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New York State Thruway Authority

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 27, 1999

The Honorable William Kennard
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Kennard:

On behalf of the New York State Thruway Authority ("NYSTA"), I write to urge the Commission to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the establishment of a Low Power FM microbroadcasting service. If authorized, microbroadcasting on the FM band could provide entities like NYSTA with the tools to solve the considerable problems motorists nationwide experience with Traveler's Information Service ("TIS") radio facilities.

NYSTA currently uses low-power AM stations to broadcast travel advisory and public safety messages to motorists traveling on the New York State Thruway and other highways. NYSTA operates and maintains a 641-mile highway system that includes the New York City metro area, Albany, Syracuse, and Buffalo. NYSTA is experiencing interference throughout the system. For example, in the New York City metro area, atmospheric conditions and interference from commercial AM radio stations (including an overpowered station in the Caribbean) and other TIS facilities significantly reduce, or in some instances eliminate, the operational effectiveness of NYSTA's TIS system. In the Syracuse area, the TIS is knocked off the air by a Canadian AM station.

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NYSTA is exploring different approaches to minimize interference and increase system capacity on the existing, AM-based TIS, but they will only moderate, not eliminate, the problem. Migration to the FM band could provide a more permanent solution to the TIS reception problems and greatly facilitate our mission of furthering public safety.

We believe a Low Power FM service would benefit public safety and transportation entities like NYSTA throughout the nation. Low power FM radio will provide an effective alternative to the limited radio facilities currently used by public safety and transportation service entities. This new service could provide critical real-time information to travelers confronting emergency situations, traffic patterns and accidents. For numerous transportation entities, broadcast radio is the only way to convey messages on a timely basis. Necessary communications include the announcement of not only unforeseen incidents and accidents, but also planned activities, such as construction schedules and the suggestion of alternate routes. Low power FM could ensure that critical messages reach motorists and will improve safety and efficiency on the nation's roads.

Therefore, we strongly urge the Commission to consider the adoption of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to establish a Low Power FM microbroadcasting service. Further, as part of such a rulemaking, we ask that the Commission propose permitting public entities, that seek to increase public safety for travelers, such as NYSTA, to hold authorizations in any such new service.

Sincerely yours,



Howard E. Steinberg

cc: The Honorable Susan Ness
The Honorable Gloria Tristani
The Honorable Harold Furtchtgott-Roth
The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Ms. Susan Fox
Ms. Susanna Zwerling
Ms. Anita Wallgren
Mr. Rick Chessen
Ms. Helgi Walker
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