

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

In the Matter of
Numbering Resource Optimization

CC Docket No. 99-200

**REPLY COMMENTS OF
THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND CABLE**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Telecommunications and Cable

KAREN CHARLES PETERSON
COMMISSIONER

1000 Washington Street, Suite 820
Boston, MA 02118-6500
(617) 305-3580

Dated: July 15, 2019

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The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable (“MDTC”)¹ respectfully submits these reply comments in support of the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission’s (“NHPUC”) April 26, 2019 petition for additional delegated authority to implement number optimization measures in the 603 area code.² The MDTC encourages the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) to grant this petition, which would allow the NHPUC to more efficiently assign telephone numbers and delay or avoid number exhaustion in the state’s single area code.³

¹ The MDTC regulates telecommunications and cable services within Massachusetts and represents the Commonwealth before the FCC. MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. 25C, § 1; MASS. GEN. LAWS ch. 166A, § 16.

² *In re Numbering Res. Optimization*, CC Docket No. 99-200, *Petition by the N.H. Pub. Utils. Comm’n for Additional Delegated Auth. to Implement No. Optimization Measures in the 603 Area Code* (Apr. 26, 2019).

³ The MDTC likewise supports the more recent petition of the Maine Public Utilities Commission to implement the same number optimization measures. *In re Numbering Res. Optimization*, CC Docket No. 99-200, *Petition by the Me. Pub. Utils. Comm’n for Additional Delegated Auth. to Implement No. Optimization Measures in the 207 Area Code & Comments in Support of the Petition by the N.H. Pub. Utils. Comm’n for Additional Delegated Auth. To Implement No. Optimization Measures in the 603 Area Code* (June 26, 2019).

Granting the NHPUC's petition would allow for a limited-scale trial⁴ of a popular⁵ idea: Individual Telephone Number ("ITN") pooling. The NHPUC has demonstrated its ability and its willingness to serve as a proving ground for this proposed approach. Such an experiment would provide a wealth of information for other states and regions that may wish to use this number conservation tool in years ahead to avoid expansion into new area codes. It would avoid the complexity and cost of implementing ITN on a nationwide basis all at once, and would provide the NHPUC with an added degree of autonomy in maintaining its single area code. State-level experimentation has long been an important tool in area code optimization. The FCC has contemplated state-level experimentation with number optimization methods for decades,⁶ and allowed states to volunteer to accelerate their participation in the state-by-state rollout of thousands-number pooling.⁷

The benefits of avoiding area code exhaustion are many and well-known, particularly for a state that has maintained a single area code statewide to date. Adding an area code, whether by splitting or overlaying, results in significant costs, particularly for businesses which must change

⁴ The FCC has used pilot programs in several instances to test proposed initiatives without the cost or other added challenges of a rollout on a national scale, including for instance the Connected Care rural telehealth Program. *See, e.g., Promoting Telehealth for Low-Income Consumers*, WC Docket No. 18-213, *Notice of Inquiry* (Aug. 3, 2018). Also, Chairman Pai supports a recently-announced pilot program by USTelecom to improve broadband mapping. Ajit Pai, Chairman, Fed. Commc'ns Comm'n, Remarks at USTelecom Forum on Reinventing Broadband Mapping (Mar. 21, 2019), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-356682A1.pdf>.

⁵ ITN pooling was discussed as an attractive option for number optimization as early as 1998, but at the time was dismissed as the task force investigating its feasibility found that the technology to implement it would take four to six years to develop. *See* No. Res. Optimization Working Grp., Modified Rep. to the N. Am. Numbering Council on No. Optimization Methods at 46 (Oct. 20, 1998), http://preprod-nanc.org/docs/neno/nanc_nro_report_1998.doc; *In re Numbering Res. Optimization*, CC Docket 99-200, Rep. & Order & Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making, FCC 00-104, ¶¶ 227-231 (Mar. 31, 2000).

⁶ *See Common Carrier Bureau Seeks Comment on N. Am. Numbering Council Rep. Concerning Tel. No. Pooling & Other Optimization Measures*, 13 FCC Rcd. 22,233, 22,240-41 (Nov. 6, 1998).

⁷ *See Common Carrier Bureau Seeks Comment on Nat'l Thousands-Block No. Pooling Rollout Schedule*, CC Docket 99-200, *Public Notice*, DA 01-2419 (Nov. 6, 2001).

all of their documentation and branding to reflect either a change to 10-digit dialing or a new area code. It also creates consumer confusion, again particularly in locations that have been associated with a single area code since the advent of direct dialing. For elderly people, people with disabilities, and people who don't have mobile phones or who live outside of reliable mobile phone coverage, adding a new area code and requiring 10-digit dialing would be a challenging change. And for the 200 or more businesses in New Hampshire that use "603" in their branding, it may cause a meaningful dilution of the strength of those brands.

For the reasons discussed above and the additional reasons noted by the NHPUC in its Petition, the MDTC urges the FCC to grant the Petition, allowing the NHPUC to implement ITN pooling in order to more efficiently assign numbers and avoid premature area code exhaustion.

Respectfully submitted,

KAREN CHARLES PETERSON, COMMISSIONER

By: /s/ Rosalie Fazio-Eynullayeva
Rosalie Fazio-Eynullayeva, Counsel

Massachusetts Department of
Telecommunications and Cable
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