

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

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| In the Matter of                       | ) |                      |
|  | ) |                      |
| Review of the Commission's Rules       | ) | WT Docket No. 17-200 |
| Governing the 896-901/935-940 MHz Band | ) |                      |
|  | ) |                      |

**COMMENTS OF EXELON CORPORATION**

Exelon Corporation (“Exelon”), and its subsidiaries, PECO Energy Company (“PECO”) and Commonwealth Edison Company (“ComEd”), hereby submit these Comments in response to the Notice of Inquiry (“NOI”) released by the Federal Communications Commission (the “Commission”) in the above-referenced proceeding.<sup>1</sup> The Commission opened this proceeding to examine whether rule changes may be appropriate to improve spectrum efficiency, increase access to spectrum, and expand flexibility in the 896-901/935-940 MHz (“900 MHz band”). The NOI also seeks comment on whether the public interest would be served by retaining the existing configuration for the 900 MHz band, reserving the channels for private communications systems for the current and future needs of the Business/Industrial/Land Transportation (B/ILT) users.

**Introduction and Summary**

Exelon Corporation is an energy holding corporation which provides critical infrastructure energy delivery services through its subsidiaries, including PECO and ComEd. Exelon does business in 48 states and the District of Columbia and Exelon’s companies deliver electricity and natural gas to approximately 10 million customers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Review of the Commission’s Rules Governing the 896-901/935-940 MHz Band*, Notice of Inquiry, 32 FCC Rcd 6421 (rel. Aug. 4, 2017).

PECO, headquartered in Philadelphia, is one of the oldest and largest utility companies in the country, serving approximately 1.6 million electric customers and more than 511,000 natural gas customers in southeastern Pennsylvania. PECO currently holds narrowband Personal Communications Services (“PCS”) licenses for channels that are immediately adjacent to the spectrum at issue in the NOI. ComEd, headquartered in Chicago, is also one of the largest utility companies in the country. It delivers power to more than 3.8 million customers across northern Illinois. ComEd is engaged in a ten-year, \$2.6 billion dollar investment program to modernize its electric grid with infrastructure investments and smart grid technology, including a smart meter for every customer. ComEd currently uses spectrum for its mission critical private land mobile radio (“PLMR”) communications system that is within the 900 MHz band, the spectrum at issue in the NOI.

Exelon and subsidiaries PECO and ComEd have carefully reviewed the Commission’s NOI with respect to the 900 MHz band and fully support the Comments of the Critical Infrastructure Coalition.<sup>2</sup> We appreciate the Commission’s efforts to examine its rules governing the 900 MHz band to ensure that use of this spectrum best serves the public interest. However, we are concerned that several of the proposals in the NOI would disrupt incumbent licensees in the 900 MHz band and adjacent spectrum, including PECO and ComEd, who rely on this spectrum for their critical communication systems. We support the Coalition’s conclusion that the Commission should not adopt any changes to the 900 MHz band that would result in disruptions to the critical communication systems of existing users in the 900 MHz band or in adjacent spectrum.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Comments of Critical Infrastructure Coalition filed in WT Docket No. 17-200 (Oct. 2, 2017) (“Coalition Comments”). Exelon, PECO and ComEd as members of the Coalition, joined in signing the Coalition Comments.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 14.

### **Comments of Exelon and Subsidiaries PECO and ComEd**

Exelon and subsidiaries PECO and ComEd agree with the Coalition Comments generally and strongly support the Coalition with regard to the following issues: (1) incumbent users in the 900 MHz band and adjacent bands rely on this spectrum for critical communications and reconfiguring the band to introduce broadband operations would likely result in harmful interference to these incumbents; (2) relocating 900 MHz incumbents would be disruptive and costly; and (3) the potential harms of introducing broadband operations in the 900 MHz, by reconfiguring the band or increasing operational flexibility, outweigh the limited benefits. As such, Exelon and subsidiaries PECO and ComEd strongly urge the Commission to retain the existing framework for the 900 MHz band.

First, with regard to incumbent users in the 900 MHz band and adjacent bands, PECO and ComEd provide excellent examples of incumbents that rely on this spectrum for critical communication systems. PECO holds licenses in the narrowband PCS band, channels starting at 901/940 MHz, that form a key component of its communications network for the efficient management of its utility grid. PECO uses this spectrum for advanced meter reading, outage management and distribution automation. ComEd currently uses spectrum within the 896-901 MHz and 935-940 MHz bands for its mission critical PLMR communications system for emergency communications and dispatch, outage recovery and general field communications. For PECO, the concern is that certain proposals in the NOI would result in adjacent-channel interference to PECO's radio system. For ComEd, the concern is that certain proposals in the NOI would result in harmful co-channel interference to its operations. The nature of electric and gas utilities' communications requires the highest level of protection from interference possible, to ensure reliability of its required operations. Such utilities are considered critical infrastructure

industry entities, and as such, require reliable communication based monitoring and control for their distribution grid and associated systems. If their critical infrastructure radio operations are disrupted by interference, they may be required to add additional infrastructure, at a substantial cost, in order to maintain the same level of service and coverage that is expected by customers.

We agree with the Coalition, that allowing broadband operations in the 900 MHz band, through reconfiguring the 900 MHz band or increasing operational flexibility, would likely cause harmful interference to incumbent critical communications in the 900 MHz and critical communication uses in adjacent spectrum.<sup>4</sup> Such interference would clearly disrupt the current operations of PECO and ComEd. The Commission should ensure that this spectrum remains available for critical communications. The Coalition provides examples of users developing narrowband innovations within the existing framework, demonstrating that the Commission should also ensure that spectrum is available to meet the future needs of incumbent licensees.<sup>5</sup>

Second, if the Commission realigns the 900 MHz band and requires incumbents to relocate, this would be disruptive to the existing critical communications of incumbent licensees and very costly. As the Coalition points out, in addition to the direct costs of reconfiguring the band, there would be ongoing operating costs that would increase in order to obtain comparable coverage, such as increasing the number of tower sites, the number of tower leases, the amount of equipment and maintenance.<sup>6</sup> The broadband licensees would need to cover such increased operating costs in order to make incumbent licensees whole. Relocating existing licensees would be extremely disruptive to the existing operations of PECO and ComEd and detrimental to their abilities to fully operate their smart grid networks and mission critical communications systems.

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

According to the Coalition, relocating existing licensees may not even be feasible in some markets.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the Coalition persuasively argues that the potential harms of introducing broadband operations in the 900 MHz band, by reconfiguring the band or increasing operational flexibility, would outweigh the limited benefits of permitting a small broadband segment in the band.<sup>8</sup> As already discussed, introducing such broadband operations into the 900 MHz band increases the risks of causing harmful interference to critical communications users in the band and critical communications users in adjacent spectrum. Allowing such broadband operations and relocating incumbent 900 MHz users would be very costly to accomplish and would result in increased operating costs for incumbent users that would continue on an ongoing basis. On the other hand, the public benefits of allowing such broadband operations in the band would be relatively small as the amount of spectrum available for broadband operations would be limited.<sup>9</sup> The Commission should not risk disruption to the critical communications in the 900 MHz band.

PECO and ComEd, like the other members of the Critical Infrastructure Coalition, rely on their spectrum in the 900 MHz and adjacent spectrum for critical communications and the delivery of services that have a positive impact on the economy. Because of the potential for harmful interference and the possibility of significant disruption to ongoing critical infrastructure radio operations, and the relatively small public benefits of realignment, Exelon and subsidiaries PECO and ComEd strongly urge the Commission to retain the existing framework for the 900 MHz band to ensure that in-band and adjacent band remains available for critical infrastructure communications.

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 9, 12.

## Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Exelon and subsidiaries PECO and ComEd respectfully request that the Commission retain the existing configuration for the 900 MHz band to ensure that spectrum in the 900 MHz band and spectrum in adjacent bands remain available for critical infrastructure communications.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: October 2, 2017