

## Notes and Recommendations on Improving FCC.gov

Modernizing the FCC website is going to require a serious effort to embrace a participatory mentality and the technology that has enabled it.

*Our broad recommendations include:*

- Traffic and searches on the current site should be analyzed to help determine which parts of the site are most in-demand.
- Migrate to conversational language across the site
  - Get away from alphabet-soup names like "ECFS" and come up with something more meaningful and memorable to average citizens.
  - The data should not merely be available, it should also be in plain English.
- Commissioner statements, public notices, etc (in other words, all the "headlines" on the homepage) should be available as HTML Web pages, not just Microsoft Word docs and PDFs. Important references – such as dockets, other FCC announcements, etc. – within that content should be hyperlinked.
- RSS feeds should be used across the Web site
- The use of blogs written by the chairman, commissioners and the bureaus would be welcome. Repurposing this content for independent Web sites and aggregators would help bring attention to the activities and accomplishments of the Commission.
- Likewise, agency involvement in popular social networks or other sites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube would expose the FCC to new audiences, demonstrate the agency's commitment to public participation and the Internet, and allow new avenues for the public to contact the agency.
- A version of the site that was accessible and readable via mobile devices needs to be developed.
- Video feeds of hearings and other public appearances by FCC commissioners and staff need to be more sophisticated – higher-quality feeds, higher number of maximum viewers, more prominent mention on homepage, and made available for posting/remixing by third parties, etc.
- The agency should allow third parties to interact with comments and other data by submitting, searching, sorting, tracking comments, etc. Doing so would allow innovation in presentation and organization of FCC data to be carried out by parties other than the FCC itself.

## Further Recommendations

### *Homepage*

There needs to be an illustrated "about the FCC" section that explains the agency's responsibilities and objectives in clear language and drives users to appropriate sections of the site.

The Homepage needs to be divided by issue area, not just bureau

- Broadband, Broadcasting, Cable, Mobile Telephony, Landline Telephony, Public Safety
  - Similar to <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumers.html>

Aggregation pages need to be overhauled

- For instance <http://www.fcc.gov/broadband/706.html>;  
[http://www.fcc.gov/broadband\\_network\\_management/](http://www.fcc.gov/broadband_network_management/)

### *Calendars*

We agree with Public Knowledge in recommending the use of extensive user-friendly calendars:

- All the calendars should provide the ability to deselect categories and be viewable by day, week or month.
- When possible, calendars should allow for subscriptions through third party calendar programs such as Outlook, iCal, Google Calendar, etc.
- Include hyperlinks to learn more about a particular calendar item such as agenda items at open meeting...agenda items should then link to more info including comments filed
- A central calendar with filing deadlines, hearings, meetings...anything Commission-wide
- Bureau level calendars that could include filing deadlines, form submission deadlines, ex partes, etc
- Commissioner calendars that include speeches, DTV Outreach, ex partes (including the staff of Commissioners), etc

## ***Comments***

The Commission should also provide the user with next steps following comment submission:

- Offer to provide periodic updates on the status of proceedings through a variety of means, including social networks, email, RSS feed
- The ability to follow bureau proceedings with a calendar subscription
- Frequent commenters could create a user account
  - Citizens and firms could create accounts and profiles that allowed them to comment on/discuss blog posts, pages, data, etc.
  - It should also allow users to save searches, so that when logged in it's easy to re-conduct a complicated advanced search without having to reconstruct it from memory.
  - ECFS and other comments filed by logged-in users could show up on the “user’s profiles”, making it easy to see what other active members of the FCC site are filing.

Submitting Comments must become an easier exercise. The FCC should create a similar system to ECFS Express but that is:

- Easier to find
  - Prominent placement on the homepage
  - Perhaps a button that exists on every page
- More user-friendly
  - Hyperlink to each Notice and existing comments for each docket provided

Importantly, the ECFS system should include a robust API allowing third parties to interact with comment data by submitting, searching, sorting, tracking comments, etc.

## ***Search***

FCC.gov needs a more effective and user-friendly search tool;

Currently the website search does a poor job of providing results.

- Much of this is due to a variety of inadequate pages
  - Such as <http://www.fcc.gov/broadband/>
    - Form 477 means nothing to the public, neither does Section 706
- Advanced Search should be able to filter by issue area
- Search results should have logical search results at top
  - For instance searching net neutrality the first result is random testimony not [http://www.fcc.gov/broadband\\_network\\_management/](http://www.fcc.gov/broadband_network_management/)
- Integrate different kinds of search, with radio buttons to search the website, ECFS comments, or reports/data

Comment search is also inadequate.

- Identifying the proceeding number
  - Provide a page with commonly searched proceedings
    - Perhaps including most frequently searched or commented in dockets over the past month
  - Provide a way to search by key terms for proceeding numbers
- Add the ability to use Boolean Logic i.e. search for multiple dockets and/or commenters at once
- The text of ECFS comments themselves should be searchable

### *Data*

- Aggregate data page is buried but can be used as a starting point - <http://www.fcc.gov/osp/data.html>
  - Ascertain information of particular interest to the general public and provide quick access page

- Many areas need significant improvement, explanation and in some cases to be made available
  - Spectrum
    - Auctions
    - Band Plans
  - ARMIS
  - COALS
  - Broadcasting
- Geographic related data should take advantage the burgeoning online mapping tools
- Utilize the open Keyhole Markup Language (KML) standard for image overlays with mapping applications such as Google Earth
  - This is already done by multiple National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration programs
    - See [http://www.nosa.noaa.gov/google\\_earth.html](http://www.nosa.noaa.gov/google_earth.html);  
[http://wdssii.nssl.noaa.gov/geotiff\\_new/index.html](http://wdssii.nssl.noaa.gov/geotiff_new/index.html)
  - Free Press has detailed this recommendation to the FCC regarding Broadband data
    - See II.C.ii of:  
[http://www.freepress.net/files/Expedited\\_Comments\\_Broadband\\_Mapping.pdf](http://www.freepress.net/files/Expedited_Comments_Broadband_Mapping.pdf)