

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

In the Matter of )
Cox Communications Hampton Roads, LLC )
Petition for Determination of Effective )
Competition in York County and West Point, )
Virginia )
CSR 8187 -E

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Adopted: November 29, 2010

Released: November 29, 2010

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

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Cox Communications Hampton Roads, 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)(4) and 76.907 of the Commission's rules for a determination that Petitioner is subject to effective competition in the community listed on Attachment A and hereinafter referred to as the "Community." Petitioner alleges that its cable system serving the Community is subject to effective competition pursuant to Section 623(1) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended ("Communications Act") and the Commission's implementing rules, and is therefore exempt from cable rate regulation in the Community because of the competing service provided by two direct broadcast satellite ("DBS") providers, DirecTV, Inc. ("DirecTV") and Dish Network ("Dish"). Petitioner alternatively claims that its cable system serving the Community listed on Attachment B is subject to effective competition because of the competing service provided by Verizon, hereinafter referred to as "Competitor." 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, as that term is defined by Section 623(1) of the Communications Act and Section 76.905 of the Commission's rules. 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. 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 A and B.

1 See 47 U.S.C. § 543(1).
2 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2) and 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(4).
3 47 C.F.R. § 76.906.
4 See 47 U.S.C. § 543(1) and 47 C.F.R. § 76.905.
5 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 the Community is “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 Community to support their assertion that potential customers in the Community 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 Community 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 Community.<sup>14</sup> Petitioner sought to determine the competing provider penetration in the Community by purchasing a subscriber tracking report from the Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association that identified the number of subscribers

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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 4-6.

<sup>9</sup> *Mediacom Illinois LLC*, 21 FCC Rcd 1175, 1176, ¶ 3 (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.

<sup>12</sup> *See* Petition at 4 and Exhibit 3.

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

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

attributable to the DBS providers within the Community 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 A, 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 Community. Therefore, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied for the Community.

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 Community listed on Attachment A.

## **B. The LEC Test**

9. Section 623(l)(1)(D) of the Communications Act provides that a cable operator is subject to effective competition if a local exchange carrier (“LEC”), or its affiliate, offers video programming services directly to subscribers by any means (other than direct-to-home satellite services) in the franchise area of an unaffiliated cable operator which is providing cable service in that franchise area, but only if the video programming services offered in that area are comparable to the video programming services provided by the competing unaffiliated cable operator<sup>17</sup>; this test is otherwise referred to as the “LEC” test.

10. The Commission has stated that the incumbent cable operator must show that the LEC intends to build-out its cable system within a reasonable period of time if it has not completed its build-out; that no regulatory, technical or other impediments to household service exist; that the LEC is marketing its services so that potential customers are aware that the LEC’s services may be purchased; that the LEC has actually begun to provide services; the extent of such services; the ease with which service may be expanded; and the expected date for completion of construction in the franchise area.<sup>18</sup> It is undisputed that the Community listed on Attachment B served by both Petitioner and Competitor, a local exchange carrier, and that these two MVPD providers are unaffiliated. 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>19</sup> and is supported in this petition with copies of channel lineups for Competitor.<sup>20</sup> Finally, Petitioner has demonstrated that the Competitor has commenced providing video programming service within the Community listed on Attachment B, has marketed its services in a manner that makes potential subscribers reasonably aware of its services, and otherwise satisfied the LEC effective competition test consistent with the evidentiary requirements set forth in the *Cable Reform Order*.<sup>21</sup>

11. Based on the foregoing, we conclude that Petitioner has also submitted sufficient evidence demonstrating that its cable system serving the Community listed on Attachment B has met the LEC test and is subject to effective competition.

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<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 7-10.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 8-10 and Exhibit 2.

<sup>17</sup> See 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(D).

<sup>18</sup> See *Implementation of Cable Act Reform Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, 14 FCC Rcd 5296, 5305-06, ¶¶ 13-16 (1999) (“*Cable Reform Order*”).

<sup>19</sup> See 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(g). See also Petition at 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> See Petition at 19-20 and Exhibit 10.

<sup>21</sup> See *Cable Reform Order*, 14 FCC Rcd at 5305-06, ¶¶ 13-15. See also Petition at 18-19.

**III. ORDERING CLAUSES**

12. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the petition for a determination of effective competition filed in the captioned proceeding by Cox Communications Hampton Roads, LLC **IS GRANTED**.

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

14. This action is taken pursuant to delegated authority pursuant to Section 0.283 of the Commission's rules.<sup>22</sup>

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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

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<sup>22</sup> 47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

## ATTACHMENT A

## CSR 8187-E

## COMMUNITY SERVED BY COX COMMUNICATIONS HAMPTON ROADS, LLC

<b>Community</b>	<b>CUID</b>	<b>CPR*</b>	<b>2000 Census Households</b>	<b>Estimated DBS Subscribers</b>
West Point	VA0308	54.59	1068	583

\*CPR = Percent of competitive DBS penetration rate.

**ATTACHMENT B**

**CSR 8187-E**

**COMMUNITY SERVED BY COX COMMUNICATIONS HAMPTON ROADS, LLC**

<u>Community</u>	<u>CUID</u>
York County	VA0302