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December 7, 2016

Marlene Dortch
Secretary

Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Notice of *Ex Parte*, CG Docket No. 16-145

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On December 5, Jeff Cohen, Mark Reddish, and Lauren Corcoran from the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International met with representatives of the Commission's Office of Strategic Planning & Policy Analysis, Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau, and Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss APCO's views on the above-captioned proceeding regarding the transition from TTY to Real-Time Text (RTT) technology.¹

APCO reiterated its support for RTT as a tool that has the potential to enable faster, more robust communications with 9-1-1 than TTY or SMS.² Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability must have viable options for contacting 9-1-1.

APCO's particular concern is that backwards compatibility for RTT-to-TTY would establish text-to-911 as a nationwide service available to all consumers using RTT, even when PSAPs have not elected to implement text-to-911.³ The vast majority of PSAPs have not implemented an IP-based SMS text-to-911 solution. As a result, the entire general population will be capable of texting 9-1-1 via RTT, while leaving most PSAPs with the sole option of responding back with TTY – the substantially inferior technology RTT is meant to replace.

¹ Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology et al., Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 16-53, CG Docket No. 16-145, GN Docket No. 15-178 (rel. Apr. 29, 2016) (NPRM), available at

https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-16-53A1.pdf.

² See Comments of APCO International, Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology et al., filed July 11, 2016, available at

<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/107111379403276/APCO%20Comments%20RTT%20TTY%207-11-16.pdf> (APCO Comments).

³ APCO Comments at 3.

There are numerous reasons that the vast majority of PSAPs have not yet adopted SMS text-to-911 and that, of the PSAPs that have, very few have elected to implement text-to-911 via TTY. PSAPs face significant financial, operational, and technical challenges with implementing text-to-911. Even without the cost of additional equipment, for example if the PSAP elects to receive text messages via TTY, PSAPs still face costs and technical challenges for integrating TTY with PSAP systems such as computer aided dispatch and records management systems. Further, preparing to receive these text messages from the general public is far different from being ready to receive messages only from individuals with disabilities.

Accordingly, APCO recommends that the Commission seek comment in a further notice of proposed rulemaking on how to address contingencies if an influx of RTT-to-TTY 9-1-1 messages from the general public adversely impacts PSAP operations and emergency response. APCO would also support inclusion of consumer outreach and education requirements similar to prior waiver orders, aimed at explaining the potential limitations of using RTT for reaching 9-1-1, particularly for the majority of PSAPs that do not have IP-connectivity.

Ideally, all PSAPs would have the funding, policies, personnel, and other resources needed to achieve NG9-1-1 solutions and be able to send and receive RTT messages as RTT, taking full advantage of the advanced features the technology offers. The Commission could assist in this regard by requiring carriers to employ RTT solutions that use consensus-based standards developed through an accredited standards development process to ensure full interoperability, economies of scale, and compatibility with other NG9-1-1 systems. This will ensure that PSAPs are able to receive RTT messages in the format of their choice with only minimal additional costs and increase the likelihood that RTT users, particularly those who come to rely on RTT as their primary means of contacting 9-1-1, fully benefit from its enhanced features. Further, any requirements related to RTT-TTY compatibility, which as proposed by the Commission assume the development of a gateway, must clarify that the costs of additional software or infrastructure will not be imposed upon PSAPs.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

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