

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

In the Matter of)
Comcast Cable Communications, LLC) MB Docket No. 12-96, CSR 8613-E
Petition for Determination of Effective)
Competition in Ten Illinois Communities)

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Adopted: June 7, 2013

Released: June 12, 2013

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

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Comcast Cable Communications, LLC, on behalf of its subsidiaries and affiliates, hereinafter referred to as "Petitioner," has filed with the Commission a petition pursuant to Sections 76.7, 76.905(b)(2) 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 the "Communities." Petitioner alleges that its cable system serving the Communities is subject to effective competition pursuant to Section 623(l)(1)(B) 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 Communities because of the competing service provided by two direct broadcast satellite ("DBS") providers, DIRECTV, Inc. ("DIRECTV"), and DISH Network ("DISH"). 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(l) 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 Attachment A.

II. DISCUSSION

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 ("MVPDs"), 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

1 See 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(B).

2 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

3 47 C.F.R. § 76.906.

4 See 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1); 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b).

5 See 47 C.F.R. §§ 76.906-907(b).

households in the franchise area.⁶ This test is 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.⁷ It is undisputed that the 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.⁸ 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.⁹ We further find that Petitioner has provided sufficient evidence to support its assertion that potential customers in the Communities are reasonably aware that they may purchase the service of these MVPD providers.¹⁰ 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,¹¹ and is supported in this petition with copies of channel lineups for both DIRECTV and DISH.¹² 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.¹³ Accordingly, we find that the first prong of the competing provider test is satisfied.

5. The second prong of the competing provider test requires that the number of households subscribing to MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceeds 15 percent of the households in a franchise area. Petitioner asserts that it is the largest MVPD in nine of the ten Communities; and that, in the other Community (Poplar Grove), Petitioner and the DBS providers combined each serve in excess of 15 percent of the households.¹⁴ The Commission has recognized that in the latter conditions, whichever MVPD is the largest, the remaining MVPDs have subscribership of over 15 percent.¹⁵

6. Petitioner sought to determine the competing provider penetration in the Communities by purchasing a subscriber tracking report from the Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association that identified the number of subscribers attributable to the DBS providers within the Communities on a

⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(B); 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(B)(i); 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2)(i).

⁸ See Petition at 3.

⁹ *Mediacom Illinois LLC*, 21 FCC Rcd 1175, 1176, ¶ 3 (2006).

¹⁰ 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(e)(2).

¹¹ See 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(g); see also Petition at 5.

¹² See Petition at Ex. 2.

¹³ See *id.* at 3.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 7; *id.*, Declaration of Warren Fitting, Petitioner’s Senior Director of Regulatory Accounting, at ¶ 3 (March 5, 2012).

¹⁵ If Petitioner is the largest MVPD, then MVPDs other than the largest one are the DBS providers, which have a combined share of over 15%. On the other hand, if one of the DBS providers is the largest MVPD, then Petitioner (which alone has over 15%) and the other DBS provider combined have over 15%. See, e.g., *Comcast Cable Commc'ns, LLC*, 26 FCC Rcd 10967, 10968-69, ¶ 5 (2011); *Comcast Cable Commc'ns, LLC*, 26 FCC Rcd 4901, 4903, ¶ 5 (2011); *Time Warner Cable Inc.*, 25 FCC Rcd 14422, 14424, ¶ 6 (2010).

zip code plus four basis.¹⁶

7. Based upon the aggregate DBS subscriber penetration levels that were calculated using Census 2010 household data,¹⁷ 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 Communities. Therefore, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied for each of the Communities. 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 A.

III. ORDERING CLAUSES

8. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the petition for a determination of effective competition filed in the captioned proceeding by Comcast Cable Communications, LLC, on behalf of its subsidiaries and affiliates, **IS GRANTED**.

9. **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**.

10. This action is taken pursuant to delegated authority pursuant to Section 0.283 of the Commission's rules.¹⁸

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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¹⁶ Petition at Exs. 5-6. A zip code plus four analysis allocates DBS subscribers to a franchise area using zip code plus four information that generally reflects franchise area boundaries in a more accurate fashion than standard five digit zip code information.

¹⁷ Petition at Ex. 6.

¹⁸ 47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

ATTACHMENT A

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COMMUNITIES SERVED BY SUBSIDIARIES AND AFFILIATES OF
COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

Communities	CUIDs	CPR*	2010 Census Households	Estimated DBS Subscribers
Belvidere	IL0199	30.42	8,803	2,678
Byron	IL0236	23.73	1,433	340
Loves Park	IL0124	22.04	9,831	2,167
Machesney Park	IL0591	26.52	8,893	2,358
Mount Morris	IL0235	20.93	1,295	271
Oregon	IL0234	21.84	1,630	356
Polo	IL0238	32.19	988	318
Poplar Grove	IL1829	51.02	1,623	828
Rockford	IL0108	20.97	59,973	12,576
Stillman Valley	IL0237	24.88	430	107

*CPR = Percent of competitive DBS penetration rate.