

Boston Mayor Pitches Attorneys General on Opposing Verizon/SpectrumCo

Menino: Deal Would Leave Boston on Wrong Side of Digital Divide

In a letter this week to Attorney General Eric Holder, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino said the city believes that Verizon's proposed purchase of wireless spectrum from cable operators and associated cross-marketing agreements are anticompetitive, not in the public interest and unlawful.

In a separate letter, he asked Massachusetts attorney general Martha Coakley to oppose the transaction as well.

Justice and the FCC are currently vetting Verizon's proposed \$3.9 billion purchase from SpectrumCo (Comcast, Time Warner Cable and Bright House) and Cox.

Boston already filed comments opposing the deal, but in the letter to Holder emphasizes that he is concerned the deal will mean that Verizon and Comcast will "never compete" in Boston, "thereby effectively depriving our community, citizens, small businesses, schools, hospitals and educational facilities the benefits of video and broadband competition."

To allow the deal, said Menino, would be to leave Boston "permanently on the wrong side of the digital divide."

In a similar letter to Coakley, he said he was looking to her for leadership in opposing the deal.

"Verizon Wireless has made a persuasive case that the marketing agreements with the cable companies are strongly in the public interest," said Verizon spokesman Richard Young. "We believe these agreements will enhance competition, allowing Verizon Wireless to take market share from other wireless companies, while allowing cable companies to more vigorously compete by enabling them to offer wireless services as part of a triple or quad-play package of services. As a result of these enhanced offers, Verizon believes consumers will benefit with a variety of new packages and services."