

Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20554

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In the Matter of:	)	
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Telephone Number Portability	)	
	)	CC Docket No. 95-116
T-Mobile USA, Inc. and Sprint Nextel	)	
Corporation Petition for Declaratory	)	
Ruling	)	

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**REPLY COMMENTS OF INTEGRA TELECOM, INC IN SUPPORT OF T-MOBILE USA, INC. AND SPRINT NEXTEL'S PETITION FOR DECLATORY RULING ON NUMBER PORTABILITY.**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

As with many other changes in the telecom industry, the changes suggested in the petition of T-Mobile and Sprint Nextel have spawned a parade of horrors. Some comments suggest that simplification of the current intercarrier porting process may lead to putting customers out of service, shutting businesses down, rendering customers unable to access 911, and imposing costs of up to a billion dollars. Integra, a wireline carrier with local service operations in eight states, is skeptical of the litany of worst case scenarios presented in some of the comments in this docket. In fact, Integra believes that the unnecessary complexity and rigidity of the current porting process has resulted in number ports being delayed and customers being out of service and that simplifying the process as requested by the Petitioners

would result in a more seamless porting experience and fewer customer outages and delays.

The objective of T-Mobile and Sprint Nextel is laudable: When they have a potential customer requesting their service and only need to port the existing phone numbers, they want a simple, straightforward and uniform process. Integra supports streamlining the porting process because it is in the best interest of the consumer and helps foster effective competition. Accordingly, Integra urges the Commission to issue an order that prohibits any carrier from requiring more information in a local service request (“LSR”) than is necessary to port telephone numbers and to prohibit delaying ports for reasons that are not related to the porting of numbers.

## **II. DISCUSSION**

### **A. The Current Porting Process Is Unnecessarily Complicated**

Although some commenters in this docket refer to simple and complex porting, Integra believes those labels are largely misleading. Simple and complex are certainly appropriate labels when speaking of provisioning services. In that context, they reflect whether the service design and translations will be standard or simple, or whether they will require additional effort or expertise and be considered complex.

When used in the context of porting, however, the terms “simple” and “complex” should apply to whether existing facilities will be reused, which may require additional work and coordination and result in a complex port,

and whether the porting of numbers is all that is required, which would be a simple port. With respect to number porting, Integra believes that the vast majority of ports involve simply transferring a telephone number, or several telephone numbers, from one carrier to another. Whether this involves one or a thousand numbers, it does not require design or translations on the part of the executing carrier to facilitate the port. Therefore, most of the ports would be considered simple ports.

Since most ports are simple, most information beyond that which identifies the telephone number to be ported and the customer associated with that number is unnecessary. Currently, however, carriers require much more information on an LSR than information that identifies the telephone number and the customer. Carriers require additional, unnecessary information for their own purposes, not for the purpose of porting the telephone number. And the ability of those carriers to refuse to port absent additional, unnecessary information has led to mischief and delay in the porting process.

Many incumbent LECs require requesting carriers to provide data on an LSR that is not strictly necessary to complete a port – which Integra refers to as “non-essential information” – simply to make the incumbent LEC’s disconnection process easier. This disconnect process is often automated, and if the information driving the process – in this case, taken from the requesting carrier’s LSR – is missing or inaccurate, the LSR will be

rejected. This makes it very difficult for a new service provider to set proper expectations with its customers due to potential delays in the LSR process. Moreover, the requesting carrier is not the executing carrier's agent and should not be expected to gather and provide information the only purpose of which is to assist the executing carrier in a process that has nothing to do with porting telephone numbers.

Adding to the surprise, requesting carriers often receive LSR rejections even though the requesting carrier used the *exact* information that the executing carrier provided in its customer service record ("CSR"). The database in which the LSR validation takes place apparently is not always the same as the database from which the data for the CSR is derived. Integra has experience with service orders being rejected by incumbent LECs because of the lack of a period after "Inc." or the use of "St" rather than "Street" on an LSR. This inflexible application of the porting process can lead to extensive delays and inconvenience to the customer.

Some carriers continue to reject LSRs for reasons specifically prohibited by the FCC. For example, some carriers may reject a port because the customer has data service, number blocks (as small as 5 numbers) or some other violation of internal policies even though these issues have nothing to do with the porting of numbers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *In the Matter of BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. Request for Declaratory Ruling that State Commissions May Not Regulate Broadband Internet Access Services by Requiring BellSouth to Provide Wholesale or Retail Broadband Services to Competitive LEC UNE Voice Customers*, FCC 05-78, ¶ 36 (FCC rel. Mar. 25, 2005) ("We take this opportunity to

Additionally, the current porting process is hindered by some limitations imposed by some executing carriers that often result in the disconnection of a customer's existing service before new service is in place. Some executing carriers require requesting carriers to notify them as early as before 3:00 p.m. on the day of a port if the port must be rescheduled. However, since Integra's customers are businesses, they often require the transition to a new service provider to be done after normal business hours. If a customer's appointment occurs at 7:00 p.m., it would be impossible to know before 3:00 p.m. that a problem with the customer's new services requires a reschedule of the port. Problems could arise since the requesting carrier would be unable to contact the executing company within the time period specified by the executing carrier. The executing carrier's automated internal process may disconnect the customer's service even though the port did not occur, which could result in the customer being out of service.<sup>2</sup>

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remind carriers that the Act requires, and we intend to enforce, non-discriminatory number porting between LECs, including our previous conclusion 'that carriers may not impose non-porting related restrictions on the porting out process.'")

<sup>2</sup> As illustrated in the process flows included as attachment A to Qwest's opening comments in this docket (Flow A, figure 6, steps 1, 2 and Flow AA, figure 7, steps 4, 9), the executing carrier should verify that a port has been activated before completing any disconnect work, which would effectively eliminate disconnection before the new service is operational. Unfortunately, many companies choose not to complete this verification, resulting in premature disconnections and outages. Customers often incorrectly blame the requesting carrier for the outages and, given the difficulties and delays associated with restoring service, may decide to stay with the executing carrier. Some carriers' failures to use the tools available to prevent premature disconnections put requesting carriers at a substantial competitive disadvantage. Many service providers contend that changing their systems and processes to eliminate this problem would be too expensive. However, a simple solution would be to have the LSR include the local routing number ("LRN") of the porting company. The executing carrier need only launch an LNP query to see if the number has ported. If the returned LRN is not theirs, they can be virtually certain the port has been activated and can continue with their internal disconnection process without fear of premature disconnection.

## **B. The Commission Need Not Defer This Issue to an Industry Forum**

Some commenters assert that the Commission should defer this issue to the Ordering and Billing Forum (“OBF”). The OBF, though, is but one of many forums and committees overseen by the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (“ATIS”). ATIS imposes membership requirements and revenue-based fees on member companies. However, membership to ATIS does not allow participation in OBF or any other working committee. Each committee requires additional fees to participate. While some final documents or parts of documents of ATIS committees are available to the public, Integra’s experience is that most information is unavailable to companies that do not pay fees to join ATIS committees or forums. These barriers effectively limit membership to only the largest companies and results in guidelines or standards that are decided by a small fraction of the companies impacted without input or review by the rest of the industry.

In addition, Integra understands that the ATIS committees’ decision making is often based on consensus. If an industry segment does not agree, there is no consensus. Given the unwillingness of the incumbent LECs to make the porting process seamless for competitors that take the incumbent LECs’ customers, the consensus approach makes it difficult for competitive companies to drive changes of this nature through ATIS. Moreover, the

industry bodies have been the source for the overly burdensome requirements that T-Mobile and Sprint Nextel seek to streamline with the Petition.

In contrast to the intricate North American Numbering Council process flows included in Attachment 1 of Qwest's opening comments in this docket, porting numbers without reusing underlying facilities could be, and should be, an uncomplicated process. Integra's suggested process is as follows:

- 1) minimal data that is necessary to complete the port sent via LSR;
- 2) subscription versions created in the NPAC by the new service provider;
- 3) incumbent company places 10 digit trigger on porting numbers prior to requested due date (this could be done at time of FOC);
- 4) once the new service is tested and working properly, the new service provider activates subscription versions in the NPAC, which completes the porting process.

After step 4, the number porting is complete, and the donor company could then perform customer-requested disconnection activity.

### III. CONCLUSION

The porting process has become too cumbersome. Carriers sometimes use it as an opportunity to obtain non-essential information or to delay or entirely obstruct number porting. For those reasons, Integra supports the Petition and urges the Commission to clearly and unequivocally limit the data an executing carrier can require from a requesting carrier to the information necessary to facilitate a customer's change of service providers.

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