

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In re Applications of

RURAL CELLULAR CORP., Transferor

and

WT Docket No. 07-208

CELLCO PARTNERSHIP d/b/a VERIZON
WIRELESS, Transferee

for Consent to the Transfer of Control of
Commission Licenses and Authorizations
Pursuant to Sections 214 and 310(d) of the
Communications Act.

MOTION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

OF

VERMONT PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. §1.46(b), Vermont Public Interest Research Group (“Vermont PIRG”) respectfully requests an extension of time for filing a petition to deny of 90 days. Additional time is necessary for the public to analyze the potential effects of this merger because the merger’s impact is wide-ranging and highly significant, and the current comment period is insufficient to analyze these effects and to file a thorough petition to deny.

Analysis of this merger requires sophisticated economic analysis of several regions. The merger involves the acquisition of the fourteenth largest wireless carrier, Rural Cellular Corp. (“RCC”), by the second largest wireless carrier, Cellco Partnership

d/b/a Verizon Wireless (“VZW”).¹ RCC, through four subsidiaries, provides service to more than 778,000 customers² in territories within 15 states, and holds CMRS authorizations covering between 7.2 million³ and 8.6 million “POPS.”⁴ The application is 452 pages in length and was posted on the Commission’s ECFS system in eighteen non-sequential files.

This merger may have significant effects on competition for several reasons. In several markets, VZW holds one cellular license and RCC the other. In many rural areas, there is limited competition from other national or even local carriers. In a number of markets, the two parties to this merger hold spectrum in excess of the 70 MHz “initial screen.” By the applicants’ count, there are 26 counties where the combined entities’ spectrum would exceed the 70 MHz “initial screen.”⁵ If these were the only territories legitimately at issue, a careful analysis would require a longer period than the thirty-three days from the October 11th issuance of the Commission’s public notice to the November 13th deadline for petitions to deny.

But, notwithstanding the parties’ request for expedited approval, this transaction involves much more than merely “counting the megahertz.” If the transaction is approved as proposed, it will have far-reaching effects on RCC subscribers, who will lose access to analog (and, presumably, TDMA) services as early as February 18, 2008⁶. In addition, most RCC subscribers will be required to transition from the current GSM

¹ Description of Transaction, Public Interest Showing and Related Requests and Demonstrations (“Description”) filed in WT Docket No. 07-208, at 38-39 (citing market share figures from the Commission’s 11th Annual Competition Report).

² *Id.* at 4.

³ *Id.* at 2.

⁴ *Id.* at 4.

⁵ *Id.* at 42.

⁶ *Id.* at 2 (n.4) and 13.

network to VZW's CDMA service in approximately eighteen months.⁷ The transaction will also affect millions of customers of other carriers who have deployed GSM technology; when those customer travel to or through the RCC territories, they obtain service as roamers, and there is concern that the GSM network on which they rely for service will not be upgraded or appropriately maintained once VZW completes its overlay of CDMA in the GSM service areas. The public does not have the ability to evaluate these issues in a thirty-three day window. Despite diligent attempts to address these matters within the available window, more time is necessary.

This proceeding is too important for the public not to have adequate time to comment. Universal, competitively priced wireless service—for voice and data—is becoming a necessity. The public should have adequate time to study whether this acquisition may result in unreliable coverage, high prices, inability to access roaming for data or voice, or uncompetitive markets. Because this proceeding implicates important issues affecting millions of Americans, the FCC should grant the public more time to address the issues presented by the proceeding.

Specifically, the Commission should grant an extension of 90 days. This extension should provide Vermont PIRG and other organizations sufficient time to address the most important matters raised by this acquisition.

⁷ *Id.* at 23.

Respectfully submitted,

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November 9, 2007

I certify that, on November 9, 2007, I have had the following individuals served by first-class mail.

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I have also had Commission staff contacted verbally, as directed in 47 C.F.R. §1.46(c).

Larry Blosser