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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

CC Docket No. 95-116
RM 8535

In the Matter of)
)
Telephone Number Portability)
)

Comments of
U.S. Intelco Networks, Inc.

U.S. Intelco Networks, Inc. (U.S. Intelco), by counsel, hereby files these comments in response to the July 13, 1995 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued by the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) in the above-captioned proceeding.¹ U.S. Intelco is wholly owned by 282 Independents Telephone Companies (Independents or ITCs) and provides customer database services, calling card billing validation services, 800 RESPORG services, revenue administration services and other related database services to over 1000 Independents nationwide. In providing these services, U.S. Intelco has demonstrated its commitment to the deployment of advanced telecommunications services throughout America and its initiative and participation in the implementation of an Independent Signalling System 7 network which has ensured the availability of line information database and 800 database services to customers served by rural ITCs.

U.S. Intelco has made a commitment to utilize the experience noted above in the development and provision of an advanced Local Area Number Portability (LANP) functionality aimed at assuring an

¹ See In the Matter of Telephone Number Portability, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, CC Docket No. 95-116, RM 8535, FCC 95-284, released July 13, 1995 (NPRM).

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economically and administratively viable method of providing local number portability through the interconnected, nationwide switched network. As the Commission is aware, U.S. Intelco has been actively involved in one of the on-going trials regarding the deployment of a network hierarchy that would support the forms of local number portability noted in the NPRM.² However, as explained below, the "Seattle Trial" concentrated on service provider number portability.³

To this end, U.S. Intelco, on behalf of the group of those entities involved in the Seattle Trial of LANP, is filing today an interim status report with the Commission that describes the efforts made to date on this project, clarifications as to the focus of the Seattle Trial, and the lessons learned and challenges confronting local number portability.⁴ U.S. Intelco incorporates that filing herein by reference.

U.S. Intelco submits that the Commission should take a national leadership role in the development of a consistent and cohesive policy regarding local number portability, governed by certain overall public policy goals that, ultimately, are aimed at

² See, e.g., id. at para. 13.

³ See id. ("Service provider portability refers to the ability of end users to retain the same telephone numbers (that is, the same NPA and NXX codes and the same line numbers) when changing from one service provider to another") (footnote omitted).

⁴ See Interim Status Report of the Seattle Local Area Number Portability Trial, CC Docket No. 95-116, RM 8535, filed September 12, 1995 (Interim Report).

benefitting all consumers when demand for the local number portability function is present. U.S. Intelco submits that the LANP "Island" approach inherent in the Seattle Trial provides the most promising network hierarchy for deployment of local number portability in an economical and administratively feasible manner. In support thereof, the following is shown:

I. A National Leadership Role Is Appropriate For The Commission

U.S. Intelco agrees with the Commission's general observation that the Commission should take a national leadership role in the area of local number portability. Due to the impact of local number portability on interstate communications and number exhaustion,⁵ this proceeding provides the appropriate forum for this undertaking. U.S. Intelco also believes, however, that concurrently with this undertaking, the Commission should encourage the development of empirical local number portability evidence through those state trials that are being conducted or currently are planned.

This partnership between the Commission and the now participating state commissions, in U.S. Intelco's view, should provide the Commission not only with substantial insight as to what is technically and economically (including administrative) feasible, but should also provide empirical evidence regarding how

⁵ See NPRM at paras. 29-31.

to minimize concerns over number exhaustion.⁶ Results of these trials can be periodically reported to the Commission and the record developed herein expanded to provide an opportunity for all interested parties to review and comment on those results.

Under this approach, U.S. Intelco anticipates that there may very well develop a consensus among the Commission, the involved state commissions, and the industry as to what network hierarchy provides for the most prudent deployment of local number portability while furthering national policies "such as nondiscrimination and competitive neutrality."⁷

II. The Commission Should Assure That Its Policies Of Encouraging LANP Are Consistent With Demand And Cost Causation Principles

Based on its experience and analysis of the other local number portability proposals set forth by the Commission, U.S. Intelco believes that any solution should, as a prerequisite, be capable of being implemented where demand is highest. This principle, in U.S. Intelco's view, is consistent with rational decision making; investment in network functionality cannot be divorced from the need and demand for a service.

To this end, the Seattle Trial has confirmed the conceptual notion that phased deployment, i.e., "Islands" of LANP, can be accomplished. Thus, regional, interconnected pockets of LANP can

⁶ U.S. Intelco shares the Commission's concern over number exhaustion. See, e.g., id. at para. 42. Unlike other proposals, the network hierarchy studied in the Seattle Trial accommodates this concern. See Interim Report, supra n.4, at 7-8.

⁷ See NPRM at para. 32.

be deployed and the costs of implementation can be contained in areas where those costs can be recovered from the cost causers.

Unlike a nationwide "solution" that assumes demand, the Seattle Trial's phased deployment approach provides a rational basis upon which to conclude that local number portability can further the public interest. In U.S. Intelco's view, placing the burden of cost recovery on rate payers who have no need for the function is antithetical to the public interest. U.S. Intelco notes, however, that the Seattle Trial's "Island" approach and the technology it has studied avoids this result by permitting a natural migration to a nationwide, interconnected system of regionalized data bases where costs are incurred only where the demand is present to recover those costs.

Accordingly, U.S. Intelco submits that it may be entirely premature to suggest that the Commission alone should take action to expedite local number portability implementation.⁸ Such action presumes the need for local number portability nationwide, a presumption that U.S. Intelco submits it questionable at best.

⁸ See *id.* at para 33. To this end, U.S. Intelco submits that the Commission should direct the industry to establish a separate standards-setting body to deal specifically with call routing and feature interaction issues associated with local number portability, in general. Due to the number of issues currently being addressed regarding standards, U.S. Intelco is concerned that addressing the local number portability issues within on-going forums may not allow for timely implementation of local number portability when such is required by the market participants in a given areas.

III. Multiple, Regional LANP Databases Should Be Deployed

Finally, U.S. Intelco submits that the Commission should concentrate its efforts regarding network architectures on the notion of multiple, regional databases rather than a national database such as that used in the 800 database environment.⁹ In addition to those observations noted in Section II, above, i.e., a natural migration of deploying local number portability where and when demand exists, it is entirely reasonable to expect that the aggregate volume of portable numbers will exceed the number of existing stored 800 numbers. This expectation, in turn, gives rise to concerns that one nationwide data base may be functionally inadequate to meet the demands placed upon it.

Accordingly, a single neutral entity should be selected within each regional area or "Island" to administer, maintain, and modify the local number portability data base based on the needs of that "Island." Through the adoption of this "regional" administrator model, the Commission can assure that the needs of local service providers which require this network functionality are met in a timely and responsive manner.

IV. Conclusion

U.S. Intelco has been working closely with its partners in the Seattle Trial to establish a network hierarchy for local number portability that accommodates concerns for number exhaustion, principles regarding prudent network deployment based on customer

⁹ See NPRM at para. 50.

demand, and the goal of administrative ease. For the reasons stated in both the Interim Report and herein, U.S Intelco submits that the Seattle Trial's regionalized "Island" approach to LANP is most promising for the natural migration to a nationwide local number portability solution. Accordingly, U.S. Intelco respectfully requests the Commission to take action in manner consistent with these comments and the Interim Report.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: September 12, 1995

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Nicola A. Chenosky, do hereby certify that on this 12th day of September, 1995, copies of the foregoing **Comments of U.S. Intelco Networks, Inc.** were hand delivered to the parties listed below.

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