

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of

Section 63.17 Application of Verizon New York, Inc. and Verizon New Jersey, Inc.)	WC Docket No. 13-150
)	
)	
For Authority Pursuant to Section 214 of the Communications Act of 1934, As Amended, to Discontinue the Provision of Service)	RM-10593
)	
)	

**COMMENTS OF
THE AD HOC TELECOMMUNICATIONS USERS COMMITTEE**

The Ad Hoc Telecommunications Users Committee (“Ad Hoc”) hereby responds to the Commission’s Public Notice in the docket captioned above¹ seeking comment on the application for discontinuance filed by Verizon New York, Inc. and Verizon New Jersey, Inc. (“Verizon”).

Ad Hoc opposes the application for four reasons.

First, contrary to Verizon’s representations to this Commission,² the discontinuance application does not raise narrow issues of unique interest to residents of storm-ravaged neighborhoods on Fire Island. Verizon is also abandoning wireline facilities that were not destroyed by Superstorm Sandy and that continue to provide

¹ *Comments Invited on Application of Verizon New Jersey Inc. and Verizon New York Inc. to Discontinue Domestic Telecommunications Services*, Public Notice, WC Docket No. 13-150, Comp. Pol. File No. 1115, 28 FCC Rcd 9198 (2013) (“Public Notice”).

² *Verizon Opposition to Public Knowledge’s Motion to Remove Application*, WC Docket No. 13-150, Comp. Pol. File No. 1115 (July 24, 2013) at 1-2.

services upon which customers depend, including emergency response services.³

Verizon has announced that it will “grandfather” customers whose service was not affected by Sandy, which apparently means Verizon will refuse to maintain the network plant involved until it falls into disrepair and stops working through simple neglect.⁴

Thus, the issue raised by Verizon’s application is the much broader question of when and how carriers should be permitted to withdraw functioning services and refuse to maintain working networks in order to force end users onto lower quality or higher priced service platforms. Through its Technology Transitions Policy Task Force and related proceedings, the Commission already has a process and venue for considering these issues.⁵ VZ’s discontinuance would preempt the Commission’s orderly consideration of end user impact and its development of regulatory measures to prevent adverse consequences for customers when carriers attempt to unilaterally withdraw service despite consumer demand for it.

Second, end users have no adequate alternatives to or reasonable substitutes for the landline telephone service Verizon seeks to abandon. Verizon has announced it will provide “Voice Link,” a fixed wireless device that connects a customer’s inside wiring to Verizon Wireless’ cellular service. Voice Link’s deficiencies compared to the POTS lines it replaces – its inability to provide DSL Internet access, international calling, calling card services, dial-around, collect calls, fax transmissions, medical alerts, etc. – are described in Verizon’s application and discussed at length in other pleadings.

³ Comments of S. Placilla, Commissioner, Ocean Bay Park Fire District, WC Docket No. 13-150, filed July 26, 2013.

⁴ Verizon Application at 2-3; Public Notice at note 8.

⁵ *Technology Transitions Policy Task Force Seeks Comment on Potential Trials*, Public Notice, GN Docket No. 13-5, 28 FCC Rcd 6346 (2013).

Ad Hoc's members, and small businesses everywhere, are particularly concerned about two deficiencies. First, Voice Link cannot transmit credit card "swipes," the tiny burst of data required for a merchant point-of-sale terminal to validate a credit card and process a purchase. Verizon shrugs off Voice Link's data limitations by stating that it will tell customers to buy 4G LTE broadband service in Voice Link areas – where available, of course. But this solution highlights an even broader concern for businesses of all kinds: Voice Link uses Verizon Wireless' cellular spectrum so that, like all wireless services, Voice Link service is easily and unpredictably disrupted by congestion due to shifting mobile user populations. The upshot of Verizon's reliance on Voice Link in combination with wireless data plans is that customers will be forced to give up an existing service and switch to a higher priced, less reliable one.

Finally, Verizon has offered no showing whatsoever of the financial impact on it of continuing to provide POTS lines. Nowhere does it claim to lack the necessary funds for repairing, constructing, and maintaining those lines. Nor does it claim that its POTS rates are insufficient to cover its costs. With no showing of an adverse financial impact,

Verizon can hardly claim that its interests as a carrier must outweigh the interests of the affected user community.

Respectfully submitted,

**AD HOC TELECOMMUNICATIONS
USERS COMMITTEE**

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