

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington DC 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition,) RM-11417
Amendment of Sections 101.109 and)
101.147 of the Commission’s Rules to)
Accommodate 30 MHz Channels in the)
6525-6875 MHz Band)

COMMENTS OF AT&T INC.

AT&T Inc., on behalf of its affiliates, (“AT&T”) hereby submits these comments in support of the above-referenced Petition for Rulemaking (“Petition”) filed by the Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition (“FWCC”).¹ The Petition requests that the Commission amend Sections 101.109(c), 101.147(a) and 101.147(l) of its rules to authorize 30 MHz bandwidth channels in the 6525-6875 MHz band (“Upper 6 GHz band”). As described below, the current 10 MHz bandwidth limit for fixed microwave services in the Upper 6 GHz band is no longer adequate to meet rapidly increasing needs for high capacity fixed microwave links for the provision of advanced broadband services.² Although providers currently may seek waivers to allow usage of bandwidths greater than 10 MHz, the waiver process does not allow for conditional authorizations and therefore leads to unnecessary delay in the usage of these wider channels. To allow providers to respond more quickly to increasing customer needs for high capacity

¹ See Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition Petition for Rulemaking, RM-11417 (filed Feb. 4, 2008) (“FWCC Petition”). The Appendix of the Petition provides the specific amendments proposed by FWCC.

² 47 C.F.R. § 101.109(c).

bandwidth, the Commission should amend its rules to authorize 30 MHz channels in the Upper 6 GHz band.

High capacity microwave links improve backhaul reliability, reduce costs associated with leased circuits, and enable providers to offer faster services at lower prices. In particular, the rapidly increasing demand among wireless service providers for long distance high-capacity links for advanced broadband services highlights the need for the new rules proposed by the Petition. As the FWCC points out, space in lower frequency bands – which are most suitable for long links because of their superior propagation characteristics – is limited for fixed microwave services. The 2 GHz band and the 4 GHz band essentially are unavailable for long links,³ so wireless service providers frequently rely on 6 GHz band spectrum.⁴ However, congestion in the 6 GHz band makes frequency coordination difficult, particularly in the lower portion of the band (where 30 MHz bandwidth links are allowed) and near major population centers.⁵ As a result, wireless service providers installing long distance links are forced to look to the Upper 6 GHz band, where the present 10 MHz bandwidth limit greatly reduces the value and flexibility of this spectrum.⁶

AT&T, therefore, supports the rule amendments proposed by the FWCC, which would overcome these limitations and open up the Upper 6 GHz spectrum to more

³ See FWCC Petition at 3 (explaining that “[a]mong the fixed service bands, 2 GHz has by far the best propagation, but has been reallocated to satellite and mobile services. Next best is the 4 GHz band, but coordination there is all but impossible nationwide, due to the extreme proliferation of registered receive-only satellite dishes.”).

⁴ See FWCC Petition at 3 (explaining that “[i]n practice, 6 GHz is often the lowest-frequency band available for long links”).

⁵ See FWCC Petition at 3.

⁶ *Id.*

valuable uses. The use of 30 MHz channels is already allowed in the lower portion of the band, and there is no reason to treat the Upper 6 GHz band differently. Moreover, the FWCC's proposed amendments are carefully drafted to ensure spectrum efficiency. Under the proposed amendments, the coordination of a 30 MHz link in the Upper 6 GHz band may only be requested if the Lower 6 GHz band cannot accommodate the link.⁷ And as the FWCC further explains, the current loading and minimum bits-per-second requirements for the Upper and Lower 6 GHz bands will prevent any usage of a 30 MHz channel for data that cannot be handled on a narrower channel.⁸

The Commission has allowed more flexible spectrum use in the Upper 6 GHz band by granting waivers for bandwidths greater than 10 MHz.. However, the Commission's case-by-case waiver approach for this spectrum does not allow usage of this spectrum to proceed on a sufficiently timely basis to serve operators' needs. As the FWCC petition describes, because conditional authorizations are not available when applications are granted pursuant to waivers of the Commission's rules, "a high-capacity link in the Upper 6 GHz band – even though successfully coordinated – cannot be operated until the Commission completes processing the application."⁹

The delays caused by the lack of conditional authorizations harm both wireless service providers and their customers.¹⁰ Indeed, link installation is frequently delayed

⁷ See FWCC Petition at 5.

⁸ FWCC Petition at 3 (citing 47 C.F.R. § 101.141(a)(3)).

⁹ FWCC Petition at 4. See also, 47 C.F.R. § 101.31(b)(iii).

¹⁰ AT&T agrees with FWCC's assertion that "[f]ixed service facilities must often be installed on short notice to meet urgent needs, which makes conditional licensing important to the industry and its customers. Fixed service bands carry critical services such as public safety communications (including police and fire vehicle dispatch), coordinating the movement of railroad trains, controlling natural gas and oil pipelines,

even after the Commission approves waiver applications because carriers frequently refrain from ordering equipment and designing infrastructure plans for links until they receive FCC approval. The FWCC's proposed amendments will allow for conditional licensing, which would eliminate the delays caused by the case-by-case waiver approach and allow operators to respond more expeditiously to their customers' increasing bandwidth needs.¹¹

For the reasons set forth above, AT&T supports the implementation of the amendments proposed by the FWCC to allow more efficient spectrum usage and to assist providers in serving their customers' growing broadband needs.

Respectfully submitted,

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regulating the electric grid, and backhauling wireless telephone traffic. In addition, they carry large amounts of business data. Conditional licensing allows providers to meet public safety, infrastructure, and commercial needs with minimum delay." FWCC Petition at 4.

¹¹ See FWCC Petition at 4 (explaining that the proposed rules will "provide certainty to fixed service operators and end users, and will enable conditional licensing for the prompt deployment of new broadband links capable of high capacity").

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Loretia Hill, do hereby certify that on this 31st day of March 2008, I caused copies of the foregoing "Comments of AT&T Inc." to be delivered to the following via First Class U.S. mail and/or email.

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