

Megamergers do not always garner much sustained attention outside of the usual outfits fighting against concentration and for consumer interests.

The most recent Frankenstein melding was Comcast and NBC Universal. The opposed regulars were all there, me included.

Last Tuesday was the deadline for objections to the AT&T takeover of T-Mobile to be submitted to the Federal Communications Commission. Of course, the expected organizations such as Free Press, Media Access Project and Public Knowledge filed thoughtful detailed objections.

The proposed merger has attracted the attention of groups that normally do not weigh in on such matters, even if they should. The California Utilities Commission has broken with tradition and is going to investigate the merger. No small thing considering California is the nation's largest wireless market.

Then there is Sprint Nextel. The fourth-largest wireless carrier in the United States submitted a hearty objection.

Industry heavyweights, or even middleweights, rarely come out with such force against another's plan to grow through expansion. The goose-and-the-gander theory usually applies in these instances because the company watching the consolidation within its industry knows it would do the same thing if given the chance.

But that is not what Sprint is doing. It has taken an aggressive stand, whereas the other remaining national wireless carrier, Verizon, is not opposing the merger — a merger that would knock Verizon back from the largest carrier to the second-largest.

In its filing with the FCC, Sprint said, "The proposed transaction would turn back the clock on competition and innovation. ... The transaction would make AT&T the nation's largest wireless carrier with 118 million subscribers in total. Coupled ... with Verizon's more than 94.1 million total subscribers ... Twin Bells' market dominance would dwarf Sprint, the sole remaining national carrier, and the rest of the wireless industry, thereby creating an entrenched, anti-competitive duopoly."

Sprint has every reason to fear this merger. Combined, Verizon and AT&T would essentially control more than 70 percent of the wireless market.

The duopoly resembles the old days of Ma Bell. There was a reason AT&T was broken up nearly three decades ago. The monopoly was not good for consumers or technological advances. Just like the looming duopoly will not be good for consumers or communications advances.

Sprint, and a number of the other groups opposing the deal, do not buy AT&T's argument that the merger must happen if broadband is going to be deployed to rural areas and underserved communities. If reaching these areas is something AT&T wants to do, it should take the \$39 billion it will use to ingest T-Mobile and build out its system.

The only reason rural areas might not have good service is because AT&T has decided not to go there. Buying the smaller T-Mobile is not going to result in flawless blanket coverage in Montana's Flathead Valley.

I buy Sprint's objections. This merger would hurt consumers and technological advances. An aspect of this merger I find worrisome deals with net neutrality.

The FCC passed some very weak net-neutrality rules late last year. One of the reasons the rules were so soft is that it did not apply to wireless broadband.

If AT&T and T-Mobile join to create the largest wireless network in the country, it does not bode well for a free-flowing Internet. Consumers can expect AT&T, a tireless opponent of net neutrality, to use its lack of competition to muck up the Internet with tiered pricing and the throttling of content.

The choice is simple for the FCC and the U.S. Department of Justice: Stop this merger now. If it is allowed to happen it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recreate a competitive wireless market.

i urge u guys to take the time to block its good thing for conusmer with low prices