

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Amendment of Part 74 of the Commission's)	MB Docket No. 18-119
Rules Regarding FM Translator Interference)	

To: The Commission

**COMMENTS
OF
MONROE PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE TELEVISION, INC.**

Monroe Public Access Cable Television, Inc. ("MPACT"), by Counsel, and pursuant to the *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("NPRM")*, FCC 18-60 (released May 10, 2018) submits these Comments in opposition to certain elements of the proposal to streamline the FCC's rules and procedures relating to interference caused by FM translators. MPACT is the licensee of Radio Station WERW-FM in Monroe, Michigan. WERW provides service far beyond its 54 dBu contour, and has numerous listeners and sponsors from its distant service area. Should the FCC adopt some of the proposals outlined in this proceeding, MPACT will lose a significant number of listeners and sponsors.

MPACT understands the motivation behind this rulemaking in light of the AM Revitalization efforts but the FCC's efforts to revitalize the AM radio service should not concomitantly degrade the FM radio service. If all the rules and policies proposed in this proceeding are adopted, the demise of the FM radio service will occur.

Under the current rules, FM translators are required to protect both full service and first in line licensed secondary facilities to not just their respective protected class contour but also

to the extent of these stations' "listenable signal." The listenable signal of WERW extends well beyond the station's 54 dBu contour to towns such as Carleton, Dundee, Erie, Estral Beach, Flat Rock, Ida, Luna Pier, Petersburg, and Temperance. Attached please find a letter-statement from Milward J. Beaudry II, MPACT's Executive Director, regarding the listenership and revenue derived from the fringe service area of WERW's service area.

While there may be situations where an FM translator is limited by its interference with a full power FM station beyond the 54 dBu contour of the full power FM station, a change to the rules would expose each full power FM station to further erosion of its audience. Terrestrial radio is already beleaguered by online music services, YouTube and podcasts that have caused many people to migrate away from the FM radio band. Along with these new trends we have seen considerable sponsorship dollars move away from terrestrial broadcasting to online broadcasting.

For example, listeners to National Public Radio stations are aging faster than the overall radio audience and listening less to the network's most popular radio programs according to data shared by the NPR Network. Though NPR is seeing some listening gains on digital platforms, particularly with podcasts, its broadcast audience has dropped. Average-quarter-hour listening during morning drive time dropped 11 percent from 2011 to 2015, and afternoon drive audience declined 6 percent. The only age bracket that increased during that time was the 65-plus audience. See, *Current, "Drop in younger listeners makes dent in NPR news audience," October 16, 2015*. About 50% of Americans now listen to online radio. See, *Radio & Internet News, www.rainnews.com, March 11, 2016*.

MPACT believes that, to provide a level of administrative certainty to these types of proceedings, there should be a full-power station field strength value beyond which no

complaint of actual or predicted interference will be considered actionable but the 54 dBu value is not appropriate for this cutoff point. Since MPACT has numerous regular listeners well beyond the 54 dBu contour of WERW, we believe that a lower value field strength would be more appropriate than the 54 dBu as a cutoff for interference complaints.

New technologies and changing listener habits are challenging enough to traditional terrestrial broadcasting. We do not need to be taking any action that further contributes to the degradation of the FM radio service. A careful balance needs to be achieved.

FM translator stations have always been licensed on a secondary basis, and they should continue to be licensed that way. FM translator stations should not be provided equal or near-equal status to full power FM radio stations as the regulatory obligations for an FM translator station license will remain much less burdensome than a full power FM radio station license. There must be reasonable limits. We cannot rob Paul to pay Peter, but that is exactly what is proposed here as the efforts here to help the FM translator service will degrade the full power FM radio service.

In the NPRM the Commission states “we believe that it is necessary to consider how best to balance our enduring interest in maintaining the technical integrity of our FM services with our desire to promote greater certainty and stability for translator licensees.” See, *NPRM at para. 27*. MPACT believes that such balancing should not include any geographical limit on where a full power FM station has listeners that live, work or drive, or where the full power FM station derives advertising revenue. Therefore, the protected zone for full power FM radio stations must go beyond the 54 dBu contour.

This proceeding should focus on the heart of the complaint process. If the Commission were to adopt the more stringent and standardized content requirements for a listener

complaint and a minimum number of listener complaints that must support an interference complaint then an adequate balance will have been achieved without the need for an unreasonable outer contour limit.

Since one of the goals in this proceeding is to provide more certainty and efficiency to FM translator interference proceedings then a significant step in that direction would be for the FCC to create what it believes is a model interference complaint questionnaire to be used FM translator interference proceedings. Presently the FCC relies upon broadcasters to elicit such information and often those questionnaires vary widely from case to case. A standardized form would not only elicit exactly the type of information the FCC requires but it would also reduce the gamesmanship that accompanies these proceedings. The standardized form would need to be sworn to under the penalty of perjury, and possibly executed in the presence of a Notary to ensure the legitimacy of each complainant.


The use of a standardized form released by the FCC would also serve to show each listener complainant that their responses would definitely be scrutinized by a federal agency, and that their continued cooperation would be necessary. This would separate the genuine complainant who seriously wants these matters resolved from the casual complainant who may not really care but nonetheless loaned their name to the effort with no desire to follow up, if necessary.

Heading off a drawn-out and often expensive interference complaint proceeding is to the benefit of all involved parties, especially with regard to the scarce resources of the FCC. Costs to prosecute translator interference claims can result in thousands of dollars of legal and engineering fees. The use of a standardized complaint form would streamline the process and reduce the overall expenses of all involved parties.

Finally, MPACT agrees with the aspect of the proposal that in response to an interference complaint an FM translator station should be allowed to modify anywhere on the FM dial and still be considered a minor change application. The routine acceptance of these types of displacement modification applications would certainly facilitate the resolution of many FM translator interference complaints.

Respectfully submitted,

MONROE PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION, INC.

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Dear Mr. Tepper

This letter is to identify an interference issue caused by a Class-D FM translator as reported by listeners within the 54 dBu contour. The most recent being on July 19, 2018. On numerous days and times listeners and sponsors of Monroe Public Access Cable Television, Inc. licensee of WERW-FM have identified that W232CA translator assigned to Parent Station WUFL-AM was the cause of co-channel interference.

The communities within Monroe County are uniquely linked to the city of Monroe which is the county seat where WERW is licensed to serve. As a rural county not well served by media outlets from either Detroit, Michigan to the north and Toledo, Ohio to the south, this fact alone identifies how important our service is to Monroe County as a whole.

MPACT relies on the revenue from Monroe County businesses beyond the city of Monroe, Michigan for sponsorships to operate WERW-FM.

Another aspect of our operation, MPACT works very closely with our local government in airing council meetings on WERW as part of commitment to the community. Our services in this area help to inform our listeners and has become an important link between government and citizens.

Sincerely,

Milward J. Beaudry II
Executive Director

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MPACT on Charter Channel 187/Comcast Channel 21