



October 6, 2017

BY ELECTRONIC FILING

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **NOTICE OF EX PARTE**
PS Docket No. 15-91: *Improving Wireless Emergency Alerts and Community-Initiated Alerting*

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Competitive Carriers Association (“CCA”)¹ submits this *ex parte* to further supplement the record regarding CCA’s pending Petition for Waiver² (“Petition”) and reiterate CCA’s request that the compliance deadline for embedded references be extended to May 1, 2019, in the above-referenced proceeding.³ CCA continues to commend the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) for its voluntary Wireless Emergency Alerts (“WEA”) program and reiterates its participating members’ intent to provide consumers with enhanced wireless emergency alerts to the extent feasible.

A successful WEA program requires ongoing collaboration between a variety of entities including the FCC, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, public safety industry, and telecommunications carriers, vendors, and suppliers. As described in CCA’s Petition,

¹ CCA is the nation’s leading association for competitive wireless providers and stakeholders across the nation. CCA’s membership includes nearly 100 competitive wireless providers ranging from small, rural carriers serving fewer than 5,000 customers to regional and national providers serving millions of customers. CCA also represents nearly 150 associate members including vendors and suppliers that provide products and services throughout the mobile communications supply chain.

² Petition for Waiver, or in the alternative, Request for Extension of Time of Competitive Carriers Association, PS Docket No. 15-91 (filed August 16, 2017) (“CCA WEA Petition”).

³ *Improving Wireless Emergency Alerts and Community-Initiated Alerting*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, PS Docket No. 15-91, et al., FCC 16-127 (rel. Sept. 29, 2016) (“2016 Report & Order” or “FNPRM”).

certain capabilities necessary to implement enhanced WEA requirements are still in flux, which justifies an extension of the embedded references compliance deadline.⁴ First, some providers must upgrade from an application-based solution to a network-based solution to comply with the enhanced WEA program. This will require additional time to incorporate these solutions and obtain devices that are cell broadcast enabled. While CCA understands that certain ATIS standards for embedded references have been approved and are in the process of being published, providers require additional time to upgrade the commercial mobile service provider (“CMSP”) gateway and the Cellular Broadcast Center (“CBC”) servers, which ultimately support the passage of WEA messages with embedded references including Universal Resource Locators (“URLs”) and phone numbers to consumers. The CBC servers are the gateway to wireless carriers, and thus are a critical component to delivering a WEA message with embedded references from the alert originator. As a result, carriers that are currently participating in the WEA program through an application-based solution need additional time to coordinate, test, and implement updates to current solutions.

Many providers also require additional time to obtain devices that are cell broadcast enabled, or to ensure there are devices currently in the market that can be cell broadcast enabled on the carrier’s network. Standard-based WEA systems use cell broadcast to support delivery of a WEA message from the alert gateway to the consumer. Carriers using a legacy application-based system previously did not use cell broadcast technology to deliver WEA alerts; thus, the devices used by customers on their network may not be cell broadcast enabled, which is required to support enhanced WEA capabilities. Additionally, as CCA has previously noted, rural and regional carriers are often delayed as long as twelve months in receiving the requisite equipment needed to provide consumers with the latest services and devices. For this reason, in addition to providing adequate time to work with vendors to support an application-based solution, or to upgrade individual networks, the FCC should allow CCA members adequate time to ensure devices can support enhanced WEA capabilities, through May 1, 2019.

In addition to obtaining devices, carriers also need time to test WEA-capable handsets currently on the market today. Otherwise, users may need to manually copy and paste a link into an Internet browser to access additional content. As noted in the record, some handsets are not currently capable of supporting “clickable” hyperlinks due to limitations in the device itself.⁵ And many providers, including those who may be using vendors to deliver WEA alerts from the alert gateway to consumers, have no visibility or control over the device’s ability to display the embedded reference and enhanced material. It also is important to recognize that support for embedded references is contingent upon a device’s capability to access the Internet, and many legacy devices cannot support “clickable” links. This is especially relevant for CCA members serving rural and remote areas, who may still be transitioning from 2G and 3G networks to newer technologies. CCA therefore urges the FCC to extend the November 1, 2017 deadline to May 1, 2019, to allow the device ecosystem sufficient time to support the enhanced embedded references requirement adopted in 2016, and to ensure carriers can continue offering critical WEA services.

⁴ See e.g., CCA WEA Petition.

⁵ See CTIA Petition for Reconsideration, PS Docket No. 15-91 (filed Dec. 1, 2016) (“CTIA Petition”).

Finally, the FCC must likewise provide adequate time for providers to obtain and implement the necessary ATIS standards. As CCA has noted, many smaller and regional members do not participate in the ATIS standards-setting process, and are therefore delayed in accessing this important technical material.⁶ Likewise, alert originators may require additional time to complete training, and ensure there are processes established for initiating embedded URL alerts and confirming that the URL embedded in the WEA message is complete and reachable.⁷ This will allow carriers to confirm that the hyperlink is not simply a link with a hidden URL address. For these reasons, the FCC should extend the compliance deadline to May 1, 2019.

CCA looks forward to continued work with industry to ensure consumers can access critical information in times of disasters and emergencies. This *ex parte* notification is being filed electronically with your office pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the Commission's rules. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rebecca Murphy Thompson

Rebecca Murphy Thompson
EVP & General Counsel
Competitive Carriers Association

cc (via email): Matthew Berry
Michael Carowitz
Zenji Nakazawa
Lisa Fowlkes

Nicole McGinnis
Megan Henry
Renee Roland
Gregory Cooke

⁶ This is compounded by the fact that many non-nationwide carriers have fewer resources and a limited ability to influence standards development and equipment design. Indeed, the two largest carriers often command important aspects of standards development and equipment manufacturing, with competitive carriers usually 12-months behind larger providers in implementing standards and accessing devices. *See ex parte* Letter from Rebecca Murphy Thompson, EVP & General Counsel, CCA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, PS Docket No. 15-91 (filed Sept. 29, 2017); *Ex Parte* Letter from Rebecca Murphy Thompson, EVP & General Counsel, CCA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, PS Docket No. 15-91 at 2 (filed July 18, 2016). *See also, e.g.*, Reply Comments of Competitive Carriers Association, CG Docket No. 16-145 at 2 (filed July 25, 2016) (citing Comments of Competitive Carriers Association, CG Docket No. 16-145 at 4 (filed July 11, 2016) (noting that AT&T and Verizon both command important aspects of network development in many contexts, including equipment design and manufacture); *and* Revised Petition of Competitive Carriers Association for a Waiver at 7-9, GN Docket No. 15-178 (filed Apr. 8, 2016)).

⁷ *See ex parte* Letter from Robert Morse, Associate General Counsel, Federal Regulatory and Legal Affairs, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, PS Docket No. 15-91 (filed Oct. 5, 2017) ("Verizon WEA EP").