

**Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Comcast Cable Communications, LLC	)	CSR 7160-E
	)	
Petition for Determination of Effective	)	
Competition in 9 Washington Franchise Areas	)	

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER**

**Adopted: April 18, 2008**

**Released: April 21, 2008**

By the Senior Deputy Chief, Policy Division, Media Bureau:

**I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1. Comcast Cable Communications, LLC, hereinafter referred to as “Petitioner,” has filed with the Commission a petition pursuant to Sections 76.7, 76.905(b)(2), 76.905(b)(1) and 76.907 of the Commission’s rules for a determination that Petitioner is subject to effective competition in those communities listed on Attachment A and hereinafter referred to as “Communities.” Petitioner alleges that its cable system serving the Communities listed on Attachment B is subject to effective competition pursuant to Section 623(1) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (“Communications Act”)<sup>1</sup> and the Commission’s implementing rules,<sup>2</sup> and is therefore exempt from cable rate regulation in the Communities because of the competing service provided by two direct broadcast satellite (“DBS”) providers, DirecTV, Inc. (“DirecTV”) and Dish Network (“Dish”). Petitioner alternatively claims to be exempt from cable rate regulation in the Communities listed on Attachment C because the Petitioner serves fewer than 30 percent of the households in the franchise area. The petition is unopposed.

2. In the absence of a demonstration to the contrary, cable systems are presumed not to be subject to effective competition,<sup>3</sup> as that term is defined by Section 623(1) of the Communications Act and Section 76.905 of the Commission’s rules.<sup>4</sup> The cable operator bears the burden of rebutting the presumption that effective competition does not exist with evidence that effective competition is present within the relevant franchise area.<sup>5</sup> For the reasons set forth below, we grant the petition based on our finding that Petitioner is subject to effective competition in the Communities listed on Attachments (B and C).

<sup>1</sup>See 47 U.S.C. § 543(a)(1).

<sup>2</sup>47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2) and 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(1).

<sup>3</sup>47 C.F.R. § 76.906.

<sup>4</sup>See 47 U.S.C. § 543(l) and 47 C.F.R. § 76.905.

<sup>5</sup>See 47 C.F.R. §§ 76.906 & 907.

## II. DISCUSSION

### A. The Competing Provider Test

3. Section 623(l)(1)(B) of the Communications Act provides that a cable operator is subject to effective competition if the franchise area is (a) served by at least two unaffiliated multi-channel video programming distributors (“MVPD”) each of which offers comparable video programming to at least 50 percent of the households in the franchise area; and (b) the number of households subscribing to programming services offered by MVPDs other than the largest MVPD exceeds 15 percent of the households in the franchise area;<sup>6</sup> this test is otherwise referred to as the “competing provider” test.

4. The first prong of this test has three elements: the franchise area must be “served by” at least two unaffiliated MVPDs who offer “comparable programming” to at least “50 percent” of the households in the franchise area.<sup>7</sup>

5. Turning to the first prong of this test, it is undisputed that these Communities are “served by” both DBS providers, DIRECTV and Dish, and that these two MVPD providers are unaffiliated with Petitioner or with each other. A franchise area is considered “served by” an MVPD if that MVPD’s service is both technically and actually available in the franchise area. DBS service is presumed to be technically available due to its nationwide satellite footprint, and presumed to be actually available if households in the franchise area are made reasonably aware of the service’s availability.<sup>8</sup> The Commission has held that a party may use evidence of penetration rates in the franchise area (the second prong of the competing provider test discussed below) coupled with the ubiquity of DBS services to show that consumers are reasonably aware of the availability of DBS service.<sup>9</sup> We further find that Petitioner has provided sufficient evidence of DBS advertising in local, regional, and national media that serve the Communities to support their assertion that potential customers in the Communities are reasonably aware that they may purchase the service of these MVPD providers.<sup>10</sup> The “comparable programming” element is met if a competing MVPD provider offers at least 12 channels of video programming, including at least one channel of nonbroadcast service programming<sup>11</sup> and is supported in this petition with copies of channel lineups for both DIRECTV and Dish.<sup>12</sup> Also undisputed is Petitioner’s assertion that both DIRECTV and Dish offer service to at least “50 percent” of the households in the Communities because of their national satellite footprint.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, we find that the first prong of the competing provider test is satisfied.

6. The second prong of the competing provider test requires that the number of households subscribing to MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceed 15 percent of the households in a franchise area. Petitioner asserts that it is the largest MVPD in the Communities.<sup>14</sup> Petitioner sought to determine the competing provider penetration in the Communities by purchasing a subscriber tracking report from

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<sup>6</sup>47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(B); *see also* 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

<sup>7</sup>47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2)(i).

<sup>8</sup>*See* Petition at (*paragraph number/s and Exhibit reference as may be appropriate*).

<sup>9</sup>Mediacom Illinois LLC et al., *Eleven Petitions for Determination of Effective Competition in Twenty-Two Local Franchise Areas in Illinois and Michigan*, 21 FCC Rcd 1175 (2006).

<sup>10</sup>47 C.F.R. § 76.905(e)(2).

<sup>11</sup>*See* 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(g). *See also* Petition at 4-5.

<sup>12</sup>*See* Petition at Exhibit 2.

<sup>13</sup>*See* Petition at 3.

<sup>14</sup>*See* Petition at 5.

the Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association (“SBCA”) that identified the number of subscribers attributable to the DBS providers within the Communities on a zip code plus four basis.<sup>15</sup>

7. Based upon the aggregate DBS subscriber penetration levels that were calculated using Census 2000 household data,<sup>16</sup> as reflected in Attachment B, we find that Petitioner has demonstrated that the number of households subscribing to programming services offered by MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceeds 15 percent of the households in the Communities. Therefore, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied for each of the Communities.

8. Based on the foregoing, we conclude that Petitioner has submitted sufficient evidence demonstrating that both prongs of the competing provider test are satisfied and Petitioner is subject to effective competition in the Communities listed on Attachment B.

### **B. The Low Penetration Test**

9. Section 623(l)(1)(A) of the Communications Act provides that a cable operator is subject to effective competition if the Petitioner serves fewer than 30 percent of the households in the franchise area; this test is otherwise referred to as the “low penetration” test.<sup>17</sup> Petitioner alleges that it is subject to effective competition under the low penetration effective competition test because it serves less than 30 percent of the households in the franchise area.

10. Based upon the subscriber penetration level calculated by Petitioner,<sup>18</sup> as reflected in Attachment C, we find that Petitioner has demonstrated the percentage of households subscribing to its cable service is less than 30 percent of the households in the Communities listed on Attachment C. Therefore, the low penetration test is also satisfied as to the Communities

### **III. ORDERING CLAUSES**

11. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the petition for a determination of effective competition filed in the captioned proceeding by Comcast Cable Communications **IS GRANTED**.

12. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the certification to regulate basic cable service rates granted to any of the Communities set forth on Attachment A **IS REVOKED**.

13. This action is taken pursuant to delegated authority pursuant to Section 0.283 of the Commission’s rules.<sup>19</sup>

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Steven A. Broeckaert  
Senior Deputy Chief, Policy Division, Media Bureau

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<sup>15</sup>Petition at 5.

<sup>16</sup>Petition at 7-8; Supplement at 1.

<sup>17</sup>47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(A).

<sup>18</sup> Supplement at 1.

<sup>19</sup>47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

## ATTACHMENT A

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## COMMUNITIES SERVED BY COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

<b>Communities</b>	<b>CUIDS</b>
Anacortes	WA0001
Burlington	WA0004
Coupeville	WA0338
Island County	WA0264
	WA0277
	WA0280
	WA0427
Langley	WA0278
Mount Vernon	WA0005
Oak Harbor	WA0191
Sedro-Woolley	WA0010
Skagit County	WA0222
	WA0450

## ATTACHMENT B

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## COMMUNITIES SERVED BY COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

Communities	CUIDS	CPR*	2000 Census Household	Estimated DBS Subscribers
Anacortes, WA	WA0001	24.61%	6086	1498
Burlington	WA0004	28.91%	2398	693
Coupeville	WA0338	57.09%	737	421
Island County	WA0264	44.30%	19228	8517 **
	WA0277			
	WA0280			
	WA0427			
Langley	WA0278	29.72%	486	144
Mount Vernon	WA0005	30.68%	9276	2846
Oak Harbor	WA0191	30.05%	7333	2204
Sedro-Woolley	WA0010	40.88%	3205	1310
Skagit County	WA0222	38.79%	16937	6570 ***
	WA0450			

\*CPR = Percent of competitive DBS penetration rate.

\*\* Comcast operates 4 cable systems in Island County and therefore each has its own CUID number. The systems operate pursuant to one franchise, however, and therefore Comcast reports a common set of numbers for these systems.

\*\*\* Comcast operates 2 cable systems in Skagit County and therefore each has its own CUID number. The systems operate pursuant to one franchise, however, and therefore Comcast reports a common set of numbers for these systems.

## ATTACHMENT C

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## COMMUNITIES SERVED BY COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

<b>Community</b>	<b>CUID</b>	<b>Franchise Area Households</b>	<b>Cable Subscribers</b>	<b>Penetration Percentage</b>
Skagit County	WA0222 WA0450	16937	3847	22.71%*

\* Comcast operates 2 cable systems in Skagit County and therefore each has its own CUID number. The systems operate pursuant to one franchise, however, and therefore Comcast reports a common set of numbers for these systems.