

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC

In the matter of)
)
Amendment of Sections 74.1231,) RM-9419
74.1232, 74.1233, 74.1284 of the)
Commission's Rules)

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF
CHARLES S. FITCH, P.E.

The following comments are filed by Charles S. Fitch, P.E. ("Fitch") in response to the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in In the Matter of Amendment of Sections 74.1231, 74.1232, 74.1233, 74.1284 of the Commission's Rules. This Petition would allow AM broadcast stations to have FM translators.

Fitch is a Broadcast Consultant Engineer who numbers amongst his clients many AM stations of small to medium facilities (5 kW and under) that would be most assisted in their service efforts by the use of translators. Among these is minority owned and programmed WKND (am), Windsor, CT. This station creates a substantial portion of its programming in-house presenting as much as 12 hours a week of public service programming in prime time not only to the African-American community but also to several underserved ethnic groups. This exceptional programming effort is severely challenged by a very limited daytime only signal.

Fitch agrees with the Petitioner (ACAMBA) and feels that the proposals contained therein are an excellent means to maintain the vitality of an established service that focuses by its very nature on individual communities. Classically and historically AM Broadcasting has been local in nature and structure, diverse in programming and effective and responsive to their communities.

The instant Petition is logical, timely, well founded in law and procedure and should be adopted as it truly is in the PUBLIC's interest, convenience and necessity.

Fitch also, by way of endorsement, agrees with the erudite comments filed by the Crawford Broadcasting Corporation previously filed which amplifies and fine tunes much of the detailed regulatory

structure that would be needed to make FM translators for AM stations a potent and logically implemented adjunct to these licenses.

However, Fitch feels that to be completely effective that FM translators for AM stations should have priority over all other secondary FM band uses including the proposed Low Power FM (LPFM)*.

Further, since there are a finite number of FM translator channels in any one area, such as central Connecticut, some sort of priority structure must be created to achieve the greatest diversity of program choices to the public. Highest priority then should be given to AM daytimers, FCC AM Class-D (including the old night micropower III-B's) that would pledge a meaningful, locally generated nighttime service of non-duplicated programming (e.g. not also running on any co-owned FM). Similarly a higher priority would be given to AM stations that create and originate more than half of their programming inside their community. A high priority would be given to AM fulltime stations that use a directional antenna system (DA) that lose more than half of their 1mv/m service area at night and do not gain an equal amount of interference free service area using their nighttime antenna. Some priority would be given to a translator that would extend unduplicated AM programming into an adjacent area to the station's 1 mv/m coverage contour. Finally, priority would be given to licensing a freestanding FM translator that would extend an unduplicated information based (less than 50% music) programming into an area within 100 miles of where there are fewer than 10 interference free daytime signals and this would be a new service.

The net result of allowing FM translators for AM stations in general and AM daytimers particularly would be a more reliable delivery for an already established service that is in danger of perishing. It would preserve a diversity of voices and in many cases, a unique community resource where there is just a single licensed radio station in that local.

The Commission has recently completed the effort of creating the regulatory structure for Advanced Television that returns the spectrum that had been occupied by NTSC TV channels 2 through 6. Our present FM standards are nearly 50 years old and many magnitudes of improvement in transmission technology have come in the intervening years. Compatible In Band On Channel (IBOC) digital transmission is fast becoming a reality for both AM and FM. If the universe of FM translators is kept in the Broadcasting arena, when AM gets IBOC digital, a superior transmission concept that eliminates many of AM's weaknesses, then these FM translators can be given up to allow a technical freedom from interference for IBOC on FM. If other service, such as LPFM are implemented and established in the FM band, it will be difficult if not impossible to reestablish them elsewhere in the spectrum to allow IBOC FM to reach its full potential.

For the above reason of future improvements to FM, LPFM specifically should be kept out of the

FM spectrum. We have an excellent, existing model for this new LPFM service and that is the distribution scheme for NOAA weather radio... a few channels of modest power levels used over and over for maximized, local area coverage. To avoid competing with the interference of massively powerful FM's, LPFM should be given its own spectrum in the top of the old TV channel 6. With new technology these channels can be 50 KHz or less in occupied bandwidth and enjoy extraordinary coverage with low power of 100 watts at 100 ft HAAT. The transmission scheme can be mono analog with a backstrapped digital carrier for either a CD quality stereo signal or other program services. Using a 30 mile spacing, a plethora of local, LPFM channels with an extreme low cost of implementation can be had all across America. This is an ideal use of this reclaimed spectrum that would give LPFM a proper birth and future as a separate, reliable service all in its own. Was this not why this spectrum was reclaimed but to make way for new services and technologies that would benefit the greatest number of Americans.

In conclusion, this petition to modify the regulations for FM translators to allow their use by AM stations will allow, if properly structured, reliable day and night coverage for AM broadcasters over their associated communities. Further, it will invigorate an already existing but technically stymied service that can continue to provide diversity of programming, addition viewpoints and commitment to localism.

We believe that this proposal has merit. In addition to providing AM stations a means of remaining viable and effectively competing commercially, the public would be served by the added convenience, diversity and localism. Fitch encourages the Commission to give it due consideration. The AM service is desperately in need of solutions to its technical limitations. This proposal is a creative and effective means of achieving such a solution.

Respectfully submitted,

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