

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

In the Matter of)
Comcast Cable Communications, LLC) MB Docket No. 12-316, CSR-8734-E
Petition for Determination of Effective)
Competition in Loudoun County, VA)

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Adopted: June 27, 2013

Released: June 27, 2013

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) 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(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 Community 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 Community 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 While the subject of the Petition is Loudon County, VA, Petitioner is only seeking a determination of effective competition for the portions of Loudoun County that are unincorporated. See Attachment A.

2 See 47 U.S.C. § 543(l)(1)(B).

3 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

4 47 C.F.R. § 76.906.

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

6 See 47 C.F.R. §§ 76.906-.907(b).

households in the franchise area.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ We further find that Petitioner has provided sufficient evidence to support its assertion that potential customers in the Community are reasonably aware that they may purchase the service of these MVPD providers.¹¹ 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,¹² and is supported in this petition with copies of channel lineups for both DIRECTV and DISH.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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 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 attributable to the DBS providers within the Community on a zip code plus four basis.¹⁵ Petitioner asserts that it serves in excess of 15 percent of the households in the Community, while competing providers serve an aggregate of more than 15 percent of the Community.¹⁶

6. Based upon the aggregate DBS subscriber penetration levels that were calculated using Census 2010 household data,¹⁷ as reflected in Attachment A, we are able to conclude that this portion of the test is met by analyzing the data submitted for both the Petitioner and its MVPD competitors. If the subscriber penetration for both the Petitioner and the aggregate competing MVPD information each

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

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

⁹ See Petition at 3-5.

¹⁰ *Mediacom Illinois LLC*, 21 FCC Rcd 1175, 1176, ¶ 3 (2006).

¹¹ 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(e)(2).

¹² See 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(g); see also Petition at 5.

¹³ See Petition at Exhibit 1.

¹⁴ See Petition at 3-5.

¹⁵ Petition at 6-7. 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.

¹⁶ See Petition at 7; *id.* at Exhibit 6.

¹⁷ Petition at 7-8; *id.* at Exhibit 6.

exceed 15 percent in the franchise area, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied.¹⁸ In the Community, the Petitioner's penetration rate is in excess of 15 percent and the combined competing MVPD provider penetration rate is 31.40 percent.¹⁹ Therefore, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied. 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.

III. ORDERING CLAUSES

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

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

9. This action is taken pursuant to delegated authority pursuant to Section 0.283 of the Commission's rules.²⁰

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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¹⁸ See, e.g., *Charter Communications*, 21 FCC Rcd 1208, 1210, ¶ 5 (MB 2006); *Time Warner Entertainment Advance/Newhouse Partnership*, 17 FCC Rcd 23587, 23589, ¶ 6 (MB 2002).

¹⁹ See Petition at 7; *id.* at Exhibit 6.

²⁰ 47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

ATTACHMENT A

MB Docket No. 12-316; CSR 8734-E

COMMUNITY SERVED BY COMCAST CABLE COMMUNICATIONS, LLC

Community	CUIDs	CPR*	2010 Census Households	Estimated DBS Subscribers
Loudoun County, VA (unincorporated areas)	VA0332	31.40%	67,177	21,096

*CPR = Percent of competitive DBS penetration rate.