

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

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In the Matter of

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Telephone Number Portability

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CC Docket No. 95-116

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

CONSOLIDATED RESPONSE OF
RAM MOBILE DATA USA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

RAM Mobile Data USA Limited Partnership ("RMD"), hereby submits this consolidated response to the petitions for reconsideration filed in the above-referenced proceeding.¹

RMD operates SMR systems that provide "interconnected"² mobile data services that do not offer real-time, two-way switched voice service. As such, its systems currently are excluded from the Commission's definition of "covered SMR" systems for purposes of this and other proceedings.³ This exclusion is entirely reasonable. RMD's systems are unlike traditional cellular and broadband PCS systems and they "will have little competitive impact on competition between providers of wireless telephony service or between wireless and wireline carriers" for whom the number portability rules were intended.⁴ Indeed, RMD's data customers do not have telephone numbers, *per se*, to port, as it were, to another carrier. As a practical matter, it simply makes no sense to speak in terms of "number portability" when speaking of data-only SMR systems.

Nonetheless, several parties have petitioned the Commission to reconsider its "covered SMR" definition and to amend it in ways that might, inadvertently or not, bring RMD's mobile data systems within the scope of the definition. For the reasons set forth below, the Commission should reject these suggestions.

¹ RMD herein responds to petitions for reconsideration filed in this proceeding by The American Mobile Telecommunications Association, Inc. ("AMTA"); Nextel Communications, Inc. (Nextel); and Small Business In Telecommunications, Inc. ("SBT").

² RMD's systems are deemed to be interconnected, however, only because of the Commission's expansive definition of "interconnected service," which includes systems that allow customers to interconnect to the public switched network. See In re Implementation of Sections 3(n) and 332 of the Communications Act, 9 FCC Rcd 1411, 1434-35 (1994).

³ The Commission also is considering the application of its rules regarding CMRS resale and roaming (CC Docket No. 94-54), enhanced-911 (CC Docket No. 94-102), and RF emissions hazards (ET Docket No. 93-62) with respect to "covered SMR" services. To the extent that the Commission seeks to use a single uniform definition for "covered SMR" services in each of these contexts, therefore, it is essential that the Commission not consider RMD's comments herein in isolation, but rather consider the impact of its "covered SMR" definition to which these comments speak in a wide variety of contexts.

⁴ In re Telephone Number Portability, CC Docket No. 95-116, First Report & Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (rel. July 2, 1996) ("First R&O") ¶ 156.

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DISCUSSION

I. The Commission's Exclusion Of Data-Only SMR Systems From The "Covered SMR" Definition Should Be Retained.

In the First R&O, the Commission determined that it will apply its telephone number portability rules to cellular, broadband PCS, and "covered SMR" services.⁵ The First R&O defines "covered SMR" systems to include 800 MHz and 900 MHz SMR licensees that hold geographic area licenses and incumbent wide area SMR licensees that offer real-time, two-way switched voice service that is interconnected with the public switched network.⁶ This definition, the Commission explained, was intended to exclude "local SMR licensees offering mainly dispatch services to specialized customers in a non-cellular system configuration."⁷ Further, as the Commission noted in its CMRS resale order, the definition of "covered SMR" services excludes SMR licensees "offering only data, one-way, or stored voice services on an interconnected basis."⁸ These exclusions are based on the recognition that such systems do not compete substantially with wireline local exchange carriers or with cellular and broadband PCS providers.⁹ This exclusion of data-only SMR systems from the "covered SMR" definition is well founded and should be retained.

To begin with, data-only SMR systems provide services that are unlike the services offered by cellular, broadband PCS, and real-time, two-way voice SMR systems. These "covered" services are equivalent to, and a substitute for, wireline local exchange carrier services. Data-only SMR systems, by contrast, compete in different markets and are subject to different competitive concerns. With respect to the instant proceeding, for instance, data-only SMR systems use technologies that distinguish them from cellular, broadband PCS and real-time, two-way voice SMR systems. Indeed, RMD's customers do not have a "telephone number," *per se*, for use with the RMD system. These customers are assigned a unique identification code unrelated to local exchange telephone numbers. It makes no sense to speak in terms of number portability for these customers — they have no number to "port."

⁵ First R&O ¶ 155.

⁶ Id. (citing Interconnection and Resale Obligations Pertaining to Commercial Mobile Radio Services, CC Docket No. 94-54 (rel. July 12, 1996)).

⁷ Id. ¶ 156.

⁸ Interconnection and Resale Obligations Pertaining to Commercial Mobile Radio Services, CC Docket No. 94-54 (rel. July 12, 1996).

⁹ First R&O ¶ 156.

Further, with respect to the other proceedings in which the “covered SMR” definition is being used, it is unrealistic to assume or expect that users of data-only SMR systems will use those systems as their primary personal communications technology. Thus, for instance, the costs of extending the E911 requirements to data-only systems far outweigh the benefits. Users simply will not be relying on data-only SMR systems to contact public safety agencies in an emergency.

In short, inclusion of RMD’s data-only SMR services within the “covered SMR” definition would be impractical, inefficient, and unnecessary.

II. Any Small System Exemption Adopted In This Proceeding Should Not Undermine The Basic Justification For The Exclusion Of Data-Only SMR Systems From The “Covered SMR” Definition.

As detailed above, the current exclusion of data-only SMR systems from the “covered SMR” definition is entirely consistent with the purposes underlying the substantive rules for which the definition is being used to determine coverage. Nonetheless, some of the petitions filed in this proceeding seek amendments to the “covered SMR” definition which, apparently inadvertently, risk bringing mobile data SMR systems within the ambit of the “covered SMR” definition.

AMTA, for example, suggests that only those SMR systems that have an “in-network switching facility” should be deemed to be “covered SMRs.”¹⁰ AMTA posits that it is this “in-network switching” capability that distinguishes cellular-like from non-cellular-like systems. RMD disagrees. The appropriate inquiry, as the Commission recognizes in the First R&O, is whether a reasonable cost-benefit analysis, based on competitive factors in the market served by the system, supports imposition of a particular requirement.

Although the technical configuration of a system may be suggestive of the kind of service that the system provides, it is one step removed from the essential inquiry. As a result, ambiguities in the definition of “in-network switching” or a “mobile telephone switching facility” will lead to inadvertent inclusions and exclusions from coverage. For example, the definition offered by AMTA could be construed to include simple “interconnect patches” used by many analog SMRs to provide occasional interconnected

¹⁰ AMTA Petition for Reconsideration at 3-8; see also Nextel Petition for Reconsideration at 7 (urging the Commission to modify its “covered SMR” definition to include only “those SMR systems ... using a mobile telephone switching facility”).

service to their dispatch customers, but which do not support more sophisticated mobile telephone features such as on-call hand-off and seamless roaming.

RMD also opposes AMTA's proposed rule to the extent that it eliminates the "real-time" voice service limitation on coverage. No explanation is offered by AMTA for the suggested rule change, which would inappropriately bring within the rule's scope systems that use incidental, non-real-time voice messaging. Thus, for instance, if the real-time voice limitation were removed, systems providing only store-and-forward messaging would be required to provide E911 capabilities. Such a requirement would defy common sense and undermine the Commission's efforts to streamline its regulatory requirements consistent with the Administration's goal of reinventing government.¹¹

In the alternative, AMTA has suggested that the Commission modify the "covered SMR" definition to include only systems serving twenty thousand 20,000 or more subscribers nationwide.¹² Although AMTA's suggested alternative definition has the appearance of regulatory simplicity,¹³ it advocates the use of an inappropriate criterion to determine coverage. Large or small, certain types of SMR providers (*e.g.*, those that provide data-only services), will compete in markets distinct from those in which cellular and broadband PCS voice providers compete. To the extent that the CMRS number portability rules are intended to enhance competition in the wireless local exchange markets, therefore, the definition of SMR systems to be "covered" by Commission rules should turn upon the functional uses of the system, which will, in turn, determine the technical configuration of the system and the market in which it competes, rather than simply the size of the system.

Nonetheless, RMD recognizes that certain other considerations might favor an exemption from covered status for very small SMR systems that would otherwise qualify

¹¹ See, *e.g.*, USA Today, Clinton Goal: Fix Government, page 1A (Sept. 7, 1993) (effort to reinvent government will eliminate "absurd regulations"); 55 Broadcasting & Cable, Hundt: New Bureau To Enforce Cable Act (Dec. 20, 1993) (Cable Bureau intended to be more streamlined than other bureaus in accordance with efforts to reinvent government).

¹² AMTA Petition for Reconsideration at 8-9. SBT makes a series of suggestions based on the precise language used in each of three different orders in which the Commission has applied rules to "covered SMR" systems. The changes proposed by SBT appear to be intended to ensure that systems that do not compete in the "mass market for real-time, two-way voice services" are not encompassed within the "covered SMR" definition. See SBT Petition for Reconsideration at 4. Although RMD does not endorse the specific mechanisms by which SBT proposes to achieve this result, RMD does support the general purpose of the SBT petition.

¹³ In fact, AMTA's approach is not as simple as it might first appear. Because configurations of SMR systems may vary, no single number can be identified that will provide a sensible and rational demarcation point between small and large systems in every case and with respect to every system architecture.

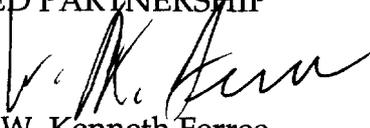
as "covered SMRs." Indeed, the Commission frequently provides small system exemptions from its rules because of the hardship that application of the rules would work on small systems. The Commission should only adopt such an exemption in this context, however, recognizing that it addresses different concerns than those driving the basic limitations on the "covered SMR" definition. A small system exemption should not substitute for the general exclusion from coverage of systems providing services that do not compete substantially with cellular and broadband PCS voice systems.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, RMD urges the Commission to retain a functional approach to its definition of "covered SMR" services and to continue to exclude from that definition data-only SMR systems. RMD does not object to the addition of a small system exemption to the "covered SMR" definition, so long as that exemption does not modify the basic definition.

Respectfully submitted,

RAM MOBILE DATA USA
LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

By: 

Jonathan Wiener
W. Kenneth Ferree

GOLDBERG, GODLES, WIENER & WRIGHT
1229 Nineteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 429-4900

Its Attorneys

September 27, 1996

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing Consolidated Response of Ram Mobile Data Usa Limited Partnership, was sent by first-class mail, postage prepaid, this 27th day of September, 1996, to each of the following:

Jill Lyon,
Director of Regulatory Relations
American Mobile Radio Telecommunications
Association, Inc.
1150 18th Street, NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20036

Robert S. Foosaner
Lawrence R. Krevor
Laura L. Holloway
Nextel Communications, Inc.
800 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1001
Washington, DC 20006

Dennis C. Brown
Brown & Schwaninger
1835 K Street, NW, Suite 650
Washington, DC 20006

David L. Meier
Cincinnati Bell Telephone
201 E. Fourth Street
P.O. Box 2301
Cincinnati, Ohio 45201-2301

Loretta J. Garcia
Donald J. Elardo
MCI Telecommunications Corp.
1801 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Campbell L. Ayling
Nynex Telephone Companies
111 Westchester Avenue
White Plains, NY 10604

Michael S. Fox
Director, Regulatory Affairs
John Staurulakis, Inc.
6315 Seabrook Road
Seabrook, MD 20706

David Cossen
L. Marie Guillory
NCTA
2626 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20037

Lisa M. Zaina
OPASTCO
21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

John T. Scott, III
Crowell & Moring
1001 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004-2595

Richard L. Cys
Davis Wright Tremaine
1155 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

Mark D. Roellig
Dan Poole
Jeffrey S. Bork
US West, Inc.
1020 19th Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

Lewis R. Cohen
John H. Harwood II
Wilmer Cutler & Pickering
2445 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037-1420

Mary McDermott
Linda Kent
Charles D. Cosson
Keith Townsend
U.S. Telephone Association
1401 H Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005

Wendy C. Chow
Michael Altschul
Randall S. Coleman
Cellular Telecommunications
Industry Association
1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036

Perry S. Goldschein
Joanne Salvatore Bochis
National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc.
2300 N Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20037

Andrew D. Lipman
Erin M. Reilly
Swidler & Berlin
3000 K Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20007

Riley M. Murphy
James C. Flavey
American Communicaitons Services, Inc.
131 National Business Parkway, Suite 100
Annapolis Junction, MD 20701

Brad E. Mutschelknaus
Edward A. Yorkgitis, Jr.
Kelley Drye & warren, LLP
1200 19th Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036

David A, Gross
Kathleen Q. Abernathy
AirTouch Communications, inc.
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036

Charles V. Gerkin, Jr.
Chorney, taylor & Feil, P.C.
3399 Peachtree Road, N.E.
Suite 1700, The Lenox Building
Atlanta, GA 30326

M. Robert Sutherland
Theodore R. Kingsley
BellSouth Corp.
BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc.
Suite 1700
1155 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30309-3610

John M. Goodman
Bell Atlantic
1133 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Jeffrey S. Linder
Angela N. Watkins
Wiley Rein & Fielding
1776 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

David J. Gudino
HQE03F05
GTE SService Corporation
P.O. Box 152092
Irving, TX 75015-2092

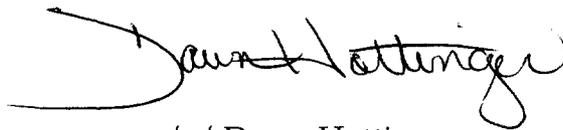
Gail Polivy
1850 M Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036

James D. Ellis
Robert M. Lynch
David F. Brown
SBC Communications Inc.
175 E. Houston
Room 1254
San Antonio, TX 78205

Durward D. Dupre
Mary W. Marks
Southwestern Bell Telephone Company
One Bell Center
Room 3558
St. Louis, MO 63101

Bruce Beard
Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems
17330 Preston Road
Suite 100A
Dallas, TX 75252

Marlin D. Ard
Nancy C. Woolf
Pacific Telesis
140 New Montgomery Street
Room 1523
Fifteenth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Dawn Hottinger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

/s/ Dawn Hottinger
Dawn Hottinger