

If both of AT&T's transactions with T-Mobile and Qualcomm were to go through AT&T would have even a more powerful hold on the country's spectrum capacity. I urge the AT&T Qualcomm transaction to be similarly denied or have regulatory conditions including a divestiture -- requiring AT&T to divest some spectrum to smaller carriers being squeezed by spectrum hog AT&T.

The Federal Communications Commission will decide in the next 180 days whether or not to approve AT&T's plans to buy Qualcomm's spectrum, allowing it boost its 4G network and compete against Verizon.

The FCC said Friday it restarted its informal "shot clock" on the deal, setting a limit on how long it will take on its decision. Many experts believe AT&T will be able to clear the deal, since Qualcomm quit using the spectrum in question when it ended its MediaFlo television service.

AT&T says it needs the spectrum to boost its 4G LTE network capacity and compete with Verizon, which is far ahead when it comes to the next-generation service. AT&T only has 4G service in a handful of markets, while Verizon's has already reached nationwide and is still growing.

The Qualcomm agreement is especially vital because of remaining doubts over the future of its planned \$39 billion merger with T-Mobile. The merger's question is in doubt, troubled initially by an antitrust lawsuit against the acquisition by the Department of Justice. As a result, the Dallas, Texas-based company pulled back its request with the FCC on the merger to focus on the DoJ suit and sell off assets to meet regulators' approval.

Recent developments indicate the merger may have hit an indefinite delay. The DoJ on Friday said it wants to withdraw or postpone its antitrust case against AT&T, throwing another wrinkle into the merger approval process.

The carrier today also requested a delay in the DoJ case, casting another shadow over the merger's prospects, as well as AT&T's plans to expand its network and become the nation's largest cellular provider.

The Qualcomm deal may be some consolation for the carrier in the wake of its merger's possible collapse. The deal won't push AT&T into the highest-ranked provider position, but it will give the company much needed-spectrum, which it needs to remain competitive with Verizon.

The FCC is expected to approve the Qualcomm deal, especially after chairman Julius Genachowski last month said he was circulating an order with the other commissioners to approve to the deal. However, the Rural Telecommunications Group has asked the FCC to put the decision on hold.

The RTG claims the government agency linked its review of the Qualcomm deal to the T-Mobile merger, so it should not decide on Qualcomm while the T-Mobile deal is still under discussion. However, since the DoJ now says it wants to postpone its own suit against the merger, putting the Qualcomm deal on hold until after a trial is held would delay the transaction for some time.

Meanwhile, AT&T and Qualcomm are both pushing ahead with their deal, saying that delaying the issue for the DoJ's investigation and trial of the T-Mobile merger ?simply makes no sense.?

But if both plans are permitted to go through, AT&T would have even a more powerful hold on the country's spectrum capacity.