

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

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ET Docket No. 00-258

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
Amendment of Part 2 of the Commission's)
Rules to Allocate Spectrum Below 3 GHz)
For Mobile and Fixed Services to Support)
the Introduction of New Advanced Wireless)
Services, including Third Generation)
Wireless Systems)
)
Petition for Rulemaking of the Cellular)
Telecommunications Industry Association)
Concerning Implementation of WRC-2000;)
Review of Spectrum and Regulatory)
Requirements for IMT-2000)
)
Amendment of the U.S. Table of Frequency)
Allocations to Designate the 2500-2520/)
2670-2690 MHz Frequency Bands for the)
Mobile-Satellite Service)

RM-9920

RM-9911

To: The Commission

COMMENTS

The South Carolina Educational Television Commission (SCETV) submits these comments in response to the *Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order* in the captioned proceeding, FCC 00-455 (released January 5, 2001) ("NPRM"). The NPRM explores the possibility of introducing new advanced mobile and fixed services (including Third Generation mobile services, or "3G") in various frequency bands, including the 2500-2690 MHz band currently allocated for and used by stations operating in the Instructional Television Fixed Service ("ITFS") and the Multichannel Multipoint Distribution Service ("MMDS").

SCETV urges strongly that the FCC's introduction of new cell phone services cannot and must not be accomplished at the expense of ITFS and MMDS allocations in the 2500-2690 MHz band. Preservation of these ITFS and MMDS allocations are necessary both for the continuation of pervasive and invaluable licensed uses by incumbent stations in these services and the expanding

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rollout of advanced wireless broadband services to schools, homes and businesses. SCETV believes that the Commission has identified, and can make available, other spectrum to satisfy demand for 3G mobile, without any incursion into the 2500-2690 MHz band.

South Carolina is a largely rural state, home to 4.01 million people (2000) of which, 669,342 of those people are students. It is the responsibility of SCETV to provide a statewide educational communications network, so that educators may initiate comprehensive educational opportunities to public schools, colleges, universities, and for adult continuing education.

In 1973, SCETV received the first construction permit for the ITFS system. Since that time, more than \$28 million dollars has been spent to design and implement a statewide ITFS network. It is comprised of 256 ITFS channels (49 transmitters, 15 Studio-to-Transmitter links) that interconnect 35 Distance Education Learning Centers or DELC's that serve 723 of the states 1,114 public schools.

SCETV provides each DELC with over 1,500 taped hours (new/updated yearly) of instructional television programs approved by the South Carolina Department of Education and an equipped studio for live-interactive instruction. Teachers may request specific programming. Locally produced instructional programming include: History, English, AP courses, Psychology, Foreign Languages, Western Civilization, Math, Biology, and others. Programming for student enrichment included: Safe Kids, Rice Festival, Arts Council, Truancy Forum, Writing Contest, Quiz Bowl, Teacher of the Year Banquet, SAT Question of the day, The World Around Us, Literacy Festival Showcase, to name a few.

SCETV's ITFS system provide students with a broad range of classes they otherwise could not attend. For example, in McClellanville, Advanced Placement (AP) Government and AP Economics offered by the Charleston's ITFS system provide students access to college-credit courses that would otherwise be unavailable. In Marlboro last semester 116 8th graders had access to high

school Algebra I and English I. Furthermore, many of the live courses can be applied for college credit, allowing gifted high school students to get a jump on their college education. The advantages are enormous: students get a trial-run at college, giving them the confidence to succeed, and the credits they earn result in substantial savings of college tuition. For the 71% of students at one high school who qualify for free or reduced lunches, the money saved can mean the difference between completing college or not. In addition, the state of South Carolina saves money when students accelerate their college educations; all college students in South Carolina who maintain a “B” average are eligible for a \$3000 state-sponsored scholarship, and the more courses students take before college, the more money the state saves.

Superintendents desire two-way interactive opportunities or the chance to execute them at lower costs. There is a dire need, in this largely rural state, to meet the educational needs of all students. However, there is limited funding available to implement needed upgrades to the ITFS system.

Recent developments in technology have made it possible for ITFS and MMDS stations to provide high-speed, two-way wireless data transmission services, including broadband Internet access. These technological innovations are particularly timely given the explosion in online education which increasingly requires broadband access to rich-media content. Wireless broadband in the 2500-2690 MHz band utilizing ITFS and MMDS channels is fast enough to support a broad range of such content, including two-way real-time video, streaming video, and other bandwidth intensive applications necessary for effective distance learning. In addition, wireless broadband provides the capability for educational institutions to build wide area networks at a reasonable cost.

ITFS educational licensees have become valuable “partners” of wireless communications companies through the practice of leasing capacity, or network sharing, which the FCC first allowed in 1983. The commercial counterpart of ITFS, MMDS has provided a variety of transmission services to communities around the country. Because MMDS licensees only have a limited amount

of bandwidth, many ITFS licensees have joined with them to create shared networks – essentially allowing ITFS systems to be deployed and operated at the expense of the commercial partner while generating additional funds for schools to use in developing their distance learning programs. The FCC has strongly encouraged this practice. However, if the FCC now takes channels away from these providers to make room for 3G services, the advantages of this public/private, educational/commercial collaboration will be lost.

Despite some implementation of DSL and cable modems by Bell South and Time Warner, respectively, much of South Carolina is without broadband access. Broadband access is critical so that schools can have inexpensive interactive contact with each other. SCETV plans to convert its 256 channel network to digital and share its excess capacity with a broadband access provider. In exchange for the capacity, the provider would complete the build out of the network to reach the remaining 391 schools who currently are not connected to the ITFS network. The provider, implementing two-way interactive services, would make them available to schools, business and residences in South Carolina. Competitive broadband or the only broadband access would be available. The state would get a significant return on their 28 million dollar investment. And most importantly, South Carolina students will have equal access to important educational information necessary for their personal development.

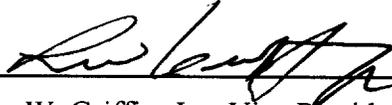
The new ITFS/MMDS broadband wireless services are critical to bridging the digital divide – the chasm between those in the United States that have access to broadband Internet offerings and those that do not. The benefits of high-speed Internet access do not reach most Americans. DSL and cable modem services are primarily serving new, affluent, suburban neighborhoods, leaving inner cities, rural areas, and various other insular communities behind. However, with the highly favorable signal transmission and reception range of stations operating in the 2500-2690 MHz band, ITFS/MMDS stations can reach rural areas, inner-city neighborhoods and other underserved communities that cable modems and DSL cannot or will not serve. Thus, only wireless broadband,

provided through ITFS and MMDS in the 2500-2690 MHz band, has the power to bridge the digital divide.

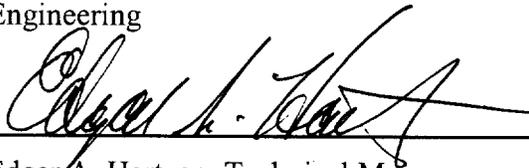
If the FCC reallocates all or part of the ITFS/MMDS spectrum for 3G services, the capacity, usefulness, and value of the ITFS spectrum would be significantly diminished if not destroyed. Even if only part of the spectrum is taken, many of South Carolina's educational institutions would lose their ITFS service altogether, while SCETV would face new equipment costs, service disruption and cutbacks, lower quality service and signal interference. Moreover, the deployment of wireless broadband services through ITFS/MMDS shared networks would be stopped in its tracks, and for many communities, the promise of high-speed advanced services -- either at all or at any reasonable price -- would remain beyond reach.

For all these reasons, SCETV opposes any reallocation of channels in the 2500-2690 MHz band from ITFS and MMDS, and urges the FCC to move 3G mobile services into other available spectrum.

Respectfully Submitted,



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