regulation. In addition to setting rates for reciprocal compensation, many states have revised their rules governing intrastate access charges. Although some states have chosen to mirror interstate access charges,[456] others continue to maintain intrastate access charges that far exceed interstate charges.[457]

3. Problems Associated With the Existing Intercarrier Compensation Regimes

173. The introduction of competition into local telephone markets revealed weaknesses in the existing intercarrier compensation regimes that remained notwithstanding the efforts of the Commission and certain states to reform interstate and intrastate access charges. As the Commission observed in 2001, "[i]nterconnection arrangements between carriers are currently governed by a complex system of intercarrier compensation regulations . . . [that] treat different types of carriers and different types of services disparately, even though there may be no significant differences in the costs among carriers or services."[458] We have seen numerous examples of regulatory arbitrage in the marketplace both because of the different rates for similar functions under different intercarrier compensation regimes and because none of these regimes currently set rate levels in an economically efficient manner.[459]

174. One example of regulatory arbitrage involves traffic to dial-up ISPs. Following adoption of the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, state commissions set reciprocal compensation rates for the exchange of local traffic. These reciprocal compensation rates were sufficiently high that many competitive LECs found it profitable to target and serve ISP customers who were large recipients of local traffic, since dial-up Internet customers would call their ISP and then stay on the line for hours. This practice led to significant traffic imbalances, with competitive LECs seeking billions of dollars in reciprocal compensation payments from other LECs.[460] The Commission responded by adopting a separate interim intercarrier compensation regime for this traffic.

175. On February 26, 1999, the Commission issued a Declaratory Ruling and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in which it held that ISP-bound traffic is jurisdictionally interstate because end users access websites across state lines. Because the *Local Competition First Report and Order* concluded that the reciprocal compensation obligation in section 251(b)(5) applied to only local traffic,

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[456] *See, e.g., BA-WV's Intrastate Access Charges*, Case No. 00-0318-T-GI, Commission Order, 2001 WL 935643 (West Virginia PSC June 1, 2001) (ordering that "the traffic-sensitive intrastate access charges of Verizon-WV shall be modified to mirror the interstate rate structure and rate elements"); *Tariff Filing of BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc to Mirror Interstate Rates*, Case No. 98-065, Order (Kentucky PSC Mar. 31, 1999) (requiring BellSouth "to eliminate the state-specific Non-Traffic Sensitive Revenue Requirement . . . , thus moving its aggregate intrastate switched access rate to the FCC's 'CALLS' interstate rate"); *Establishment of Carrier-to-Carrier Rules*, Case No. 06-1344-TP-ORD, Order, 2007 WL 3023991 (Ohio PUC Oct. 17, 2007) ("[T]his Commission requires ILECs to mirror their interstate switched access rate on the intrastate side . . . .").

[457] *See, e.g.*, Letter from David C. Bartlett, Vice President of Federal Government Affairs, Embarq, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92, Exh. C (filed Aug. 1, 2008) (noting intrastate terminating switched access rates five to ten times higher than interstate rates in Missouri, Washington, Virginia, and several other States).

[458] *Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime*, CC Docket No. 01-92, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 16 FCC Rcd 9610 (2001) (*Intercarrier Compensation NPRM*).

[459] The phrase "regulatory arbitrage" refers to profit-seeking behavior that can arise when a regulated firm is required to set difference prices for products or services with a similar cost structure. *See, e.g.*, PATRICK DEGRABA, BILL AND KEEP AT THE CENTRAL OFFICE AS THE EFFICIENT INTERCONNECTION REGIME 1, para. 2 n.3 (Federal Communications Commission, OPP Working Paper No. 33, 2000), *available at* http://www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/OPP/working_papers/oppwp33.pdf.

[460] *See Intercarrier Compensation for ISP-Bound Traffic*, CC Docket Nos. 96-98, 99-68, Order on Remand and Report and Order, 16 FCC Rcd 9151, 9183, para. 70 (2001) (subsequent history omitted) (*ISP Remand Order*).

the Commission found in the *Declaratory Ruling* that ISP-bound traffic is not subject to section 251(b)(5).[461] On March 24, 2000, in the *Bell Atlantic* decision, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit (D.C. Circuit) vacated certain provisions of the *Declaratory Ruling*.[462] The court did not question the Commission's finding that ISP-bound traffic is interstate. Rather, the court held that the Commission had not adequately explained how its end-to-end jurisdictional analysis was relevant to determining whether a call to an ISP is subject to reciprocal compensation under section 251(b)(5).[463] In particular, the court noted that a LEC serving an ISP appears to perform the function of "termination" because the LEC delivers traffic from the calling party through its end office switch to the called party, the ISP.[464]

176. On April 27, 2001, the Commission released the *ISP Remand Order*, which concluded that section 251(g) excludes ISP-bound traffic from the scope of section 251(b)(5).[465] The Commission explained that section 251(g) maintains the pre-1996 Act compensation requirements for "exchange access, information access, and exchange services for such access," thereby excluding such traffic from the reciprocal compensation requirements that the 1996 Act imposed. The Commission concluded that ISP-bound traffic is "information access" and, therefore, is subject instead to the Commission's section 201 jurisdiction over interstate communications.[466] The Commission concluded that a bill-and-keep regime might eliminate incentives for arbitrage and force carriers to look to their own customers for cost recovery.[467] To avoid a flash cut to bill-and-keep, however, the Commission adopted an interim compensation regime pending completion of the *Intercarrier Compensation* proceeding.[468]

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[461] *See Intercarrier Compensation for ISP-Bound Traffic*, CC Docket Nos. 96-98, 99-68, Declaratory Ruling and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 14 FCC Rcd 3689, 3703–06, paras. 21–27 (1999) (*Declaratory Ruling*), *vacated and remanded*, *Bell Atlantic Tel. Cos. v. FCC*, 206 F.3d 1 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (*Bell Atlantic*).

[462] *Bell Atlantic*, 206 F.3d at 1.

[463] *See Bell Atlantic*, 206 F.3d at 5.

[464] *Bell Atlantic*, 206 F.3d at 6.

[465] *See ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9171–72, para. 44.

[466] *See ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9175, para. 52. Thus, the Commission affirmed its prior finding in the *Declaratory Ruling* that ISP-bound traffic is jurisdictionally interstate. *See id*; *see also Declaratory Ruling*, 14 FCC Rcd at 3701–03, paras. 18–20.

[467] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9184–85, paras. 74–75. The Commission discussed at length the market distortions and regulatory arbitrage opportunities created by the application of per-minute reciprocal compensation rates to ISP-bound traffic. In particular, the Commission found that requiring compensation for this type of traffic at existing reciprocal compensation rates undermined the operation of competitive markets because competitive LECs were able to recover a disproportionate share of their costs from other carriers, thereby distorting the price signals sent to their ISP customers. *See id.* at 9181–86, paras. 67–76.

[468] *See ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9155–57, paras. 7–8. The interim regime adopted by the Commission consisted of: (1) a gradually declining cap on intercarrier compensation for ISP-bound traffic, beginning at $.0015 per minute-of-use and declining to $.0007 per minute-of-use; (2) a growth cap on total ISP-bound minutes for which a LEC may receive this compensation; (3) a "new markets rule" requiring bill-and-keep for the exchange of this traffic if two carriers were not exchanging traffic pursuant to an interconnection agreement prior to the adoption of the interim regime; and (4) a "mirroring rule" that gave incumbent LECs the benefit of the rate cap only if they offered to exchange all traffic subject to section 251(b)(5) at the same rates. *Id.* at 9187–89, 9193–94, paras. 78, 80, 89. In a subsequent order, the Commission granted forbearance to all telecommunications carriers with respect to the growth caps and the new markets rule. *See Petition of Core Commc'ns Inc. for Forbearance Under 47 U.S.C. § 160(c) from Application of the ISP Remand Order*, WC Docket No. 03-171, Order, 19 FCC Rcd 20179 (2004) (*Core Forbearance Order*). Thus, only the rate caps and mirroring rule remain in effect today.

177. On May 3, 2002, the D.C. Circuit found that the Commission had not provided an adequate legal basis for the rules it adopted in the *ISP Remand Order*.[469] Once again, the court did not question the Commission's finding that ISP-bound traffic is jurisdictionally interstate. Rather, the court held that section 251(g) of the Act did not provide a basis for the Commission's decision. The court held that section 251(g) is simply a transitional device that preserved obligations that predated the 1996 Act until the Commission adopts superseding rules, and there was no pre-1996 Act obligation with respect to intercarrier compensation for ISP-bound traffic.[470] Although the court rejected the legal rationale for the interim compensation rules, the court remanded, but did not vacate, the *ISP Remand Order* to the Commission, and it observed that "there is plainly a non-trivial likelihood that the Commission has authority" to adopt the rules.[471] Accordingly, the interim rules adopted in the *ISP Remand Order* have remained in effect.

178. On November 5, 2007, Core filed a petition for writ of mandamus with the D.C. Circuit seeking to compel the Commission to enter an order resolving the court's remand in the *WorldCom* decision.[472] On July 8, 2008, the court granted a writ of mandamus and directed the Commission to respond to the *WorldCom* remand in the form of a final, appealable order that "explains the legal authority for the Commission's interim intercarrier compensation rules that exclude ISP-bound traffic from the reciprocal compensation requirement . . . ."[473] The court directed the Commission to respond to the writ of mandamus by November 5, 2008.[474]

179. Another regulatory arbitrage opportunity arose as a result of the Commission's 1997 decision not to regulate the interstate access charges of competitive LECs. As a result, many competitive LECs filed tariffs with access charges that were well above the rates charged by incumbent LECs for similar services.[475] In response, the Commission adopted new rules that effectively capped the interstate access charges that competitive LECs could tariff.[476]

[469] *See WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 429.

[470] *See WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 433.

[471] *See WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 434.

[472] Pet. for Writ of Mandamus, In re Core Communications Inc., No. 07-1446 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 5, 2007).

[473] *In re Core Commc'ns Inc.*, 531 F.3d 849, at 861–62 (D.C. Cir. 2008) (*Core Decision*).

[474] *See Core Decision*, 531 F.3d at 861–62. If the Commission fails to comply with the writ by the November 5th deadline, the interim rules will be vacated on November 6, 2008. *See id.* at 862.

[475] *See CLEC Access Charge Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9931, para. 22. For instance, the Commission found that certain competitive LECs charged $0.09 per minute and that the weighted average of competitive LEC access rates was above $0.04 per minute. *Id.* In contrast, the same underlying data showed a composite incumbent LEC rate of $0.0056 for that same traffic. *See* AT&T Additional Comments, CC Docket Nos. 96-262, 97-146, CCB/CPD File No. 98-63, App. A. (Jan. 11, 2001). The Commission found that competitive LECs could impose excessive charges due to two factors. First, the Commission observed that access charges are paid by the IXC rather than the end-user customer. Because the IXC has no ability to affect the calling or called party's choice of service providers, it cannot avoid carriers with high access charges. *CLEC Access Charge Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9935, para. 31. Second, the Commission found that the rate averaging requirements in section 254(g) of the Act precluded IXCs from passing through particular competitive LECs' excessive access charges to the end user customers of those competitive LECs. *Id.* As a result, the Commission found the existing regulatory regime did not effectively create the incentives for the end users to select a lower-priced access provider. *Id.*

[476] *See* 47 C.F.R. § 61.26 (containing rules governing the tariffing of competitive LEC interstate switched exchange access services). As a general matter, the Commission's rules governing competitive LEC access charges limit these rates to those charged by the competing incumbent LEC. *Id.*

180. Two more recent examples of regulatory arbitrage involve billing problems and the "Access Stimulation" problem. Commenters describe problems billing for traffic when it arrives for termination with insufficient identifying information.[477] Because the existing intercarrier compensation mechanisms have vastly disparate rates that apply to different types of traffic, carriers have both the opportunity and incentive to disguise the nature, or conceal the source, of the traffic being sent in order to avoid or reduce payments to other carriers.[478] "Access Stimulation" refers to allegations that certain LECs may have entered into agreements with providers of services that generate large volumes of incoming calls to substantially increase the number of calls sent to the LEC.[479] It has been alleged that this significantly increased "growth in terminating access traffic may be causing carriers' rates to become unjust or unreasonable" in violation of section 201 of the Act.[480] In the *Access Stimulation NPRM*, the Commission has sought information about the extent of this practice, its potential impact on the rates of price cap, rate-of-return, and competitive LECs, and how this practice should be addressed.[481]

B. Comprehensive Reform

1. Introduction

181. Evidence of increasing regulatory arbitrage, as well as increased competition and changes in technology, has led the Commission to consider comprehensive reform of intercarrier compensation. In 2001, the Commission adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to examine possible alternatives to existing intercarrier regimes with the intent of moving toward a more unified system.[482] The notice generated extensive comments that generally confirmed the need for comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform, including a number of competing proposals.[483] In 2005, the Commission adopted a

[477] *See infra* Part V.D.

[478] *See infra* para. 326.

[479] *See, e.g.*, *Qwest Commc'ns Corp. v. Farmers and Merchs. Mut. Tel. Co.*, File No. EB-07-MD-001, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 22 FCC Rcd 17973, para. 1 (2007) (addressing Qwest's allegations that Farmers deliberately planned to "increase dramatically the amount of terminating access traffic delivered to its exchange, via agreements with conference calling companies").

[480] *See Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers*, WC Docket No. 07-135, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 22 FCC Rcd 17989, para. 1 (2007) (*Access Stimulation NPRM*).

[481] *Access Stimulation NPRM*, 22 FCC Rcd 17989.

[482] *See Intercarrier Compensation NPRM*, 16 FCC Rcd 9610. The Commission acknowledged a number of problems with the existing regimes, including inefficient rates and different rates for the same types of calls. *Id.* at 9616–18, paras. 11–18. The Commission thus sought comment on alternative approaches to reforming intercarrier compensation, including moving to a bill-and-keep approach to intercarrier compensation. *Id.* at 9611–13, paras. 2–4.

[483] *See, e.g.*, Regulatory Reform Proposal of the Intercarrier Compensation Forum (ICF Proposal), *attached to* Letter from Gary M. Epstein and Richard R. Cameron, Counsel for the Intercarrier Compensation Forum, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92, App. A (filed Oct. 5, 2004) (ICF Oct. 5, 2004 *Ex Parte* Letter); Comprehensive Plan For Intercarrier Compensation Reform of Expanded Portland Group (EPG Proposal), *attached to* Letter from Glenn H. Brown, EPG Facilitator, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Nov. 2, 2004); Intercarrier Compensation Reform Plan of Alliance for Rational Intercarrier Compensation (ARIC Plan), *attached to* Letter from Wendy Thompson Fast, President, Consolidated Companies, and Ken Pfister, Vice President—Strategic Policy, Great Plains Communications, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-45, 99-68, 96-98, WC Docket No. 04-36 (filed Oct. 25, 2004); Cost-Based Intercarrier Compensation Coalition (CBICC Proposal), *attached to* Letter from Richard M. Rindler, Counsel for the Cost-Based Intercarrier Compensation Coalition, to Marlene Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Sept. 2, 2004); Updated Ex Parte of Home Telephone Company, Inc. and PBT Telecom (Home/PBT Proposal), *attached to* Letter from

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Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comment on the various industry proposals.[484] In 2006, another industry coalition submitted an alternative comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform proposal, known as the Missoula Plan.[485] The Commission separately requested and received comments on the Missoula Plan proposal.[486] Finally, in 2008, the Commission stabilized the universal service fund by adopting an interim cap on payments to competitive ETCs, helping pave the way for comprehensive intercarrier compensation and universal service reform, and leading to a number of new reform proposals.[487]

182. As a result of the *Intercarrier Compensation NPRM*, the *Intercarrier Compensation FNPRM*, the filing of the Missoula Plan, and the more recent proposals that have been filed, the Commission has compiled an extensive record over the past seven years. The Commission has received comments or proposals from a wide variety of interested parties, including, states, incumbent LECs, competitive LECs, rural companies, IXCs, new technology companies, consumer advocates, business customers, and industry associations. As demonstrated throughout this order, the Commission has thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the voluminous record, has considered the evidence submitted by the parties supporting the alternatives, and has carefully evaluated each of the proposals that have been presented. Based on this examination of the options, we find that the approach we describe below and adopt in this order best achieves the goals of promoting universal service, encouraging the efficient use of, and investment in, broadband technologies, spurring competition, and ultimately, further reducing the need for regulation.

2. A New Approach to Intercarrier Compensation

183. Since the introduction of competition into long-distance telephone service, the Commission has moved toward eliminating implicit subsidies from intercarrier charges. At every stage, however, the Commission has had to balance the desire to establish more efficient intercarrier charges

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Keith Oliver, Vice President, Finance, Home Telephone Company, and Ben Spearman, Vice President, Chief Regulatory Officer, PBT Telecom, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Nov. 2, 2004); NASUCA Intercarrier Compensation Proposal at 1 (NASUCA Proposal), *attached to* Letter from Philip F. McClelland, Senior Assistant Consumer Advocate, NASUCA, to Marlene Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Dec. 14, 2004); Western Wireless Intercarrier Compensation Reform Plan at 9 (Western Wireless Proposal), *attached to* Letter from David L. Sieradzki, Counsel for Western Wireless Corp., to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Dec. 1, 2004).

[484] *See Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime*, CC Docket No. 01-92, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 20 FCC Rcd 4685, 4687, para. 4 (2005) (*Intercarrier Compensation FNPRM*).

[485] *See* Missoula Plan for Intercarrier Compensation Reform (Missoula Plan), *attached to* Letter from Tony Clark, Commissioner and Chair, NARUC Committee on Telecommunications, Ray Baum, Commissioner and Chair, NARUC Task Force, and Larry Landis, Commissioner and Vice-Chair, NARUC Task Force, to Hon. Kevin Martin, Chmn., FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed July 24, 2006) (NARUC Task Force July 24, 2006 *Ex Parte* Letter).

[486] *Comment Sought on Missoula Intercarrier Compensation Reform Plan*, CC Docket No. 01-92, Public Notice, 21 FCC Rcd 8524 (2006). Subsequently, the Missoula Plan supporters filed additional details concerning specific aspects of the plan, on which the Commission continued to seek comment. *See Comment Sought on Missoula Plan Phantom Traffic Interim Process and Call Detail Records Proposal*, CC Docket No. 01-92, Public Notice, 21 FCC Rcd 13179 (2006); *Comment Sought on Amendments to the Missoula Plan Intercarrier Compensation Proposal to Incorporate a Federal Benchmark Mechanism*, CC Docket No. 01-92, Public Notice, 22 FCC Rcd 3362 (2007).

[487] The Commission invited parties to refresh the record in these and other relevant dockets. *Interim Cap Clears Path for Comprehensive Reform: Commission Poised to Move Forward on Difficult Decisions Necessary to Promote and Advance Affordable Telecommunications for All Americans*, News Release (May 2, 2008), *available at* http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-281939A1.pdf.

against the potential adverse effects on consumers (in the form of higher flat-rated charges) and carriers (in the form of reduced intercarrier revenues). The introduction of competition into local telephone markets accelerated the need for reform. As discussed above, since the implementation of the 1996 Act, not only has local competition increased, but so has the incidence and severity of regulatory arbitrage.

184. We conclude today that, with the universal service fund now stabilized, we can wait no longer to begin the process of comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform. The differences in existing intercarrier compensation regimes impose significant inefficiencies on users and distort carriers' investment incentives, which can result in losses of billions of dollars in consumers and producers surplus. Possibly more important, these legacy regulatory regimes pose an obstacle to the transition to an all-IP broadband world. Because carriers currently can receive significant revenues from charging above-cost rates to terminate telecommunications traffic, they have a reduced incentive to upgrade their networks to the most efficient technology or to negotiate interconnection agreements that are designed to accommodate the efficient exchange of IP traffic, as both actions would likely lead to reduced intercarrier payments.[488]

185. In this order, we therefore adopt a new approach to intercarrier compensation and establish the blueprint for moving to new uniform termination rates that are economically efficient and sustainable in our increasingly competitive telecommunications markets. At the same time, we recognize, as the Commission has in the past, the need to be cognizant of market disruptions and potential adverse effects on consumers and carriers of moving too quickly from the existing intercarrier compensation regimes to our new uniform approach to intercarrier compensation. Accordingly, we adopt here a gradual ten-year transition plan with separate stages, designed to reduce rates over a sufficient period to minimize market disruptions and to cushion the impact of our reform on both customers and carriers. At the end of the transition period, all telecommunications traffic will be treated as falling within the reciprocal compensation provisions of section 251(b)(5), and states will set default reciprocal compensation rates pursuant to the new methodology we adopt herein.

186. The requirements that we adopt for intercarrier compensation do not apply to providers operating in Alaska, Hawaii, or any U.S. Territories and possessions. We find that these areas have very different attributes and related cost issues than the continental states.[489] For this reason, we are exempting providers in Alaska, Hawaii and U.S. Territories and possessions from the requirements and rules adopted herein, and we will address them in a subsequent proceeding.[490]

187. *Transition Plan.* As described below, we adopt a ten-year transition plan.[491] In the first

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[488] *See, e.g.*, T. RANDOLPH BEARD & GEORGE S. FORD, DO HIGH CALL TERMINATION RATES DETER BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT? (Phoenix Center Policy Bulletin No. 22, Oct. 2008), *available at* http://www.phoenix-center.org/PolicyBulletin/PCPB22Final.pdf.

[489] *See, e.g.*, *Verizon/América Móvil Transfer* Order, 22 FCC Rcd at 6211, para. 36 (describing "difficult to serve terrain and dramatic urban/rural differences" in Puerto Rico); *Rates and Services Integration Order*, 4 FCC Rcd at 396, paras. 7–8 (describing the unique market conditions and structure in Alaska); GCI Oct. 3, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter (citing cost distinctions between Alaska and the continental United States).

[490] *Cf. Policies and Service Rules for the Broadcasting-Satellite Service Order*, 22 FCC Rcd at 8860, para. 47 ("The Commission is committed to establishing policies and rules that will promote service to all regions in the United States, particularly to traditionally underserved areas, such as Alaska and Hawaii, and other remote areas.").

[491] A number of parties argue for a shorter transition period than that provided here. *See, e.g.*, Letter from Robert W. Quinn, Senior Vice President, Federal Regulatory, AT&T, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Oct. 23, 2008) (AT&T Oct. 23, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Letter from Kyle McSlarrow, President and CEO, NCTA, to Kevin J. Martin, Chairman, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed Oct. 28, 2008) (NCTA Oct. 28, 2008

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stage, intrastate access rates are reduced to the levels of interstate rates. During stage two, carriers will reduce their rates to an interim uniform termination rate, set by the state. Carriers whose current rates are below the interim uniform rate set by the state, however, may not increase their rates. During stage three, the rates carriers charge at the end of stage two (either the interim uniform rates or their prior rates, whichever are lower) will be gradually reduced to the rates that will apply at the end of the transition. This transition will be designed by the state so as to minimize market disruptions and adverse economic effects. This transition is described in more detail below.

188. *Intrastate Rate Reductions*. One year from the effective date of this order, we require that all LECs reduce their terminating *intrastate* switched access rates by 50 percent of the difference between their intrastate switched access rates and their *interstate* switched access rates.[492] Two years from the effective date of this order, we require that all LECs reduce their terminating intrastate switched access rates by the remaining 50 percent of the difference between their intrastate switched access rates and their interstate switched access rates so that their intrastate rates equal their interstate rates. Carriers will comply with state tariffing requirements or other applicable state law in effectuating those changes in intrastate terminating access rates.

189. *State Establishment of Interim, Uniform Reciprocal Compensation Rates*. Within two years from the effective date of this order, states must adopt a state-wide interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate applicable to all carriers (except carriers whose rates are below the interim, uniform rate, in which case, those carriers' rates shall be capped at those lower, existing rates). Three years from the effective date of this order, we require that all LECs reduce their terminating rates by 50 percent of the difference between their current terminating rate and the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate established by the state. Four years from the effective date of this order we require that all LECs reduce their terminating rates by the remaining 50 percent of the difference between their current terminating rate and the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate established by the state so that their terminating rates equal the state-set interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate. This rate will become the starting point for stage three—a six-year gradual downward transition to the final uniform reciprocal compensation rate, which the states will also set, consistent with the methodology we adopt in this order. The states will have discretion to determine the glide path, which begins four years from the effective date of this order and ends ten years from the effective date of this order. This glide path will determine the trajectory of the interim reciprocal compensation rate as it trends down to the final reciprocal compensation rate. All carriers are subject to this glide path. However, if a carrier's rate is below the rate specified in the glide path, such carrier cannot raise its rates, but is subject to the trajectory when the interim rate equals that carrier's rate. At the end of ten years (i.e., at the end of stage two), all the terminating rates of all carriers in each state will be reduced to the new final, uniform reciprocal compensation rate established by each state. We believe that, by establishing this ten-year, multiple-stage transition to a state-set final uniform reciprocal compensation rate, we will provide a sufficiently smooth and gradual glide path so that carriers will be able to adjust their other rates and revenues in a measured way over time, as allowed by the reforms adopted in this order, without creating unacceptable rate or

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Ex Parte Letter); Letter from Paul W. Garnett, Assistant Vice-President, CTIA—The Wireless Association, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed October 27, 2008) (CTIA October 27, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy (SBA) *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 5–7. We note that the reforms adopted today do not preclude carriers from entering into agreements that would reduce intercarrier charges more quickly, (*See, e.g.*, Letter from Susanne A. Guyer, Senior Vice-President, Verizon, to Kevin J. Martin, Chairman, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 (filed October 28, 2008) at 6.) nor do they prevent state commissions from accelerating the glide path toward the final reciprocal compensation rate if they deem it appropriate.

[492] To the extent that a carrier's intrastate terminating access rate already is below its interstate terminating access rate, it will not change that rate.

revenue effects.

190. Although we permit the states to establish the particular interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate for each step of the final six years of the transition, we establish certain conditions on the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate and on the terminating intercarrier rates that carriers may charge. First, although we do not set forth a methodology that states must use in setting the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rates, we do require that, within each state, there must be a single, state-wide interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate during each year and at each stage of the transition.[493] Therefore, in establishing interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rates, a state may wish to consider the impact of those rates on all the carriers in the state. States are permitted to adopt an interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate that may be higher at the beginning of the transition than some existing incumbent LEC rates today. If they do so, however, carriers with lower termination rates may not raise them to the interim uniform rate. Second, states may determine the glide path for moving from the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate to the final, uniform reciprocal compensation rate, subject to the requirement that the interim uniform rate be identical for all carriers at each step in the transition. By the end of the transition period, the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rates must decrease to a single final, uniform reciprocal compensation rate for all carriers established pursuant to the Commission's new "additional costs" methodology.

191. *Transition of Rates During Stage Three.* Beginning four years from the effective date of this order, and through the remainder of the transition, each carrier must set each of its terminating rates at the lower of: (i) its current rate; or (ii) the state-set interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate applicable at that stage of the transition. Thus, for example, if a carrier has an interstate terminating access rate above the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate applicable at that stage of the transition, but a current reciprocal compensation rate below the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate, the carrier will reduce its interstate rate to the interim rate but leave its current reciprocal compensation rate unchanged. That carrier will continue to have two separate termination rates until such time as the applicable interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate is adjusted lower and becomes less than its current reciprocal compensation rate. At that time, all the carrier's rates will be set at the level of the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate for that state.

192. We emphasize that under no circumstances shall a carrier be permitted to increase its current rates, even if the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate is higher than one or more of its current rates. In this respect, the applicable interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate set by the states will act as a ceiling or cap on such rates. We do not permit a carrier to charge a rate for terminating interstate or intrastate access, reciprocal compensation, or ISP-bound traffic that is higher than the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate, but we will permit a carrier to continue to charge a rate that is lower than the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate. We note that because CMRS providers may not tariff terminating access today,[494] and we do not permit a carrier to increase rates during the transition, CMRS providers therefore will not be permitted to charge for terminating access

[493] We recognize that the state-wide interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rates may vary state-by-state as state commissions consider the best means of transitioning to a final, uniform reciprocal compensation rate.

[494] Although CMRS providers may not tariff access charges, they are not prohibited from entering into contracts with interexchange carriers that provide for the payment of such charges. *Petitions of Sprint PCS and AT&T Corp. For Declaratory Ruling Regarding CMRS Access Charges,* WT Docket No. 01-316, Declaratory Ruling, 17 FCC Rcd 13192 (2002) (*CMRS Access Charges Declaratory Ruling*).

until the end of the transition period.[495]

193. We note that we already have an interim intercarrier compensation regime for ISP-bound traffic, and to avoid disruption in the marketplace, we will apply on a transitional basis the pricing standards we adopted for ISP-bound traffic in the *ISP Remand Order*,[496] as modified by the *Core Forbearance Order*.[497] Currently, two rules remain in effect: (1) ISP-bound traffic is currently subject to a reciprocal compensation rate cap of $.0007 per minute-of-use; and (2) under the mirroring rule, the $.0007 cap applies to traffic exchanged with an incumbent LEC only if it offers to exchange all traffic subject to section 251(b)(5) at the same rate. As explained below, we conclude that it is appropriate to retain these rules, but only on a transitional basis until a state commission, applying the "additional costs" standards adopted in this order, has established reciprocal compensation rates that are at or below $.0007 per minute-of-use.

194. In the *ISP Remand Order* in 2001, based on "convincing evidence in the record" that carriers had "targeted ISPs as customers merely to take advantage of . . . intercarrier payments"—offering free service to ISPs, paying ISPs to be their customers, and sometimes engaging in outright fraud—the Commission adopted an interim ISP payment regime to "limit, if not end, the opportunity for regulatory arbitrage."[498] The Commission adopted a gradually declining cap on intercarrier compensation for ISP-bound traffic, beginning at $.0015 per minute-of-use and declining to $.0007 per minute-of-use.[499] These rate caps reflected the downward trend in intercarrier compensation rates contained in then-recently negotiated interconnection agreements.[500] We have previously recognized that evidence that "carriers have agreed to rates"—through voluntary, arms-length negotiations—constitutes substantial evidence that rates are just and reasonable.[501]

[495] Consistent with our conclusion that CMRS providers are unable to assess access charges during the transition, we make clear that our symmetry rule, set forth in Part V.C.1.b, will not apply until the transition is over. Even so, we clarify that, to the extent that any carrier has a terminating rate above the permissible rate, such carrier must reduce the rate to the permissible level. Specifically, in the first year of the transition, all carriers with intrastate access charges higher than their interstate access charges must reduce such charges by 50 percent of the difference between its interstate switched access rate and its intrastate switched access rate. Similarly, once the state-set interim, uniform rate is in effect, all carriers must reduce terminating rates, whether interstate access, reciprocal compensation, or ISP-bound traffic, by 50 percent of the difference between the current terminating switched access rate and the interim, uniform rate (as it is reduced over time). Even though rates during the transition will not reflect true symmetry, rates for most carriers should be symmetric before the transition is over as all carriers reduce charges to the final, uniform rate.

[496] *See ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9153, 9186–93, paras. 21, 77–88.

[497] *See Core Forbearance Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 20184–89, paras. 16–26.

[498] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9187, para. 77.

[499] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9187, para. 78.

[500] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9190–91, para. 85.

[501] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9190–91, para. 85; *see also Petition of ACS of Anchorage, Inc. Pursuant to Section 10 of the Communications Act of 1934, as Amended, for Forbearance from Sections 251(c)(3) and 252(d)(1) in the Anchorage Study Area*, WC Docket No. 05-281, 22 FCC Rcd 1958, 1984–85, paras. 39, 40 n.136 (2007) (finding that "commercially negotiated rates" provide "just and reasonable prices"); *Review of the Section 251 Unbundling Obligations of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers; Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Deployment of Wireline Services Offering Advanced Telecommunications Capability*, CC Docket Nos. 01-338, 98-147, 96-98, Report and Order and Order on Remand and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 18 FCC Rcd 16978, 17389, para. 664 (2003) (subsequent history

(continued….)

195. Most commenters urge the Commission to maintain the interim compensation rules governing ISP-bound traffic until the Commission is able to transition to comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform.[502] These parties contend that a higher compensation rate would create new opportunities for arbitrage[503] and impose substantial financial burdens on wireless companies, incumbent LECs and state public utility commissions.[504] They further claim that the existing regime has simplified interconnection negotiations.[505]

196. We share these commenters' concerns. The record also suggests that eliminating the $.0007 cap and instead applying higher reciprocal compensation rates that may be set by the states during the transition period to the adoption of our new methodology would have a significant negative impact on

(continued from previous page) omitted) (*Triennial Review Order*) (finding that "arms-length agreements . . . to provide [an] element at [a] rate" "demonstrate[s]" that the rate is "just and reasonable").

[502] *See, e.g.*, Letter from Gregory J. Vogt, Counsel for CenturyTel, Inc. to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 01-92, Attach. at 10 (filed July 8, 2008) (asking the Commission to maintain the existing compromises reached with respect to ISP-bound traffic); Letter from Gary L. Phillips, Associate General Counsel, AT&T, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-98, 99-68 at 8 (filed May 9, 2008) (asserting that the public interest would be best served by maintaining the existing transitional rates pending broader intercarrier compensation reform); Letter from L. Charles Keller, Counsel for Sage Telecom, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 99-68, 01-92, Attach. at 6 (Sage Telecom May 9, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter) (stating that retaining the ISP rate serves broad policy goals); Letter from John T. Nakahata, Counsel for Level 3 Communications, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 99-68 at 1 (filed May 7, 2008) (supporting continuation of the interim compensation rules); Letter from Joshua Seidmann, Vice President of Regulatory Affairs, ITTA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 96-98, Attach. at 2 (filed Apr. 28, 2008) (ITTA Apr. 28, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter) (asking the Commission to retain the current $0.0007 rate for ISP-bound traffic); Letter from Donna Epps, Vice President of Federal Regulatory Affairs, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 96-98 at 1 (filed Apr. 7, 2008) (urging the Commission to support its earlier finding that $0.0007 is appropriate compensation for dial-up ISP traffic); Letter from L. Charles Keller, Counsel for Verizon Wireless, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 99-68, Attach. (filed May 1, 2008) (describing how elimination of the existing ISP rate would create substantial burdens on a number of carriers and state commissions) (Verizon Wireless May 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Letter from Glenn Reynolds, Vice President, Policy, USTelecom, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 99-68, 96-262, WC Docket No. 07-135 at 2 (filed Apr. 29, 2008) (noting that the Commission's existing rules have "largely mitigated the debate around compensation for ISP-bound traffic, but there is every reason to believe the same problems would arise if the Commission were to reverse direction on this issue") (USTelecom Apr. 29, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter).

[503] *See, e.g.*, USTelecom Apr. 29, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 2; Letter from Melissa E. Newman, Vice President, Federal Regulatory, Qwest, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 96-98, WC Docket No. 07-135, Attach. at 3–5 (filed Apr. 25, 2008) (Qwest April 25, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Verizon and BellSouth, Further Supplemental White Paper on ISP Reciprocal Compensation at 20 (Verizon/BellSouth Further Supp. ISP White Paper), *attached to* Letter from Donna Epps, Vice President, Federal Regulatory Advocacy, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 96-98, 99-68 (filed Sept. 27, 2004).

[504] *See, e.g.*, Verizon Wireless May 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter, Attach.

[505] *See, e.g.*, Verizon Wireless May 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter (stating that "the [m]irroring [r]ule simplified wireless-ILEC interconnection negotiations tremendously."); Supplemental Comments of Verizon and Verizon Wireless on Intercarrier Payments for ISP-Bound Traffic and the *WorldCom* Remand, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-98, 99-68 at 38–40 (filed Oct. 2, 2008) (Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments) (indicating that Verizon entered into multiple agreements using the $.0007 rate cap established in the *ISP Remand Order*).

carriers serving rural markets and broadband deployment.[506] The record demonstrates that dial-up minutes remain at high levels in rural areas and that the application of reciprocal compensation to these minutes would generate significant costs to carriers serving these rural areas.[507] Thus, it remains the case that the "rate caps help avoid arbitrage and market distortions that otherwise would result from the availability of reciprocal compensation for ISP-bound traffic."[508] We further believe that maintaining the cap on a transitional basis will minimize the disruptive effects and regulatory uncertainty that otherwise would result from the abrupt elimination of clear compensation rules for ISP-bound traffic.

197. We expect that state commissions, applying the new "additional costs" standard adopted in this order, will set final reciprocal compensation rates at or below $.0007 per minute-of-use. As noted below, the evidence in the record suggests that the incremental cost of call termination on modern switches is de minimis.[509] We have given state commissions up to ten years to transition to new rates based on the "additional costs" standard. Accordingly, the rate cap will only have an impact in a particular state on a transitional basis until that state sets rates at or below $.0007.

198. The mirroring rule has also succeeded in promoting the Commission's "goal of a more unified intercarrier compensation regime by requiring LECs to offer similar rates for like traffic."[510] Most intraMTA traffic is now exchanged pursuant to the rate caps, and a substantial portion of wireline intraexchange traffic is being exchanged at rates at or below the rate caps as well.[511] Eliminating the mirroring rule and allowing carriers to charge higher transitional reciprocal compensation rates for traffic currently subject to the mirroring rule would significantly increase the cost carriers incur in exchanging that traffic. Those increased costs would divert funds from investment in next generation wireless networks and likely would be borne by consumers, through increases in the costs of wireless offerings.[512]

199. We reject arguments that the Commission unlawfully delegated its authority in the *ISP Remand Order* and arguments that the Commission addressed previously in the *Core Forbearance*

[506] *See, e.g.*, ITTA April 28, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter, Attach. at 3, 5; Embarq May 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter, Attach. at 2, 5–7.

[507] *See, e.g.*, Letter from Tamar E. Finn, Counsel for Earthlink, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 01-92, Attach. at iii, 11–12 (filed Aug. 14, 2008) (estimating that 24% of dial-up users in rural America say that broadband service is not available where they live); Sage Telecom May 9, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 3–4; Embarq May 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter, Attach. at 6 (calculating its cost to be $100 million if all ISP-bound minutes were subject to TELRIC-based rates under section 251(b)(5)); ITTA Apr. 28, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter (noting that dial-up usage remains strong in rural areas); USTelecom Apr. 29, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter (noting a "recent study from the Pew Internet & American Life Project that indicated that while the number of dial-up subscribers had dropped 63% since 2001, the number of minutes spent online by each dial-up subscriber had increased approximately 70%. As a result, some USTelecom member companies are actually seeing an *increase* in dial-up minutes.") (emphasis in original); Letter from Bennett L. Ross, General Counsel—D.C., BellSouth D.C., to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 99-68, WC Docket No. 03-171 (filed Aug. 29, 2005) (attaching a chart showing that "dial-up subscribers would continue to generate substantial minutes of dial-up ISP calls, notwithstanding projections of a continued decline in the number of dial-up subscribers.").

[508] *Core Forbearance Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 20815–16, para. 18.

[509] *See infra* para. 250.

[510] *Core Forbearance Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 20816, para. 19.

[511] *See, e.g.*, Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 40.

[512] Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments. at 40.

Order.[513] We also disagree with parties who suggest that the Commission, in responding to the D.C. Circuit's remand in *WorldCom*, must offer detailed new justifications for each of the four features of the ISP intercarrier payment regime: the rate caps, the mirroring rule, the growth cap, and the new markets rule.[514] The prior policy justifications offered for those rules by the Commission have not been overturned by any court, and our current policy justification for retaining these rules is simply to maintain the status quo in this area on a transitional basis until our new "additional costs" methodology has been fully implemented. Indeed, pursuant to our new "additional costs" methodology, we believe that the rate caps set forth in 2001 may well be higher than the final, uniform reciprocal compensation rates set by the states. However, discarding these rules during the transition to our new methodology would be unwise and unwarranted because the "rate caps are necessary to prevent discrimination *between* dial-up Internet access customers and basic telephone service customers," those caps "protect consumers of basic telephone service" from being forced to subsidize dial-up Internet access service, and the rate caps minimize the "classic regulatory arbitrage" that reciprocal compensation for ISP-bound traffic had made possible.[515]

200. In sum, we maintain the $.0007 cap and the mirroring rule, on a transitional basis, pursuant to our section 201 authority. These interim rules shall remain in place in a state until the state commission, applying the "additional costs" standard adopted in this order, has established reciprocal compensation rates that are at or below $.0007 per minute-of-use.

201. We find that our transition plan is necessary and appropriate to prevent undue economic hardships to carriers caused by a too-rapid reduction in intercarrier compensation rates. If there is evidence that carriers are attempting to abuse the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate and/or transition process to create arbitrage opportunities, we encourage carriers to bring such evidence to our attention or that of the state commission so such claims can be investigated and, if appropriate, action taken.

3. Legal Authority

a. Legal Authority for Comprehensive Reform—Interpretation of Sections 251(b)(5) and 251(g)

202. The history of intercarrier compensation reveals many policy reasons for comprehensively reforming intercarrier compensation rates, including reducing arbitrage, promoting competition, facilitating the introduction of new technologies, and benefiting consumers. The dual structure of separate federal and state jurisdiction over communications has made accomplishing such reforms more complex, however. Although our reform does not disturb those fundamental jurisdictional distinctions, we find that, through the tools made available by the 1996 Act, we have the means to accomplish this reform by electing to partner with the states.

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[513] *See* Letter from Michael B. Hazzard, Counsel for Core Communications, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 01-92, Attach. at 18 & n.8 (filed May 14, 2008) (Core May 14, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter). We also reject Core's argument that the *ISP Remand Order* unlawfully delegates to incumbent LECs the decision of whether the *ISP Remand Order* applies. *See id.* at 19–20. The Commission did not delegate its authority in the *ISP Remand Order* but rather provided options that were not mandatory. *See, e.g.*, *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9193, para. 89. Additionally, Core argues that the Commission provided no reasoned explanation for the growth cap and new market rules adopted in the *ISP Remand Order* and never provided notice or an opportunity for comment on those specific rules. These rules, as applicable to all carriers, were forborne from in the *Core Forbearance Order*. *See Core Forbearance Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 20186–87, paras. 20–21. As such, this argument is moot.

[514] *See* Core May 14, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter, Attach. at 20–26.

[515] *In re Core Commc'ns* 455 F.3d at 277–80 (internal quotation marks omitted).

203. The Commission unquestionably has authority to reform intercarrier compensation with respect to interstate access services, rates charged by CMRS providers, and IP/PSTN traffic. Section 2(a) of the Act establishes the Commission's jurisdiction over interstate services, for which the Commission ensures just, reasonable, and not unjustly and unreasonably discriminatory rates under section 201 and 202.[516] Likewise, the Commission has authority over the rates of CMRS providers pursuant to section 332 of the Act.[517] We also make clear that authority to impose economic regulation with respect to IP/PSTN traffic rests exclusively with this Commission. The Commission has adopted a number of regulatory requirements applicable to interconnected VoIP services and providers.[518] With respect to the statutory classification of IP-enabled services, however, the Commission only has addressed two situations.[519]

204. We now classify as "information services" those services that originate calls on IP networks and terminate them on circuit-switched networks, or conversely that originate calls on circuit-switched networks and terminate them on IP networks (collectively "IP/PSTN" services).[520] Such traffic

[516] 47 U.S.C. §§ 152(a), 201, 202.

[517] 47 U.S.C. § 332.

[518] *See, e.g., Telephone Number Requirements for IP-Enabled Services Providers; Local Number Portability Porting Interval and Validation Requirements; IP-Enabled Services; CTIA Petitions for Declaratory Ruling on Wireline-Wireless Porting Issues*, CC Docket Nos. 99-200, 95-116, WC Docket Nos. 07-243, 07-244, 04-36, Report and Order, Declaratory Ruling, Order on Remand, and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 22 FCC Rcd 19531, 19538–40, paras. 14, 16 (2008) (*LNP Order*) (imposing LNP requirements, and noting that the Commission previously imposed the requirement to provide 911 service, to contribute to universal service, to protect the privacy of customers, to comply with disability access and telecommunications relay service requirements, and to satisfy certain CALEA obligations).

[519] On one hand, the Commission classified as an "information service" Pulver.com's free service that did not provide transmission and offers a number of computing capabilities. *Petition for Declaratory Ruling that Pulver.com's Free World Dialup is Neither Telecommunications nor a Telecommunications Service*, WC Docket No. 03-45, Memorandum Order and Opinion, 19 FCC Rcd 3307 (2004) (*Pulver.com Order*). On the other hand, the Commission found that certain "IP-in-the-middle" services were "telecommunications services" where they: : (1) use ordinary customer premises equipment (CPE) with no enhanced functionality; (2) originate and terminate on the public switched telephone network (PSTN); and (3) undergo no net protocol conversion and provide no enhanced functionality to end users due to the provider's use of IP technology. *See, e.g., Petition for Declaratory Ruling that AT&T's Phone-to-Phone IP Telephony Services are Exempt from Access Charges*, WC Docket No. 02-361, Order, 19 FCC Rcd 7457 (2004) (*IP-in-the-Middle Order*). *See also, e.g., Regulation of Prepaid Calling Card Services*, WC Docket No. 05-68, Declaratory Ruling and Report and Order, 21 FCC Rcd 7290 (2006) (*Prepaid Calling Card Order*).

[520] We use the term "IP/PSTN" as a shorthand, without reaching any universal conclusions regarding the technology underlying the PSTN. Today the PSTN continues to rely primarily on circuit-switched technology to connect to end-user customers, although we recognize that carriers increasingly are converting portions of their networks to IP technology. *See, e.g., IP-Enabled Services; E911 Requirements for IP-Enabled Service Providers*, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 05-196, First Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 20 FCC Rcd 10245, 10258, para. 24 & n.77 (2005) (distinguishing the "specialized" CPE required for interconnected VoIP services from the standard CPE used for typical telephone calls); *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Report to Congress, 13 FCC Rcd 11501, 11532, para. 84 (1998) ("'IP telephony' services enable real-time voice transmission using Internet protocols. The services can be provided in two basic ways: through software and hardware at customer premises, or through 'gateways' that enable applications originating and/or terminating on the PSTN. Gateways are computers that transform the circuit-switched voice signal into IP packets, and vice versa, and perform associated signaling, control, and address translation functions."). Insofar as a service allows a customer to originate a communication on an IP network and terminate it on a circuit-switched network, or vice versa, it involves a net

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today involves a net protocol conversion between end-users, and thus constitutes an "enhanced" or "information service."[521]

205. Although there are certain exceptions to this treatment, we do not find them applicable.[522] In particular, we do not find this to be "protocol conversion in connection with the introduction of new technology to implement existing services" that would be treated as a "basic," rather than "enhanced" service.[523] That exception was designed to address situations "involving no change in an existing service, but merely a change in electrical interface characteristics to facilitate transitional introduction of new technology."[524] By contrast, we find that IP/PSTN services are not mere changes to the underlying technology used for "existing" basic services, but are entirely new services with characteristics in many ways distinct from pre-existing telephone services.[525]

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protocol conversion, and we classify it as an "information service" today. Insofar as that service allows communications with no net protocol conversion, it is not subject to our "information service" classification here. We note that the presence of a net protocol conversion is not the only basis for classifying a service as an "enhanced" or "information service." *See, e.g.*, 47 C.F.R. § 64.702(a); *Computer II Final Decision*, 77 FCC 2d at 420–21, para. 97. We do not reach those issues at this time, however.

[521] *See, e.g.*, *Implementation of the Non-Accounting Safeguards of Sections 271 and 272 of the Communications Act of 1934, as Amended*, CC Docket No. 96-149, First Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 11 FCC Rcd 21905, 21957–58, para. 106 (1996) (*Non-Accounting Safeguards Order*). Interpreting the 1996 Act's definition of "information services," the Commission held that "all of the services that the Commission has previously considered to be 'enhanced services' are 'information services.'" *Non-Accounting Safeguards Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 21956, para. 103. For the all reasons discussed in Part V.B.2, we decline to defer the classification of IP/PSTN services, as requested by some parties, instead finding it appropriate to address this issue as part of our comprehensive reforms. *See, e.g.*, Letter from Ben Scott, Policy Director, Free Press, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 05-337, 06-122, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 01-92 at 15 (filed Oct. 24, 2008) (Free Press Oct. 24, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Letter from Brad E. Mutschelknaus and Genevieve Morelli, Counsel for Broadview Networks, et al., to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 2 (filed Oct. 28, 2008).

[522] Two of the exceptions are: (1) protocol processing involving communications between an end user and the network itself (e.g., for initiation, routing, and termination of calls) rather than between or among users; and (2) protocol conversion to facilitate the interconnection of networks. *Non-Accounting Safeguards Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 21957–58, para. 106. These categories of protocol processing services may involve protocol conversions, but they result in no net protocol conversion between the end users. *Implementation of the Non-Accounting Safeguards of Sections 271 and 272 of the Communications Act of 1934, as Amended*, CC Docket No. 96-149, Order on Reconsideration, 12 FCC Rcd 2297, 2297–99, para. 2 (1997). Thus, they are not relevant here.

[523] *Amendment to Sections 64.702 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations (Third Computer Inquiry); and Policy and Rules Concerning Rates for Competitive Common Phase II Carrier Service and Facilities Authorization Thereof; Communications Protocols Under Section 64.702 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations*, CC Docket No. 85-229, Report and Order, 2 FCC Rcd 3072, 3081, para. 65 (1987) (*Computer III Phase II Order*). *See also Non-Accounting Safeguards Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 21957–58, para. 106.

[524] *Communications Protocols under Section 64.702 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations*, GN Docket No. 80-756, Memorandum Opinion, Order, and Statement Of Principles, 95 FCC 2d 584, para. 16 (1983) (*Protocols Order*).

[525] *See, e.g.*, Letter from Donna Epps, Vice President, Federal Regulatory, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 06-122, CC Docket No. 01-92, Attach. at 9–11 (filed Sept. 19, 2008); Letter from Susanne A. Guyer, Senior Vice President, Federal Regulatory Affairs, Verizon, to Chairman Kevin J. Martin, FCC, WC Docket No. 04-36, at 10–11 (filed Aug. 6, 2007); Letter from AT&T et al., to Chairman Kevin J. Martin, FCC, et al., WC Docket No. 04-36, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 2–3 (filed Aug. 6, 2008); VON Coalition *IP-Enabled Services NPRM* Comments at 3–16; AT&T *IP-Enabled Services NPRM* Comments at 13–17. We thus disagree with parties who suggest, in essence, that IP/PSTN services are no different than "basic" services. *See, e.g.*, Letter from
(continued....)

206. Consistent with the *Pulver.com Order* and the *Vonage Order*, we preempt any state efforts to impose "traditional 'telephone company' regulations" as they relate to IP/PSTN information services as inconsistent with our generally unregulated treatment of information services.[526] Of course, neither the *Vonage Order*, the *Pulver.com Order*, nor our actions here preempt state actions that are consistent with federal policy.[527] Moreover, as we describe below, we allow states to establish reciprocal compensation rates, pursuant to our methodology, including for IP/PSTN traffic.

207. In sections 251 and 252 of the Act, Congress altered the traditional regulatory framework based on jurisdiction by expanding the applicability of national rules to historically intrastate issues and state rules to historically interstate issues.[528] In the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission found that the 1996 Act created parallel jurisdiction for the Commission and the states over interstate and intrastate matters under sections 251 and 252.[529] The Commission and the states "are to address the same matters through their parallel jurisdiction over both interstate and intrastate matters under sections 251 and 252."[530] Moreover, section 251(i) provides that "[n]othing in this section shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect the Commission's authority under section 201."[531] The Commission concluded that section 251(i) "affirms that the Commission's preexisting authority under section 201 continues to apply for purely interstate activities."[532]

208. In implementing sections 251 and 252 in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission's treatment of LEC-CMRS traffic provides an instructive approach. Prior to the 1996 Act, the Commission expressly preempted "state and local regulations of the kind of interconnection to which CMRS providers are entitled" based on its authority under section 201 and 332 of the Act.[533] Nevertheless, in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission brought LEC-CMRS

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Thomas Jones and Jonathan Lechter, Counsel for tw telecom et al., to Marlene H Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-45, WC Docket Nos. 05-337, 99-68, 04-36, Attach. at 2 (filed Oct. 28, 2008) (tw telecom *et. al* Oct. 28, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter). We note that whether a service is viewed by consumers as a possible substitute for a "basic" service is a distinct question from whether, as a matter of technology and the nature of the service offering, the service simply replaces the technology underlying a pre-existing basic service. Thus, our conclusion here is not inconsistent with the Commission's recognition that interconnected VoIP services increasingly are viewed by consumers as a substitute for traditional telephone services. *See, e.g.*, *LNP Order*, 22 FCC Rcd at 19547, para. 28.

[526] *Vonage Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 22404; *see also Pulver.com Order*, 19 FCC Rcd at 3316, para. 15 ("We determine, consistent with our precedent regarding information services, that FWD is an unregulated information service and any state regulations that seek to treat FWD as a telecommunications service or otherwise subject it to public-utility type regulation would almost certainly pose a conflict with our policy of nonregulation.").

[527] For example, states are free to require contributions to state universal service or telecommunications relay service funds through methodologies that are consistent with federal policy. *See, e.g.*, Letter from Robert W. Quinn, Jr. Senior Vice President, Federal Regulatory, AT&T, to Chairman Kevin J. Martin, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 06-122, CC Docket No. 96-45 at 11–16 (filed July 23, 2008) (describing ways that states could require contributions to state universal service or telecommunications relay service funds in a manner that is consistent with federal policy).

[528] *See Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15544, para. 83.

[529] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15544–45, para. 85.

[530] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15546–47, para. 91.

[531] 47 U.S.C. § 251(i).

[532] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15546–47, para. 91.

[533] *Implementation of Sections 3(n) and 332*, Second Report and Order, 9 FCC Rcd 1411, 1498, para. 230 (1994).

interconnection within the section 251 framework as it relates to intraMTA (including interstate intraMTA) traffic.[534] The Commission recognized, however, that it continued to retain separate authority over CMRS traffic.[535]

209. Courts confirmed that, in permitting LEC-CMRS interconnection to be addressed through the section 251 framework, the Commission did not in any way lose its independent jurisdiction or authority to regulate that traffic under other provisions of the Act. Thus, although the Eighth Circuit invalidated the Commission's TELRIC pricing rules in general,[536] it recognized that "because section 332(c)(1)(B) gives the FCC the authority to order LECs to interconnect with CMRS carriers, we believe that the Commission has the authority to issue the rules of special concern to the CMRS providers, [including the reciprocal compensation rules] but only as these provisions apply to CMRS providers. Thus, [the pricing] rules . . . remain in full force and effect with respect to the CMRS providers, and our order of vacation does not apply to them in the CMRS context."[537] Subsequently, the D.C. Circuit held that CMRS providers were entitled to pursue formal complaints under section 208 of the Act for violations of the Commission's reciprocal compensation rules.[538]

210. We build upon our actions in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, and now permit states to establish a uniform reciprocal compensation rate, in accordance with the new methodology we establish in this order, pursuant to the section 251(b)(5) and 252(d)(2) framework. In particular, section 251(b)(5) imposes on all LECs a "duty to establish reciprocal compensation arrangements for the transport and termination of telecommunications."[539] Section 252(d)(2)(A) sets forth an "additional costs" standard that state commissions, in arbitrating interconnection disputes involving incumbent LECs, should apply in setting the "charges for transport and termination of traffic."[540] Although we allow states to set new uniform termination rates under this framework, pursuant to our methodology, we retain our authority under section 201 to find that reciprocal compensation charges are unjust and unreasonable as they relate to interstate, CMRS, and IP/PSTN traffic within our jurisdiction.[541] We expect that states will faithfully implement the pricing standards adopted in this order,

[534] *See Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16005, para. 1023.

[535] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16005, para. 1023 ("By opting to proceed under sections 251 and 252, we are not finding that section 332 jurisdiction over interconnection has been repealed by implication, or rejecting it as an alternative basis for jurisdiction.").

[536] We note that the Supreme Court later reversed this decision and affirmed the TELRIC methodology. *See Verizon v. FCC*, 535 U.S. at 467.

[537] *Iowa Utils. Bd. v. FCC*, 120 F.3d 753, 800 n.21 (8th Cir. 1997) (*Iowa Utils. I*), *rev'd in part and remanded on other grounds*, *AT&T v. Iowa Utils. Bd.*, 525 U.S. 366.

[538] *Qwest Corp. v. FCC*, 252 F.3d 462, 465–66 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (describing the Eighth Circuit's analysis of section 332(c)(1)(B) in *Iowa Utils. I* and concluding that an attempt to relitigate the issue was barred by the doctrine of issue preclusion).

[539] 47 U.S.C. § 251(b)(5).

[540] 47 U.S.C. § 252(d)(2)(A).

[541] *See supra* paras. 203–09. *See also, e.g.*, Letter from John T. Nakahata, Counsel for Level 3 Communications, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket No. 01-92 at 9–11 (filed on Aug. 18, 2008) (Level 3 Aug. 18, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter). Contrary to Verizon's claims, we thus find no tension between permitting states to set reciprocal compensation rates for interstate traffic under the section 251 and 252 framework and the Commission's continuing authority over traffic subject to its jurisdiction, including section 201 authority expressly preserved under section 251(i).

and thus it will not be necessary for us to exercise that authority.[542]

211. The Commission unquestionably has authority to interpret and adopt rules implementing sections 251(b)(5) and 252(d)(2). Congress delegated to the Commission the task of administering the Communications Act. Section 201(b) authorizes the Commission to "prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary in the public interest to carry out the provisions of this Act."[543] "[T]he grant in § 201(b) means what it says: The FCC has rulemaking authority to carry out the 'provisions of this Act.'"[544] The Commission's rulemaking authority is not limited to interstate matters; it extends to all provisions of the Communications Act.[545]

212. In addition, we find that the section 251(b)(5) and 252(d)(2) framework is broad enough to facilitate our intercarrier compensation reform. We acknowledge that, in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission found that section 251(b)(5) applies only to local traffic,"[546] and some commenters continue to press for such an interpretation.[547] As other commenters recognize, however, the Commission, in the *ISP Remand Order*, reconsidered that judgment and concluded that it was a mistake to read section 251(b)(5) as limited to local traffic, given that "local" is not a term used in section 251(b)(5).[548] We recognize, as the Supreme Court noted in *AT&T Corp. v. Iowa Utilities Board*, that "[i]t

[542] We recognize that "the just and reasonable rates required by Sections 201 and 202 . . . must ordinarily be cost-based, absent a clear explanation of the Commission's reasons for a departure from cost-based ratemaking." *Access Charge Reform*, CC Docket Nos. 96-262, 94-1, 91-213, Second Order on Reconsideration and Memorandum Opinion and *Order*, 12 FCC Rcd 16606, 16619–20, para. 44 (*Access Charge Reform Second Order*) (citing *Competitive Telecomms. Ass'n v. FCC*, 87 F.3d 522, 529 (D.C. Cir. 1996)). In this order, we adopt an incremental cost methodology for setting termination rates. We find that the proper application of that methodology produces rates that are "just and reasonable" under section 201. As discussed below, we find it appropriate to adopt a transition before carriers begin charging rates set pursuant to our incremental cost methodology.

[543] 47 U.S.C. § 201(b) ("The Commission may prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary in the public interest to carry out the provisions of this Act.").

[544] *AT&T v. Iowa Utils. Bd.*, 525 U.S. at 378.

[545] *AT&T v. Iowa Utils. Bd.*, 525 U.S. at 378 n.6 ("[T]he question in these cases is not whether the Federal Government has taken the regulation of local telecommunications competition away from the States. With regard to the matters addressed by the 1996 Act, it unquestionably has.").

[546] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16012–13, para. 1033.

[547] *See, e.g.*, Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 24–32; Letter from Daniel Mitchell, Vice President, Legal and Industry, NTCA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 9 (filed Sept. 30, 2008) (NCTA Sept. 30, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Verizon *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 38–42; NARUC *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 6–7; Rural Alliance *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 144–49; Cincinnati Bell *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 5–11; Maine PUC and Vermont Pub. Serv. Bd. *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 7; New York State PSC *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 7; Verizon and BellSouth, Supplemental White Paper on ISP Reciprocal Compensation, CC Docket No. 96-98, 99-68 at 16–20 (filed July 20, 2004) (Verizon/BellSouth Supp. ISP White Paper); NARUC's Initial Comments at 7 n.13 (May 23, 2004). *But see, e.g.*, ICF *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 39.

[548] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9166–67, para. 35. *See also, e.g.*, Qwest, Legal Authority for Comprehensive Intercarrier Compensation Reform at 2–4, *attached to* Letter from Melissa Newman, Counsel for Qwest, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 06-45, 99-68, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 05-337, 05-195, 06-122 (filed Oct. 7, 2008); Letter from Kathleen O'Brien Ham et al., Counsel for T-Mobile, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 9–10 (filed Oct. 3, 2008); Level 3 Aug. 18, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 2, 15–18; AT&T *Missoula Phantom Traffic* Reply at 35–41; Brief from Gary M. Epstein, Counsel for ICF, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 29–35 (filed Oct. 5, 2004)

would be a gross understatement to say that the 1996 Act is not a model of clarity."[549] Nevertheless, we find that the better view is that section 251(b)(5) is not limited to local traffic.

213. We begin by looking at the text of the statute. Section 251(b)(5) imposes on all LECs the "duty to establish reciprocal compensation arrangements for the transport and termination of telecommunications."[550] The Act broadly defines "telecommunications" as "the transmission, between or among points specified by the user, of information of the user's choosing, without change in the form or content of the information as sent and received."[551] Its scope is not limited geographically ("local," "intrastate," or "interstate") or to particular services ("telephone exchange service,"[552] telephone toll service,"[553] or "exchange access"[554]). We find that the traffic we elect to bring within this framework fits squarely within the meaning of "telecommunications."[555] Had Congress intended to preclude the Commission from bringing certain types of telecommunications traffic within the section 251(b)(5) framework, it could have easily done so by incorporating restrictive terms in section 251(b)(5). Because Congress used the term "telecommunications," the broadest of the statute's defined terms, we conclude that section 251(b)(5) is not limited only to the transport and termination of certain types of telecommunications traffic, such as local traffic.

214. In the *Local Competition First Report and Order* the Commission concluded that section 251(b)(5) applies only to local traffic, but recognized that "[u]ltimately . . . the rates that local carriers impose for the transport and termination of local traffic and for the transport and termination of long distance traffic should converge."[556] In the *ISP Remand Order*, the Commission reversed course on the scope of section 251(b)(5), finding that "the phrase 'local traffic' created unnecessary ambiguities, and we correct that mistake here."[557] The *ISP Remand Order* noted that "the term 'local,' not being a statutorily defined category, . . . is not a term used in section 251(b)(5)."[558] The Commission found that the scope of section 251(b)(5) is limited only by section 251(g), which temporarily grandfathered the pre-1996 Act rules governing "exchange access, information access, and exchange services for such access" provided to IXCs and information service providers until "explicitly superseded by regulations prescribed by the Commission."[559] On appeal, the D.C. Circuit left intact the Commission's findings concerning the scope

[549] *AT&T v. Iowa Utils. Bd.*, 525 U.S. at 397.

[550] 47 U.S.C. § 251(b)(5).

[551] 47 U.S.C. § 153(43).

[552] *Id.* at § 153(47).

[553] *Id.* at § 153(48).

[554] *Id.* at § 153(16).

[555] As discussed above, we classify IP/PSTN services as "information services." We note, however, that information services, by definition, are provided "via telecommunications," enabling us to bring IP/PSTN traffic within the section 251(b)(5) framework. 47 U.S.C. § 153(20). Moreover, given that we retain independent authority under section 201, we find it reasonably ancillary to that authority to regulate IP/PSTN services in this regard, consistent with our efforts to ensure uniform treatment of all traffic on the PSTN for intercarrier compensation purposes. Thus, IP/PSTN traffic ultimately will be subject to the final uniform reciprocal compensation rates established pursuant to the methodology adopted in this order. We maintain the status quo for this traffic during the transition, however.

[556] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16012, para. 1033.

[557] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9173, para. 46.

[558] *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9167, para. 34.

[559] 47 U.S.C. § 251(g).

of section 251(b)(5), although it took issue with other aspects of the *ISP Remand Order*.[560]

215. We agree with the finding in the *ISP Remand Order* that traffic encompassed by section 251(g) is excluded from section 251(b)(5) except to the extent that the Commission acts to bring that traffic within its scope. Section 251(g) preserved the pre-1996 Act regulatory regime that applies to access traffic, including rules governing "receipt of compensation."[561] There would have been no need for Congress to have preserved these compensation rules against the effects of section 251 if the scope of section 251(b)(5) was not broad enough for the Commission to bring within its scope the traffic covered by section 251(g), i.e., access traffic. Because Congress is presumed not to have wasted its breath, particularly with a provision as lengthy and detailed as section 251(g), we find that section 251(g) confirms that section 251(b)(5) applies to the transport and termination of all telecommunications traffic exchanged with LECs, including ISP-bound traffic. And because section 251(g) "is worded simply as a transitional device, preserving various LEC duties that antedated the 1996 Act until such time as the Commission should adopt new rules pursuant to the Act,"[562] we clearly have authority under the Act to adopt regulations superseding that regime. We exercise that authority today.[563]

216. By placing all traffic under the umbrella of one compensation scheme, we eliminate jurisdictional and regulatory distinctions that are not tied to economic or technical differences between services. As the Commission observed in the *Intercarrier Compensation NPRM*, regulatory arbitrage arises from different rates that different types of providers must pay for essentially the same functions.[564] Our current classifications require carriers to treat identical uses of the network differently, even though such disparate treatment usually has no economic or technical basis. These artificial distinctions distort the telecommunications markets at the expense of healthy competition. Similar types of traffic should be subject to similar rules. Similar types of functions should be subject to similar cost recovery mechanisms. We achieve that result by moving away from the regime preserved by section 251(g) and bringing that traffic within the section 251(b)(5) framework.

217. We disagree with commenters who argue that section 251(b)(5) only can be applied to traffic exchanged between LECs, and not traffic exchanged between a LEC and another carrier.[565] The

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[560] *See WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 429.

[561] 47 U.S.C. 251(g).

[562] *WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 430.

[563] Verizon notes that although the Commission in the *ISP Remand* Order deleted the word "local" from its regulations governing reciprocal compensation, the regulations continued to exclude access services from the scope of section 251(b)(5). *See* Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 24–32; 47 C.F.R. § 51.701(b)(1). At that time, it made sense to retain the access exemption because the Commission had not issued rules superseding the access regime preserved by section 251(g). We supersede the grandfathered access regime in this order, at least in part.

[564] *Intercarrier Compensation NPRM*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9616, para. 12.

[565] *See, e.g.*, Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments ("The best interpretation of § 251(b)(5) – read in light of the text, structure, and history of the 1996 Act – is that the reciprocal compensation obligation applies only to intraexchange (or 'local') voice calls that originate on the network of one LEC (or wireless provider) and terminate on the network of another LEC (or wireless provider) operating in the same exchange (or, in the case of wireless providers, the same MTA."); Verizon and BellSouth, Internet-Bound Traffic is Not Compensable Under Sections 251(b)(5) and 252(d)(2) at 26 (Verizon/BellSouth ISP White Paper) ("By its nature, 'reciprocal compensation' must . . . apply to 'telecommunications' exchanged *between LECs* (or carriers, like CMRS providers, that the Commission is authorized to treat as LECs), not to traffic that is exchanged between LECs and non-LECs."), *attached to* Letter from Ann D. Berkowitz, Associate Director, Federal Regulatory Advocacy, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 96-98 (filed May 17, 2004).

Commission rejected that argument in the *Local Competition Order*, finding that section 251(b)(5) applies to traffic exchanged by a LEC and any other telecommunications carrier, and adopted rules implementing that finding.[566] In a specific application of that principle, the Commission concluded that "CMRS providers will not be classified as LECs,"[567] but nevertheless found that "LECs are obligated, pursuant to section 251(b)(5) (and the corresponding pricing standards of section 252(d)(2)), to enter into reciprocal compensation agreements with all CMRS providers."[568] No one challenged that finding on appeal, and it has been settled law for the past 12 years. We see no reason to revisit that conclusion now. Although section 251(b)(5) indisputably imposes the duty to establish reciprocal compensation arrangements on LECs alone, Congress did not limit the class of potential beneficiaries of that obligation to LECs.[569]

218. We also disagree with commenters who argue that section 252(d)(2)(A)(i) limits the scope of section 251(b)(5).[570] Section 252(d)(2)(A)(i) provides that a state commission "shall not consider the terms and conditions for reciprocal compensation to be just and reasonable" unless "such terms and conditions provide for the mutual and reciprocal recovery by each carrier of costs associated with the transport and termination on each carrier's network facilities of calls that originate on the network facilities of the other carrier."[571] Verizon and others argue that this provision necessarily excludes interexchange traffic from the scope of section 251(b)(5) because at the time the 1996 Act was passed, calls neither originated nor terminated on an IXC's network.[572] We reject this reasoning because it erroneously assumes that Congress intended the pricing standards in section 252(d)(2) to limit the otherwise broad scope of section 251(b)(5). We do not believe that Congress intended the tail to wag the dog.

[566] *See Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16013–16, paras. 1034–41. *See also* 47 C.F.R. 51.703(a) ("Each LEC shall establish reciprocal compensation arrangements for transport and termination of telecommunications traffic with any requesting telecommunications carrier."); *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9193–94, para. 89 n.177 ("Section 251(b)(5) applies to telecommunications traffic between a LEC and a telecommunications carrier . . . .").

[567] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15996, para. 1005. In this regard, we note that, absent a determination that CMRS providers are LECs, IXC-CMRS traffic would not be encompassed by section 251(b)(5), since neither are LECs. Nevertheless, it is our intention that, at the end of the transition, CMRS providers be entitled to reciprocal compensation for all the traffic they terminate. As the Commission has observed, "[t]here are three ways in which a carrier seeking to impose charges on another carrier can establish a duty to pay such charges: pursuant to (1) Commission rule; (2) tariff; or (3) contract." *Petitions of Sprint PCS and AT&T Corp. For Declaratory Ruling Regarding CMRS Access Charges, Declaratory Ruling*, 17 FCC Rcd 13192, 13196, para. 8 (2002).

[568] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15997, para. 1008.

[569] If Congress had intended to limit the class of potential beneficiaries of LECs' duty to establish reciprocal obligation arrangements, it would have said so explicitly. *See* 47 U.S.C. § 251(b)(3) (describing the "duty to provide dialing parity to competing providers of telephone exchange service and telephone toll service").

[570] *See, e.g.*, Verizon/BellSouth ISP White Paper at 41–43; New York State PSC *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 8–9; TDS *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 19 n.27; Qwest *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 39; NASUCA *ICC FNPRM* Reply at 17–18.

[571] 47 U.S.C. § 252(d)(2)(A)(i).

[572] *See, e.g.*, Maine PUC and Vermont Pub. Serv. Bd. *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 7–8; New York State PSC *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 7–10; Verizon/BellSouth Supp. ISP White Paper at 16–20; NARUC *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 7 n.13.

219. Section 251(b)(5) defines the scope of traffic that is subject to reciprocal compensation. Section 252(d)(2)(A)(i), in turn, deals with the mechanics of who owes what to whom, it does not define the scope of traffic to which section 251(b)(5) applies. Section 252(d)(2)(A)(i) provides that, at a minimum, a reciprocal compensation arrangement must provide for the recovery by each carrier of costs associated with the transport and termination on each carrier's network of calls that originate on the network of the other carrier.[573] Section 252(d)(2)(A)(i) does not address what happens when carriers exchange traffic that originates or terminates on a third carrier's network. This does not mean, as Verizon suggests, that section 251(b)(5) must be read as limited to traffic involving only two carriers. Rather, it means that there is a gap in the pricing rules in section 252(d)(2), and the Commission has authority under section 201(b) to adopt rules to fill that gap.

220. We reject Verizon's argument that a telecommunications carrier that delivers traffic to an ISP is not eligible for reciprocal compensation because the carrier does not "terminate" telecommunications traffic at the ISP.[574] In the *Local Competition Order*, the Commission defined "termination" as "the switching of traffic that is subject to section 251(b)(5) at the terminating carrier's end office switch . . . and delivery of that traffic to the called party's premises."[575] As the D.C. Circuit suggested in the *Bell Atlantic* decision, "Calls to ISPs appear to fit this definition: the traffic is switched by the LEC whose customer is the ISP and then delivered to the ISP, which is clearly the 'called party.'"[576] We agree.[577] Consequently, ISP-bound traffic is subject to our new intercarrier compensation framework.[578]

221. We reject opponents' other arguments that the context and history of the 1996 Act compel a finding that section 251(b)(5) could not be applied to access traffic. Verizon argues, for example, that section 251(g) demonstrates that Congress did not intend to displace the existing access pricing regime.[579] This argument ignores that Congress preserved the access regime only "until such

[573] 47 U.S.C. § 252(d)(2)(A)(i).

[574] *See, e.g.*, Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 33–34; Verizon/BellSouth ISP White Paper at 31–32.

[575] *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16015, para. 1040. *See also* 47 C.F.R. § 51.701(d).

[576] 206 F.3d at 6.

[577] Because ISP-bound traffic did not fall within the section 251(g) carve out from section 251(b)(5) as "there had been *no* pre-Act obligation relating to intercarrier compensation for ISP-bound traffic," *WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 433, ISP-bound traffic is, and always has been, subject to section 251(b)(5), although clearly interstate in nature and subject to our section 201 authority.

[578] We reject Verizon's argument against the application of section 251(b)(5) to ISP-bound traffic because this traffic is one-way traffic and as such is not reciprocal. *See* Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 26; Verizon/BellSouth ISP White Paper at 41–43. As Level 3 points out, these arguments have been rejected by the Commission and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. *See* Level 3 Aug. 18, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 18; *Pacific Bell v. Cook Telecom, Inc.*, 197 F.3d 1236, 1242–44 (9th Cir. 1999) (reciprocal compensation applies to paging traffic); *TSR Wireless, LLC v. U.S. West Commc'ns, Inc.*, 15 FCC Rcd 11166, 11178, para. 21 (2000) (the Commission's reciprocal compensation rules draw "no distinction between one-way and two-way carriers"). Because our conclusion in this order concerning the scope of section 251(b)(5) is no longer tied to whether this traffic is local or long distance, we need not address arguments made by the parties as to whether ISP-bound traffic constitutes "telephone exchange service" under the Act. *See, e.g.*, Letter from John T. Nakahata, Counsel for Level 3 Communications, LLC, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 99-68, 96-98, Attach. at 1 (filed Sept. 24, 2004). We note, however, that we retain our interim ISP-bound traffic rules. *See supra* paras. 194–200.

[579] *See* Verizon *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 41.

restrictions and obligations are explicitly superseded by regulations prescribed by the Commission."[580] As noted above, we find that section 251(g) actually supports a finding that section 251(b)(5) is broad enough to cover access traffic. Verizon also argues that the reference to reciprocal compensation in the competitive checklist in section 271,[581] which was designed to ensure that local markets are open to competition, somehow shows that Congress intended to limit the scope of section 251(b)(5) to local traffic.[582] We do not see how this argument sheds any light on the scope of section 251(b)(5). Congress no doubt included the reference to reciprocal compensation in section 271 because section 251(b)(5) applies to local traffic, a point that no one disputes. That does not suggest, however, that section 251(b)(5) applies *only* to local traffic.

222. We need not respond to every other variation of the argument that the history and structure of the Act somehow demonstrate that section 251(b)(5) does not apply to access traffic. At best, these arguments show that one plausible interpretation of the statute is that section 251(b)(5) applies only to local traffic, a view that the Commission embraced in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*. These arguments do not persuade us, however, that this is the only plausible reading of the statute. Moreover, many of the same arguments based on the history and context of the adoption of section 251 to limit its scope to local traffic were rejected by the D.C. Circuit in the context of section 251(c).[583] We find that the better reading of the Act as a whole, in particular the broad language of section 251(b)(5) and the grandfather clause in section 251(g), supports our view that the transport and termination of all telecommunications exchanged with LECs is subject to the reciprocal compensation regime in sections 251(b)(5) and 252(d)(2).

223. The approach we adopt here provides a sound basis for comprehensive reform, and we thus decline to adopt alternative proposals. On one hand, we note that some commenters advocate that the Commission adopt an intercarrier compensation rate or cap of $0.0007 per minute of use for all traffic.[584] To implement this reform proposal, parties have suggested that it would likely be necessary for

[580] 47 U.S.C. § 251(g).

[581] *See* 47 U.S.C. § 271(c)(2)(B)(xiii).

[582] *See* Verizon/Verizon Wireless Oct. 2, 2008 Supp. Comments at 26; Verizon/BellSouth ISP White Paper at 9.

[583] *United States Telecom Ass'n v. FCC*, 359 F.3d 554, 592 (D.C. Cir. 2004) (*USTA II*) ("Even under the deferential *Chevron* standard of review, an agency cannot, absent strong structural or contextual evidence, exclude from coverage certain items that clearly fall within the plain meaning of a statutory term. The argument that long distance services are not 'telecommunications services' has no support."). In *USTA II*, the D.C. Circuit was addressing whether the term "telecommunications services" was limited to local telecommunications services under section 251(c), while here we consider the analogous question of whether "telecommunications" is limited to local telecommunications under section 251(b).

[584] *See, e.g.*, Letter from Grace E. Koh, Policy Counsel, Cox Enterprises, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92, Attach. A at 1 (filed Oct. 6, 2008); Letter from Teresa D. Bauer and Richard R. Cameron, Counsel for Global Crossing North America, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 1 (filed Sept. 18, 2008); Letter from Susanne A. Guyer, Senior Vice President of Federal Regulatory Affairs, Verizon, to Kevin Martin et al., Commissioners, FCC, CC Docket. 01-92 at 4 (filed Sept. 12, 2008) (Verizon Sept. 12, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter). *But see, e.g.*, Letter from Richard A. Askoff, Executive Director—Regulatory, NECA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 3 (filed Oct. 7, 2008) ("Prescription of a nationwide uniform default rate of $0.0007 is unnecessary to solve the rate arbitrage problems identified by Verizon. It would also represent bad policy."); Letter from Lawrence Zawalick, Senior Vice President, Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative, to Kevin Martin et al., Commissioners, FCC, CC Docket 01-92 at 1 (filed Sept. 30, 2008) ("The Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative (RTFC) strongly opposes [the $0.0007] proposal.").

the Commission to preempt state regulation of intrastate access charges.[585] We believe that such a significant step is not currently warranted, and elect instead to allow states to continue setting rates for intrastate traffic, as well as permitting them to set rates for traffic subject to federal jurisdiction, pursuant to our methodology. We fully expect the new pricing methodology to achieve the goals of our continuing intercarrier compensation reform. On the other hand, some parties contend that the Commission should leave matters of intrastate intercarrier compensation reform entirely to the states.[586] These proposals evidence a pre-1996 Act worldview, however. Given the tools that the 1996 Act put at our disposal, we find it possible to move forward with truly comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform under an approach which still provides for a state role.

224. We note that, in the *Local Competition First Report and Order*, the Commission observed that section 251(b)(5) does not address charges payable to a carrier that originates traffic and concluded, therefore, that such charges were prohibited under that provision of the Act.[587] Because we elect to have the states set rates under section 251(b)(5), pursuant to our methodology, we find that retention of originating charges would be inconsistent with that statutory scheme and our new regulatory approach. Accordingly, we find that originating charges for all telecommunications traffic subject to our comprehensive intercarrier compensation framework must be eliminated at the conclusion of the transition to the new regime. We recognize, however, that changes to originating access charge rates may raise issues distinct from terminating charges. Moreover, several parties urge the Commission to delay any changes to originating charges.[588] For these reasons, we ask parties to comment on the appropriate transition for eliminating originating access charges in the accompanying Further Notice.[589] Although we ask parties to comment on the appropriate transition for eliminating originating access charges, we clarify that, under the transitional mechanism we adopt today, carriers are not permitted to increase any of their

[585] *See, e.g.*, Letter from Donna Epps, Vice President, Federal Regulatory, Verizon, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 06-122, CC Docket No. 01-92, Attach. at 14–25 (filed Sept. 19, 2008) (Verizon Sept. 19, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter).

[586] In some cases, parties propose that the Commission make available universal service support as an "enticement" for states to reform intrastate rates, but ultimately the decisions would be left to the individual states. *See* Letter from Tom Karalis, Counsel for Rural Alliance, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92, Attach. at 7 (filed Sept. 26, 2008).

[587] *See Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 16016, para. 1042. *See also* 47 C.F.R. § 51.703(b) (stating that a "LEC may not assess charges on any other telecommunications carrier for telecommunications traffic that originates on the LEC's network").

[588] *See, e.g.*, Verizon Sept. 12, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 5 (asking the Commission to defer reform of originating access); Letter from Grace E. Kohl, Policy Counsel, Cox, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, WC Docket Nos. 06-122, 05-337, CC Docket Nos. 96-45, 01-92, 99-68, 96-262 at 2 (filed Oct. 6, 2008) (supporting proposals to delay reform of originating access) (Cox Oct. 6, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter); Letter from Brian Benison, Director—Federal Regulatory, AT&T, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 99-68, 96-45, WC Docket Nos. 05-337, 07-135, Attach. at 3 (filed Oct. 7, 2008) (describing model with "No Change to Current Structure and Rates" for originating access); Letter from Kathleen O'Brien Ham, Federal Regulatory Affairs, T-Mobile, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92 at 5 (filed Oct. 3, 2008); *cf.* Letter from Mary C. Albert, Assistant General Counsel, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket No. 01-92, WC Docket Nos. 04-36, 05-337, Attach. at 1 (filed Oct. 2, 2008) (urging the Commission to delay any changes to intercarrier compensation). *But see* Letter from Anna M. Gomez, Vice President, Government Affairs, COMPTEL, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket Nos. 01-92, 96-45, WC Docket No. 04-36 at 7 (filed Oct. 1, 2008) (urging the Commission to reform originating access immediately) (Sprint Oct. 1, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter).

[589] *See infra* para 343.

current rates, including their originating access rates.[590] Thus, both interstate and intrastate originating switched access rates will remain capped at current levels until further action by the Commission addressing the appropriate transition for this traffic. This approach is consistent with our transition of terminating rates[591] and with our goal of eliminating originating access charges at the conclusion of the transition to the new regime.

b. Legal Authority for the Transition

225. Although we comprehensively reform intercarrier compensation, we do not flash cut to our new regime, but provide for a measured transition.[592] The goal of this transition is to avoid overly rapid rate changes for consumers while providing carriers with sufficient means to preserve their financial integrity as we move to the new intercarrier compensation regime.[593] For many of the same reasons that we have authority to adopt comprehensive reform, we find that the Commission has clear authority to establish such a transitional structure to serve as a glide path to the new methodology we have developed in this order.

226. We find it reasonable to adopt a transition plan under these circumstances. As the D.C. Circuit has recognized, avoiding "market disruption pending broader reforms is, of course, a standard and accepted justification for a temporary rule,"[594] and here temporary rules setting forth a glide path are needed to mitigate potentially adverse rate or revenue effects that may be caused by our comprehensive intercarrier compensation reform, including the elimination of implicit universal service subsidies in those rates. Therefore, the Commission's exercise of its authority to create a transition plan is especially appropriate here, where the Commission is acting to reconcile the Act's "implicit tension between . . . moving toward cost-based rates and protecting universal service."[595] Not surprisingly, most commenters have affirmatively recognized the need for a transitional regime.[596] Indeed, every major plan submitted to

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[590] This prohibition on increasing access rates also applies to the Primary Interexchange Carrier Charge in section 69.153 of the Commission's rules, the per-minute Carrier Common Line charge in section 69.154 of the Commission's rules, and the per-minute Residual Interconnection Charge in section 69.155 of the Commission's rules. 47 C.F.R. §§ 69.153, 69.154, 69.155.

[591] *See supra* para. 194 (prohibiting carriers from increasing their current rates, even if the interim, uniform reciprocal compensation rate is higher than one or more of its current rates).

[592] *See supra* section V.B.2.

[593] This approach is consistent with Commission precedent set forth in Part V.A, which started reforming intercarrier compensation in the 1980s. There the Commission found that a "transitional plan is necessary" in part because "[i]mmediate recovery of high fixed costs through flat end-user charges might cause a significant number of local exchange service subscribers to cancel local exchange service despite the existence of a Universal Service Fund" and "[s]uch a result would not be consistent with the goals of the Communications Act." *1983 Access Charge Order,* 93 FCC 2d at 243, para. 4. As a result, the Commission initially limited the flat rate charge imposed on end users, also known as the subscriber line charge or SLC, to $1.00 (subsequent orders raised the cap on the subscriber line charge for residential users to $6.50).

[594] *Competitive Telecomms. Ass'n v. FCC,* 309 F.3d 8, 14 (D.C. Cir. 2002).

[595] *Southwestern Bell Tel. Co. v. FCC,* 153 F.3d 523, 538 (8th Cir. 1998).

[596] *See, e.g.,* BellSouth *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 17 ("In order to avoid the market disruption and dislocation that would be associated with instantaneous implementation of a unified plan, BellSouth proposes a two-phase transition plan."); CCG *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 2 ("Any plan that reduces access rates should be phased-in over as long a period as possible, at least for rural carriers, so these companies have time to prepare for and adjust to the economic impact."); Cincinnati Bell *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 12 ("The Commission must allow carriers the opportunity to earn this lost access revenue in the transition to a new compensation regime in order to make any regime change

(continued....)

us in this proceeding, whether the Missoula plan,[597] the ICF plan,[598] Verizon's plan,[599] AT&T's plan,[600] or the plan from CBICC,[601] ARIC,[602] NARUC,[603] or NASUCA,[604] has called for the Commission to establish an orderly transition period. We take heed of these commenters and of our statutory responsibilities to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime by setting forth a multi-stage transition plan as part of our comprehensive reform of intercarrier compensation.

227. Moreover, we have several independent sources of legal authority to adopt the transition plan established in this order. For one, section 251 explicitly contemplates our authority to adopt a transitional scheme with regard to access charges. We agree with the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that section 251(g) created a "transitional enforcement mechanism"[605] preserving the access charge regimes that pre-dated the 1996 Act "until . . . explicitly superseded by regulations *prescribed by the Commission*."[606] Thus, section 251(g), by its terms, anticipates that the Commission may take action to end the regimes grandfathered by section 251(g), and inherent within the power to supersede the grandfathered access regime is the lesser power to prescribe regulations that determine *how* to transition to a cost-based pricing mechanism—a power that we have twice employed in

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revenue neutral to the affected carriers."); CCAP *ICC FNPRM* Comments at 23 ("The CCAP believes that any reform of the existing intercarrier compensation regimes should take place over a three-to-five-year period . . . .").

[597] Missoula Plan, Executive Summary at 3 ("Recognizing the vast differences among carriers, the Plan creates three different transition schedules for intercarrier compensation rates.").

[598] Letter from Gary M. Epstein and Richard R. Cameron, Counsel for ICF, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket 01-92, Attach. 2 at 3 (filed Aug. 16, 2004).

[599] Verizon Sept. 12, 2008 *Ex Parte* Letter at 9–10.

[600] Letter from Henry Hultquist, Federal Regulatory Vice-President, AT&T, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket 01-92, Attach 1 at 4 (filed July 17, 2008).

[601] Letter from Richard M. Rindler, Counsel for CBICC, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket 01-92, Attach. 1 at 2.

[602] ARIC *ICC FNPRM* Comments, Attach. 1 at 33.

[603] NARUC *ICC FNPRM* Comments, Attach. C at 6.

[604] Letter from Philip F. McClelland, Senior Assistant Consumer Advocate, NASUCA, to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, FCC, CC Docket 01-92, Attach. 1 at 1 (filed Dec. 14, 2004).

[605] *WorldCom*, 288 F.3d at 433.

[606] 47 U.S.C. § 251(g) (emphasis added). At the least, section 251(g) preserved the interstate access regime the Commission had prescribed for all carriers (*see id.* (preserving "obligations (including receipt of compensation) . . . under any . . . regulation, order, or policy of the Commission . . . .")) and the intrastate access regime the Bell Operating Companies had agreed to in the Modified Final Judgment. *See United States v. AT&T*, 552 F. Supp. at 169. Recognizing, however, that it would be "'incongruous to conclude that Congress was concerned about the effects of potential disruption to the interstate access charge system, but had no such concerns about the effects on analogous intrastate mechanisms,'" the Commission has consistently interpreted section 251(g) to preserve the intrastate access regime pre-dating the Act for all carriers. *ISP Remand Order*, 16 FCC Rcd at 9168 n.66 (quoting *Local Competition First Report and Order*, 11 FCC Rcd at 15869, para. 732); *see also Competitive Telecomms. Ass'n v. FCC*, 117 F.3d 1068, 1072 (8th Cir. 1997) ("[I]t is clear from the Act that Congress did not intend all access charges to move to cost-based pricing, at least not immediately. The Act plainly preserves certain rate regimes already in place.").