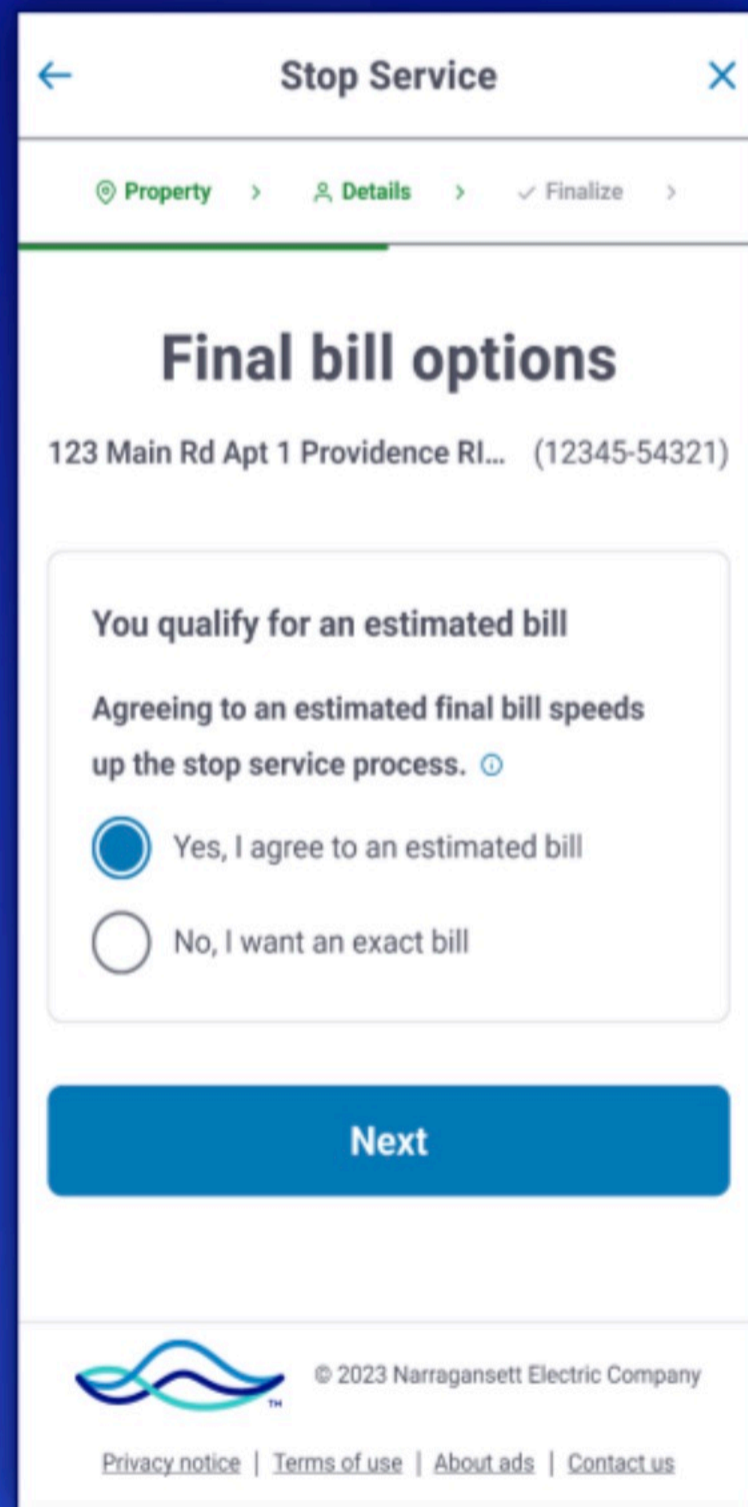
The sessions used the following structure:

- 1) Background questions
- 2) Task 1 (participant could choose estimated bill or exact bill based on real life choices)
- 3) Task 2 (remaining bill option)
- 4) Qualitative interview

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How usable and useful are the revised stop service flows?
- 2) What are participant attitudes toward the estimated bill and exact bill options?
- 3) Have the revisions made customers more likely to choose the estimated bill?
- 4) Have the revisions improved the overall user experience?

# IMPROVEMENTS



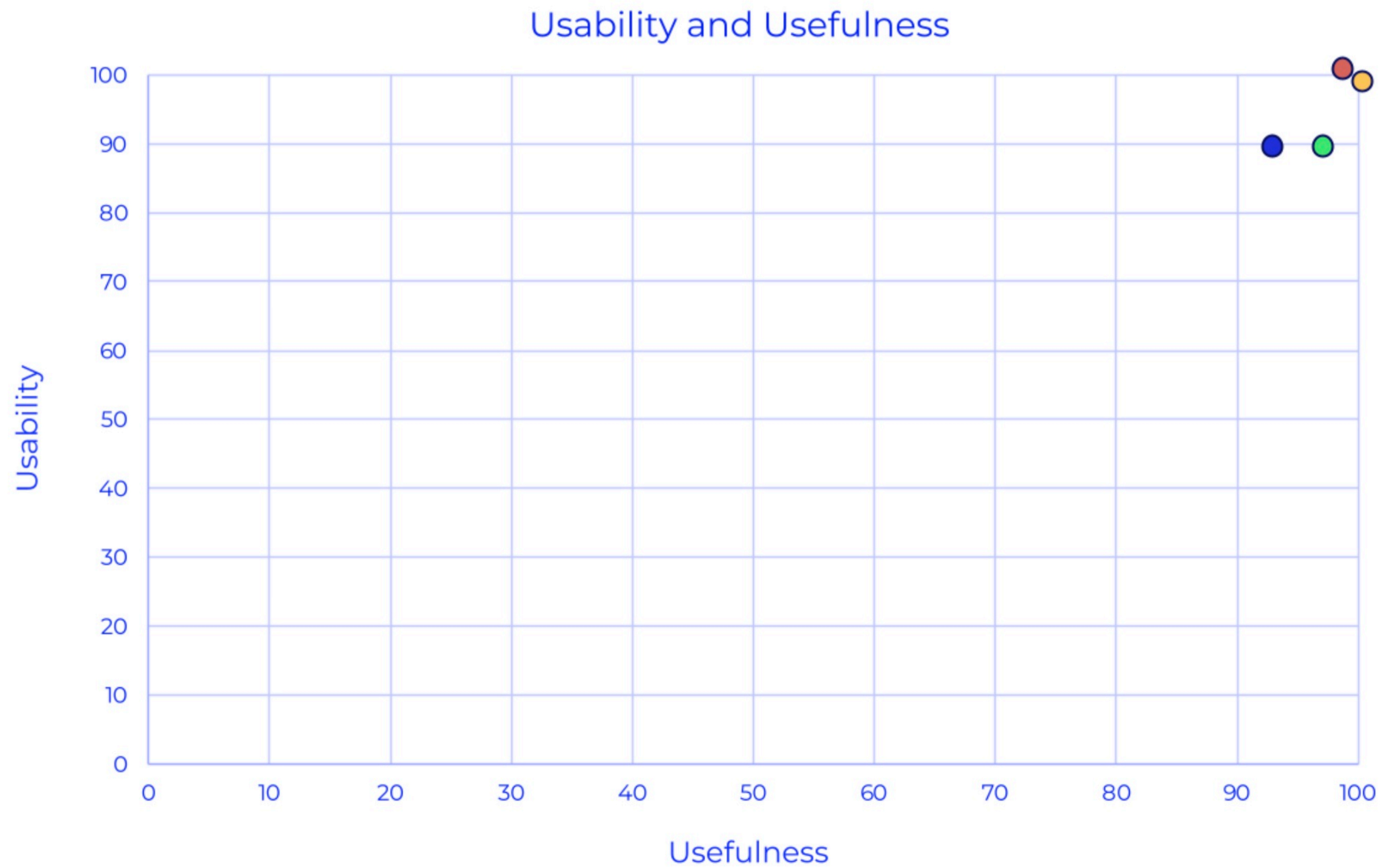
# IMPROVEMENTS

## Results

- Participants found both the estimated bill and exact bill options clearer and easier to understand. None had any problems completing the stop service tasks.
- All participants rated the usability of both bill options a 5/5. Ratings for both usability and usefulness improved from the previous study.

# IMPROVEMENTS

- Stop Service 2 – Estimated Bill Flow
- Stop Service 2 – Exact Bill Flow
- Stop Service 3 – Estimated Bill Flow
- Stop Service 3 – Exact Bill Flow



# IMPROVEMENTS

## Results

- Most participants initially selected estimated bill because of the ease and convenience. In the earlier study, most participants initially selected exact bill.
- However, most participants in both studies ultimately chose exact bill if they had an outside meter and did not need an appointment. They cited the desire to complete the process as efficiently as possible.

← Stop Service ×

Property > Details > Finalize

### Final bill options

123 Main Rd Apt 1 Providence RI... (12345-54321)

**You qualify for an estimated bill**

- Estimated bills are based on the previous month's usage.
- If your bill is overestimated, you'll receive credit for the difference. If it's underestimated, you can keep the difference.

**Yes, I agree to an estimated bill**  
Agreeing to an estimated bill speeds up the stop service process.

**No, I want an exact bill**  
Requesting an exact bill may require scheduling an appointment with a technician to stop service.

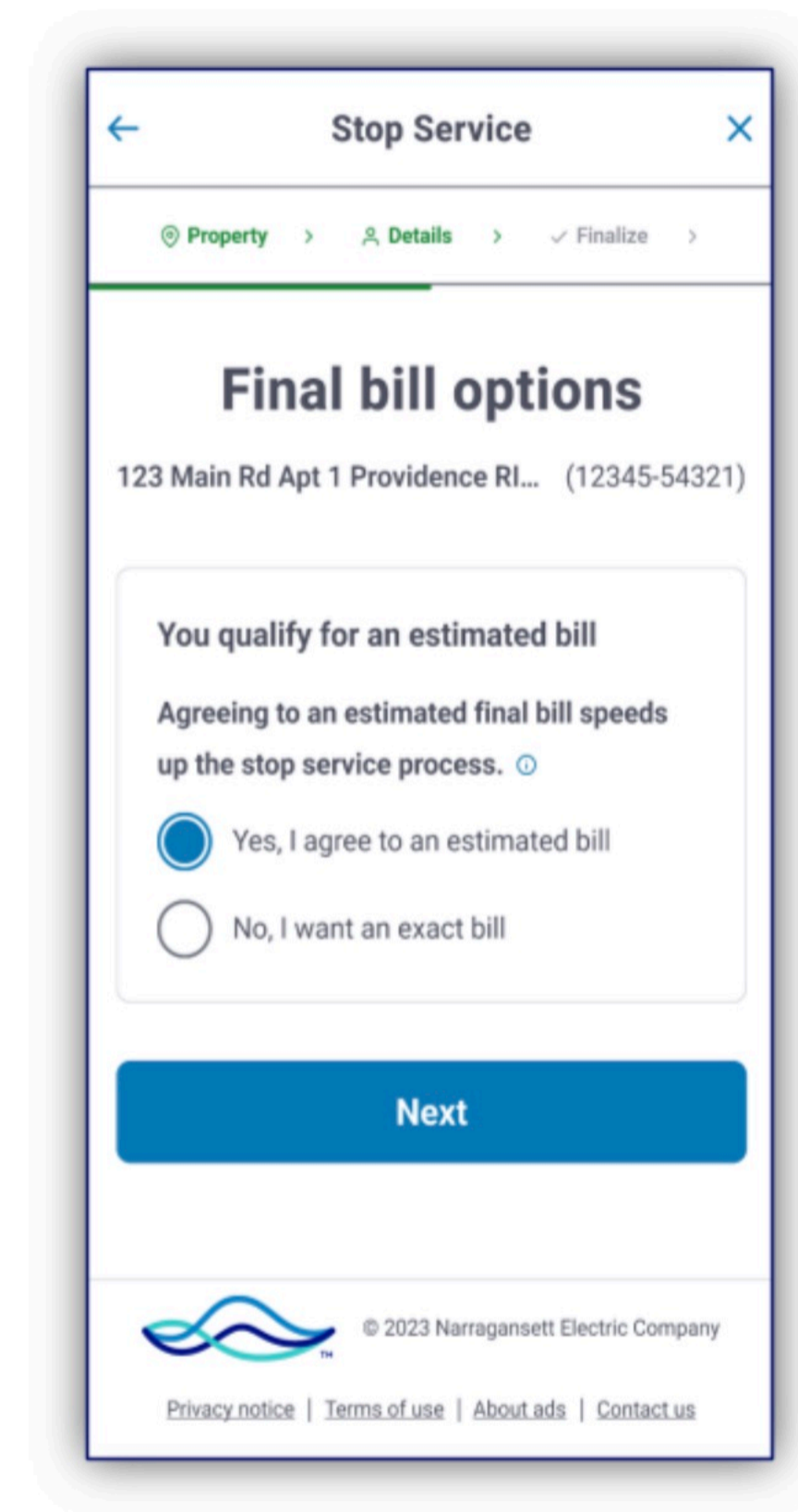
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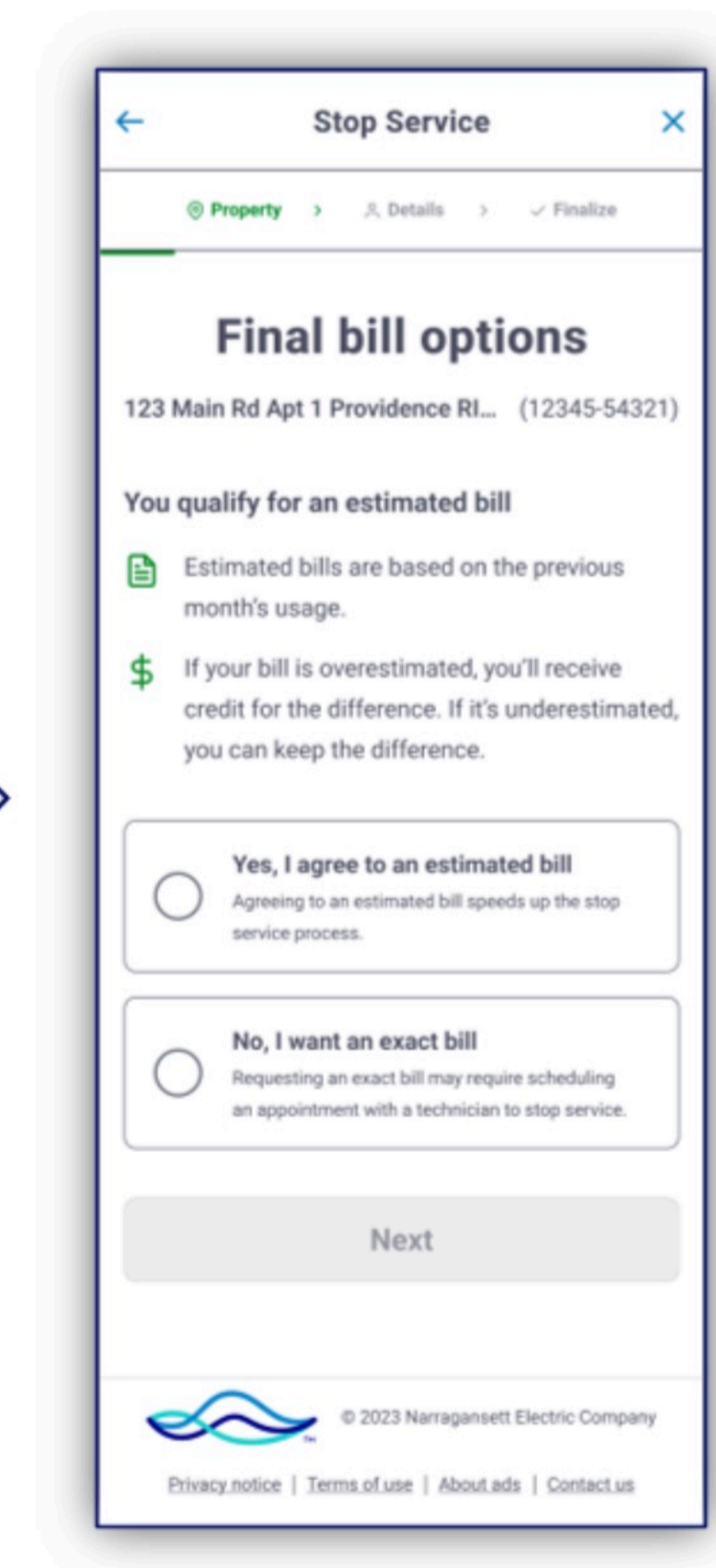
# IMPROVEMENTS

## Results

- The adjustments to the Final bill options screen made it much more effective.
- Participants were no longer confused about overcharges and undercharges
- The added appointment information persuaded most participants to choose an estimated bill.



Design tested in  
Stop Service 2

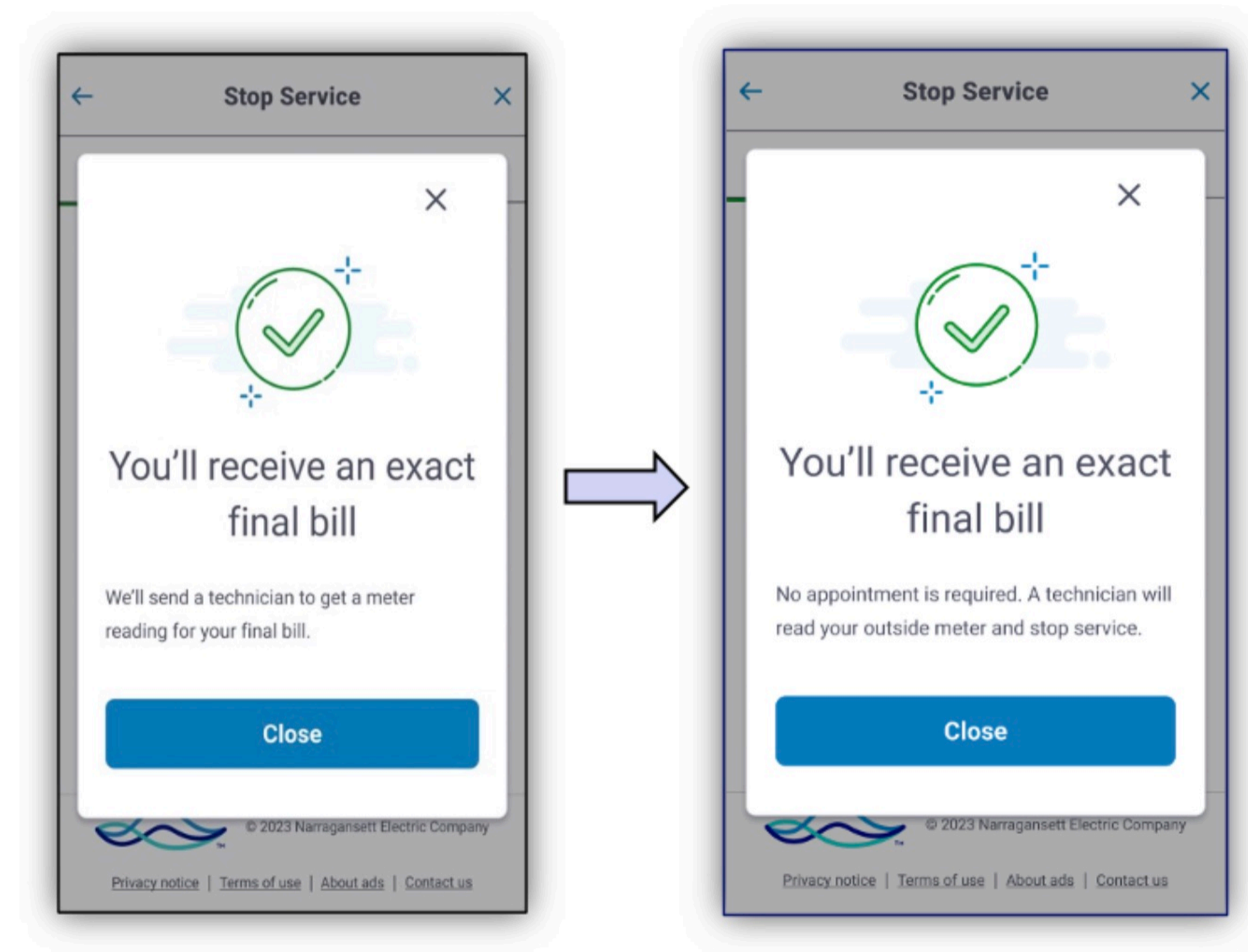


Design tested in  
Stop Service 3

# IMPROVEMENTS

## Results

- The adjustments to the Stopping your service screen and Exact bill modal fixed the issues that were causing confusion.
- On the Stopping service screen, participants were no longer confused about the order of steps.
- On the Exact bill modal, it is now clear customers don't need to be home if they have an outside meter.



Design tested in  
Stop Service 2

Design tested in  
Stop Service 3

# NEW INSIGHTS



## Appointment preparation

- Keep the area around the meter safe, accessible, and pet-free. Service animals may remain with caution.
- We will call you 15-20 minutes before arrival.
- This call might come from a blocked number.
- The technician will conduct a safety check with your gas appliances before accessing your meter.

← Stop Service ×

Property > Details > Finalize

### Meter access contact

123 Main Rd Apt 1 Providence RI... (12345-54321)

Enter your phone number or the number of the adult who will be at the stop service address

Meter access contact number

→ Phone number of adult providing meter access.

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← Stop Service ×

Property > Details > Finalize

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# APPOINTMENT PREPARATION





## Observations

- One participant was confused about how a blocked number would reach him.
- One participant thought this section was important but too easy to miss. Some participants scanned past it before noticing it.

## Recommendations

- Consider suggesting customers change their settings to allow blocked numbers before their appointment date.
- Consider making this section larger or using bold type to draw attention to it.

### Appointment preparation

-  Keep the area around the meter safe, accessible, and pet-free. Service animals may remain with caution.
-  We will call you 15-20 minutes before arrival.
-  This call might come from a blocked number.
-  The technician will conduct a safety check with your gas appliances before accessing your meter.

"The appointment preparation information is kind of small. It would help to see it because this is important. It should be a little more noticeable. Especially the bullet points. Those should be more pronounced." - Participant 5

# METER ACCESS CONTACT

## Observations

- There is a discrepancy between the Meter access contact (your number or the adult onsite) and the Stop service review screen (adult onsite).

## Recommendations

- Remove "your phone number" from the Meter access contact screen to prevent confusion.
- Consider changing the text to more clearly state the purpose (e.g., "Enter the phone number of the adult who will provide access to the meter.").

Stop Service

Property > Details > Finalize

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Stop service date Edit

1/9/2024

Appointment window

8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Meter access contact number

Phone number of adult providing meter access

(401) 222-5698



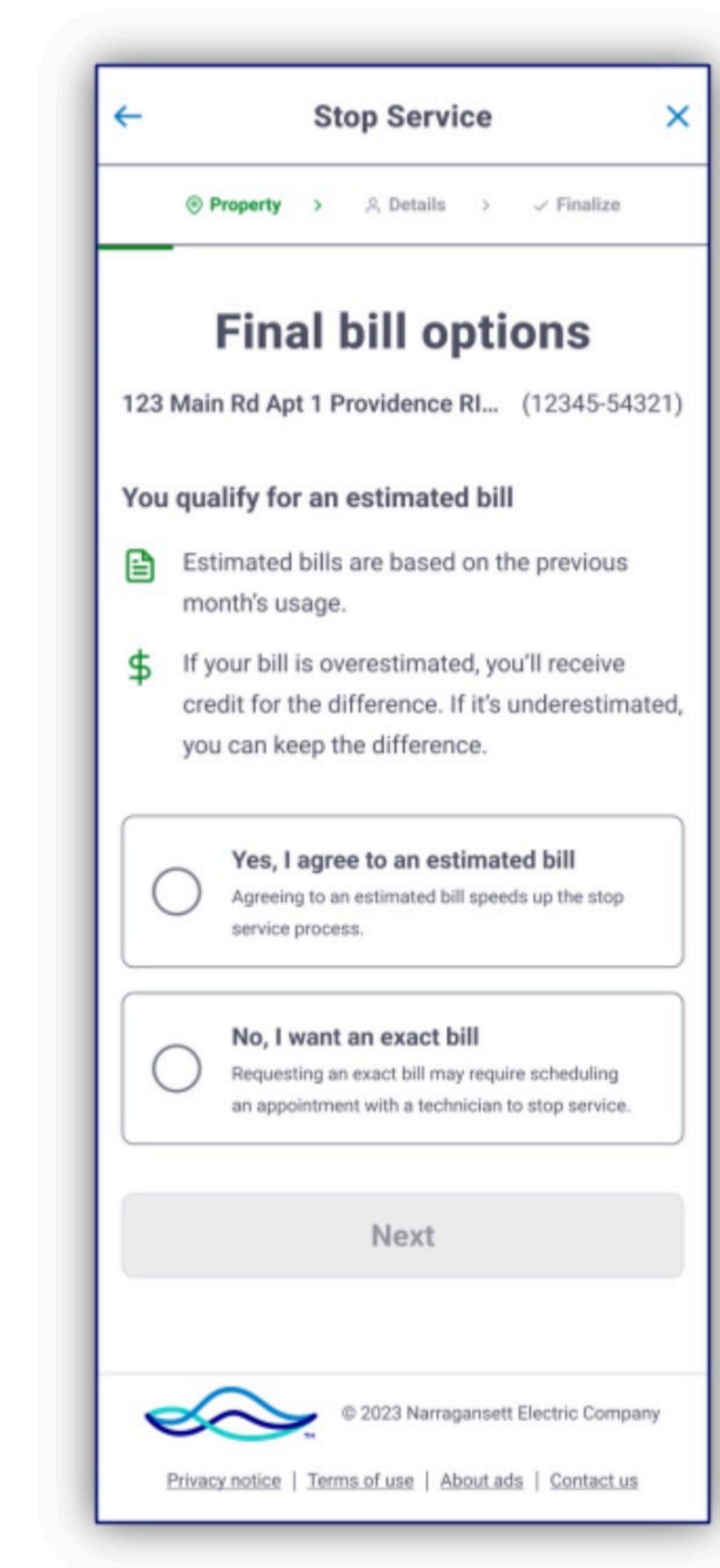
# FINAL BILL OPTIONS

## Observations

- The statement about underestimation caught most participants' attention. Some said it was one reason they chose the estimated bill.
- One participant said she would only choose the estimated bill if the previous bill would be much lower than the current month (a change in seasons).
- Another participant noted she would use more energy without worrying about the cost.

## Recommendations

- Consider whether to include the information about underestimates. On one hand, it will drive customers to choose the estimated bill, but it could cause some to use more energy.



"If it was the right month, I could kind of cheat the system. If they base it on October and it's November and I've turned my heat on, I win." - Participant 4



# INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

# INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Improvements

- Participants found both the estimated bill and exact bill clearer and easier to understand. None had any problems completing the stop service tasks.
- All participants rated the usability and ease of both bill options a 5/5. Ratings for both usability and usefulness improved from the previous study.
- Most participants initially selected estimated bill because of the ease and convenience. In the earlier study, most participants initially selected exact bill.
- However, most participants in both studies ultimately chose exact bill if they had an outside meter and did not need an appointment. They cited the desire to complete the process as efficiently as possible.
- The adjustments to the Final bill options screen made it much more effective. Participants were no longer confused about overcharges and undercharges and the added appointment information persuaded most to choose an estimated bill.
- The adjustments to the Stopping your service screen and Exact bill modal fixed the issues that were causing confusion. On the Stopping service screen, participants were no longer confused about the order of steps. On the Exact bill modal, it is now clear customers don't need to be home if they have an outside meter.

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### Insights

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