

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

In the Matter of)
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Amendment of Service and Eligibility Rules) MB Docket No. 07-172
for FM Broadcast Translator Stations) RM-11338
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To: Office of the Secretary (Electronic Filing)

COMMENTS OF SAGA COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

Saga Communications, Inc. (“Saga”)¹, by its counsel, and pursuant to Sections 1.415 and 1.419 of the Commission’s Rules, electronically files these Comments on the Commission’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 07-144, [22 FCC Rcd 15890] released August 15, 2007, and published in the Federal Register on November 6, 2007 [72 FR 62617] (“NPRM”).²

As discussed in the NPRM, on July 14, 2006, the National Association of Broadcasters (“NAB”) filed a Petition for Rulemaking proposing that the Commission amend its rules to allow AM broadcast stations to operate FM translator stations. The NAB Petition proposed that AM stations be permitted to license and/or use FM translator

¹ Saga is a broadcasting company whose business is devoted to acquiring, developing and operating broadcast properties. Saga owns or operates broadcast properties in 26 markets, including 61 FM and 30 AM radio stations, 3 state radio networks, and 2 farm radio networks.

² The date for filing comments was established as January 7, 2008, so these Comments are timely filed.

stations to retransmit their AM service as a fill-in service. Specifically, the NAB proposed that AM stations be allowed to use FM translator stations to rebroadcast the AM signal, provided that no portion of the 60 dBu contour of any such FM translator station extends beyond the smaller of: (a) a 25-mile radius from the AM transmitter site; or (b) the 2 mV/m daytime contour of the AM station. As a result, the Commission proposed rules permitting the use of FM translators by AM stations permitting the use of FM translators by AM daytime-only stations.

In previously filed Comments, Saga pointed out that eligibility for FM translators providing AM fill-in service should be limited to licensees of daytime-only AM stations, Class C AM stations, and other AM facilities that either have serious nighttime coverage deficiencies or can convincingly demonstrate that they are subject to Cuban interference or other electrical interference that degrades their signals so as to make their transmissions unusable within the FM translator's fill-in service area. In the interim, Saga has observed several licensees that have received special temporary authority for the use of FM translators by AM stations and has concluded that the Commission's proposed rules adequately address Saga's previously-expressed concerns.³ In light of this, Saga fully supports the proposals set forth in the NPRM and urges their prompt adoption.

Use of FM translators by AM stations can in no way adversely impact other uses of the spectrum since the FM translators are already in existence utilizing the spectrum for the rebroadcast of FM stations. Although only FM stations are now authorized by rule to use FM translators, the use of FM translators by AM stations has been proven

³ Saga has filed requests for special temporary authority to use FM translators to rebroadcast the signals of some of its AM stations. Saga's requests have been in compliance with the limitations proposed by the Commission.

through the issuance of STAs to other licensees as described above to be easily implemented.

In some cases, AM stations have been relegated to “second-class” status when compared to their FM sisters. As a result, some advertisers have only been able to afford to purchase time on AM stations because of the lower cost. This has, in some cases, led to the broadcast of unique programs not heard on full-power FM stations. FM translators would strengthen these stations by improving the delivery of sound quality and reception of their programs. The Commission can expect many other AM stations to utilize the FM translators to re-broadcast programs (like local high school sports events or severe weather information) to the stations’ daytime service areas where reception of the stations’ nighttime programming is severely restricted by reduced power or directional antennas. Adoption of the proposals in the NPRM is a “win-win” for the public and AM broadcast licensees.

Saga would like to suggest one additional modification to the proposed rules. Sec. 74.1283, “Station Identification,” currently prohibits requests for the assignment of particular combinations of call sign letters.⁴ For FM stations rebroadcast on FM translators, this has not been problematic since the translator station may be identified by over-the-air voice announcements or by Morse code. However, AM stations could better

⁴ Sec. 74.1283(a) Station identification, currently provides:

(a) The call sign of an FM broadcast translator station will consist of the initial letter K or W followed by the channel number assigned to the translator and two letters. The use of the initial letter will generally conform to the pattern used in the broadcast service. The two letter combinations following the channel number will be assigned in order and requests for the assignment of particular combinations of letters will not be considered.

inform the public that their programs were being carried on FM translators if they could conform the FM Translator call signs to their AM call signs. This is currently the practice among Low Power Television licensees who may request call signs ending with the suffix “-LP” to replace their TV Translator calls signs which follow the same scheme as Section 74.1283(a). Broadcasters are subjected to constant audience measurements by rating companies. These ratings are used both by the Commission in defining radio markets, by advertisers and political candidates. Conforming the FM translator call sign with the AM primary station call sign would lessen confusion and distortion and provide for more accurate rating data. The most simplistic solution to this problem is one already used by the Commission for low power stations.

Therefore, Saga requests that Section 74.1283(a) be revised as follows:

(a) Except for FM broadcast translators authorized to rebroadcast the programs of a standard broadcast station, the call sign of an FM broadcast translator station will consist of the initial letter K or W followed by the channel number assigned to the translator and two letters. The use of the initial letter will generally conform to the pattern used in the broadcast service. The two letter combinations following the channel number will be assigned in order and requests for the assignment of particular combinations of letters will not be considered. **FM broadcast translators authorized to rebroadcast the programs of a standard broadcast station may be assigned a call sign with a four-letter prefix pursuant to Sec. 73.3550 of the Commission's rules. Upon request (and subject to the consent of the primary AM station being rebroadcast), FM broadcast translator stations will be assigned the four-letter prefix of the call sign of the primary standard broadcast station being rebroadcast followed with the suffix -FX. In the case of multiple FM translators rebroadcasting the same primary AM station, FM broadcast translator stations will be assigned the four-letter prefix of the call sign of the primary standard broadcast station being rebroadcast followed with the suffix -FX1, FX2, FX3, and so forth. [emphasis supplied].**

WHEREFORE, Saga respectfully urges the Commission to adopt the proposed rules as set forth in the NPRM with the suggested modifications noted herein.

Respectfully submitted,

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