

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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In the Matter of)
)
Administration of)
the North American)
Numbering Plan)

CC Docket No. 92-237

COMMENTS OF AMERICAN TELEPHONE
AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

American Telephone and Telegraph Company ("AT&T") hereby submits its comments on the Notice of Inquiry in CC Docket No. 92-237 ("NOI"),¹ which was issued following a broadly supported petition filed by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners ("NARUC") asking for an inquiry into NANP administration and number and code assignment procedures.² The NOI requests comment (p. 6837) in two areas, specifically: (i) who should administer the North American Numbering Plan ("NANP") and how might the administration be improved; and (ii) the proposed expansion of the Carrier Identification Codes used for Feature Group D access from a three to a four-digit format.

BACKGROUND

Since 1984, Bell Communications Research Corporation ("Bellcore") has served as the NANP

¹ In the Matter of Administration of the North American Numbering Plan, 7 FCC Rcd. 6837 (1992).

² NOI, 7 FCC Rcd. at 6837.

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Administrator ("NANPA"). In this capacity, Bellcore administers the integrated numbering plan for World Zone 1, that covers the United States and seventeen other countries. The functions of the administrator include: assignment of numbering resources; monitoring the availability of these resources; and participation in industry, national and international standards bodies. As the NOI points out (p. 6837 n.4), Bellcore is owned "by the seven regional holding companies resulting from the divestiture."

Increasingly, questions have been raised as to Bellcore's ability to ignore the requirements of its owners and remain unbiased in its administration of the NANP, particularly where the owners of Bellcore compete with those dependent on the fair and impartial administration of numbering resources.³ In addition, AT&T has specifically urged that a mechanism be established to resolve numbering disputes in the absence of industry consensus.⁴

Other examples cited by the Commission (p. 6840) show that the current NANP administration process fails to meet the needs of carriers, and more importantly, of the customers they seek to serve. In another example, several international carriers expressed concern that foreign

³ See NOI, 7 FCC Rcd. at 6840 (describing complaints raised by participants in the new and expanding mobile services market, who claim to have little participation in numbering decisions that dramatically affect their ability to provide service).

⁴ Id. at 6840-41.

telephone administrations are unable to identify the carrier to whom particular calls (switched 64 kbps service) should be routed. These carriers brought this concern to the NANPA in 1989, and suggested that some of the 640 new area codes planned for 1995 be assigned for use in international carrier identification.⁵ After meeting to review alternatives and conducting a lengthy comment period, NANPA issued a draft advisory that ignored the suggested use of area codes, which have, for the most part, been reserved for the use of local exchange carriers ("LECs").⁶ Instead, NANPA proposed the creation of a new four-digit code in place of the three-digit area code. This proposal was opposed by virtually all parties (except LECs), violates several CCITT numbering Recommendations, and is even outside the ten-digit format of the NANP. The problem remains unresolved.

Similarly, in June 1985 LEC representatives informed T1D1 (an ISDN standards body) that ten-digit NANP

⁵ This solution is analogous to the Data Network Identification Code assignment guidelines for international data network providers that were developed by the industry at the direction of the Commission. See In the Matter of International Communications Policies Governing Designation of Recognized Private Operating Agencies, 104 F.C.C.2d 208(1986).

⁶ In this regard, as long as local exchange carriers are able to use NPAs to identify their networks or services, non-LEC service providers should be afforded the same opportunity. This would permit customers to have the same capability to reach LEC or non-LEC service providers and would allow non-LEC networks to be used to provide unique services, accessible from any country.

numbers would be used by local exchange carriers with their ISDN customers. One year later, NANPA convened an ISDN Numbering Forum ("INF") to develop a plan to permit non-LEC service providers (including AT&T) to use ten-digit NANP numbers with their ISDN customers. After five ineffective and often counterproductive meetings, NANPA unilaterally terminated the meetings and within two months announced that no agreements on a long-term direction for use of ten-digit numbers by non-LEC service providers had been reached.⁷

I. AN IMPARTIAL, INDUSTRY-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO ADMINISTER THE NANP.

These examples illustrate the need to establish a more responsive and impartial administration of the NANP.⁸ To accomplish this, AT&T recommends that the Commission, as it has elsewhere, rely on the industry to develop and implement numbering policy responsive to the needs of the

⁷ The NANPA has also ignored concerns of other interested parties with respect to recent proposals for personal numbering before the T1P1.3 subworking group ("SWG") on numbering, addressing, and routing. This SWG is chaired by the NANPA and is comprised primarily of LECs. Just this year, the SWG chair ruled that agreement had been reached to adopt a LEC proposal, despite objections from AT&T, MCI and Sprint, effectively excluding from a technical report an interexchange carrier proposal for personal numbering.

⁸ Similar concerns led to the decision to remove the responsibility for administration of the 800 service database from Bellcore. See, e.g., In the Matter of Provision of Access for 800 Service, 4 FCC Rcd. 2824, 2835 (1989), recon. 6 FCC Rcd. 5421, 5429-30 (1991).

marketplace.⁹ Specifically, the Commission should establish a World Zone 1 Numbering Forum, as depicted in Appendix A, and transfer responsibility for NANP administration from Bellcore to this new organization.

This forum would be a representative body open to any and all interested parties. The NANP Policy Development Committee should include representatives from both government and industry; such as participants from NARUC, the Department of State, regulatory authorities in World Zone 1 countries, and any interested service providers. The Commission should co-chair this committee, thereby facilitating its oversight responsibilities, along with an industry representative that could be rotated every two years.¹⁰ The function of the committee would be to develop and adopt NANP policy, including guidelines and procedures to implement its decisions. The Committee could rely on

⁹ See, e.g., In the Matter of Amendment of Part 63 of the Commission's Rules to Provide for Notification by Common Carriers of Service Disruptions, 7 FCC Rcd. 2010, 2012-13 (1992) (where the Commission relied on the Network Operations Forum (composed primarily of carrier representatives) to improve information exchange among carriers); In the Matter of Provision of Access for 800 Service, 4 FCC Rcd. 2824, 2835 (1989) (recognizing the use of inter-industry discussions to develop number assignment guidelines).

¹⁰ The costs of the World Zone 1 Numbering Forum should be borne equitably by the users of numbering resources. To the extent that costs associated with NANP administration are recovered today by the LECs through access charges, these charges should be reduced to reflect the costs that will be borne directly by numbering resource users.

various industry members and standards working groups (many of which exist today) for technical support, and as sources of proposals or recommendations. This committee would also provide an initial forum for problem identification and discussion, and for arriving at consensus resolution wherever possible.¹¹

When problem resolutions or policy initiatives and guidelines have been adopted, they would be referred to an NANP Administration and Implementation Group that would be responsible for carrying out the policy committee's decisions. The implementation group would administer number assignments in accordance with the specific guidelines and directives of the policy committee.¹² The implementation group would also be responsible for providing periodic feedback to the policy committee on the progress of its activities.

¹¹ One model for how the consensus model might work is described in the American National Standards Institute ("ANSI") "Procedures for the Development and Coordination of American National Standards," approved by the ANSI board of directors on September 9, 1987.

¹² Because specific guidance would be provided to this group regarding how to implement policy committee decisions, it may be acceptable for Bellcore to continue to perform this ministerial function, at least for a brief transitional period. But as improved technology and the demands of customers continue to intensify competition in the marketplace, it would be best to transfer this responsibility as soon as possible to an independent entity to avoid even the appearance of impropriety and any possibility of continuing controversy.

In certain situations, where the policy committee is unable to arrive at a decision through consensus or otherwise, the Commission's alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") procedures should be employed.¹³ Such situations would include instances where the committee has successfully narrowed the issues to a choice between two alternatives, where two distinct industry groups are unable to resolve a particular disagreement, or where implementation disputes arise that require expedited resolution. In situations where ADR is not appropriate, all parties would continue to address concerns directly to the Commission, through a complaint proceeding or otherwise.¹⁴

The combination of these conflict resolution guidelines and an industry-driven forum focused on numbering policy and implementation will provide the necessary unbiased NANP administration. The benefits of this proposal would be the impartial administration of numbering resources, with efficient solutions to conflicts through a clearly defined process for problem resolution. Equitable administration of critical numbering resources will help ensure the continued introduction of competitively offered, innovative new services, and the growth of healthy competition.

¹³ NOI, 7 FCC Rcd. at 6841.

¹⁴ Id. at 6837, 6841. As the Commission recognizes (id. at 6837), it maintains plenary jurisdiction over the NANP.

II. EXPANSION OF CARRIER IDENTIFICATION CODES FROM THREE TO FOUR DIGITS SHOULD PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY.

The NOI also requests comments (p. 6841) on the current plan to expand Carrier Identification Codes ("CICs") from three to four digits. The long term solution for the need to accommodate additional access customers and to meet the needs of the ever increasing number of market participants is expansion to a four-digit CIC.¹⁵

There are, however, significant costs associated with a conversion from 10XXX to 101XXXX dialing, required to accommodate four-digit CICs, that should be thoroughly considered.¹⁶ The requirement to educate customers about new dialing arrangements, for example, combined with the increased dialing time and increased likelihood of dialing errors, strongly suggests that 101XXXX dialing should be delayed for as long as possible. Indeed, the current industry plan recognizes the need for a transition -- that is, a period of permissive dialing -- and allows the assignment of 2000 four-digit codes while still permitting

¹⁵ Other solutions were considered but not adopted. Regional assignment of CICs, for example, would allow codes to be duplicated for different interexchange carriers that purchase access in only a few areas, distinct from one another. Serious concerns were raised, however, by regional carriers who saw such a plan as an impediment to their future expansion to national service, and by some access providers who have a nationwide presence and believed that duplication of CICs by region would create an immense administrative burden and require significant and costly development in their support systems (e.g., access billing).

¹⁶ NOI, 7 FCC Rcd. at 6841 (citing comments of Bell Atlantic).

the use of the existing 10XXX dialing for the users of networks assigned three-digit CICs. At the current rate of CIC assignments (14 per month), this permissive period could last almost 12 years.¹⁷

Further, administrative and technical changes have been put in place to prevent CIC exhaustion for as long as possible. Specifically, the industry has approved guidelines, which the NANPA has implemented, to aggressively reclaim assigned but unused CICs.¹⁸ In addition, the soon to be implemented (1Q93) expansion of FG B to four digits and the separation of the FG B and FG D codes, allowing their independent assignment, will provide for the continued availability of three-digit FG D codes.¹⁹ For all these

¹⁷ The current NANPA proposal for an 18-month permissive period simply ignores these facts, as well as the costs to customers described above, and is therefore unacceptable.

¹⁸ The NOI seeks input (p. 6841) regarding rules for assignment, recall, and transfer of CICs, should the codes not be expanded. AT&T believes that the current industry guidelines are adequate. In particular, there is no need at this time for non-voluntary recall of any existing codes. Carriers use multiple codes for a variety of technical and service reasons and any demand that codes be returned would significantly impact access purchasers and their customers.

¹⁹ For this reason, use of FG B should be encouraged for non-traditional (non-carrier) access purchasers who use access (and CICs) for other than provision of common carrier services. The industry should also examine how the desirability of FG B could be improved; for example, by providing calling number identification (ANI and/or CPN) on all FG B calls (direct or tandem connected).

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reasons, implementation of four-digit CIC codes should continue to proceed cautiously.

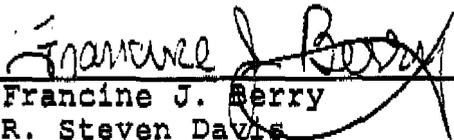
CONCLUSION

Competition, and the requirement that critical numbering resources be allocated, assigned and administered equitably and without bias to ensure the continued growth of healthy competition, requires that NANP policy development and administration be transferred from Bellcore to an open, representative forum of all interested parties. The information obtained through this proceeding will allow the Commission to identify what steps must be taken, and what procedures need to be established, to ensure impartial, equitable access to numbering resources for all service providers.

Respectfully submitted,

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