Public Knowledge

The FCC IP Transition Trials

In January 2014, the FCC set out experiments on aspects of the phone network transition to Internet Protocols (IP) and, in some cases, to fiber or wireless networks. The trials include:

(1) Voluntary Service-Based Experiments

The FCC asked providers to submit detailed proposals (voluntary for customers) to test the real-world applications of the new technologies they would like to substitute for the traditional phone service Americans rely on.

- To ensure **public safety and national security**, the experiments must: preserve 911 and Next Generation 911 capabilities; continue to support national security and public safety systems; ensure adequate backup power; and report network outages.
- To ensure **universal access**, the trials must: maintain universal service; prevent quality reduction; ensure access for persons with disabilities; and protect populations like the elderly, those with limited English proficiency, low-income communities, and Tribal lands.
- To promote **competition**, the experiments must: maintain wholesale access to competitors and maintain interconnection and intercarrier compensation.
- Finally, to ensure **consumer protection**, the trials must protect consumer privacy; comply with truth-in-billing, slamming, and cramming rules; maintain local number portability; and preserve call routing reliability.

(2) Targeted Experiments and Cooperative Research

- **Rural Broadband and Phone Service.** As we hear more interest from carriers in deploying fixed wireless services in rural areas, and more interest from consumers in all areas in obtaining access to fiber networks, the FCC announced experiments to use funds from the Connect America Funds to test different technologies in unserved areas.
- **Experiments for the Transition and Persons with Disabilities.** The FCC is structuring and funding research to continue to improve relay services used by customers with hearing disabilities. This research will be conducted with other agencies like the National Institute on Aging.
- **Numbering Testbed.** The FCC is starting a telephony numbering testbed to explore technical options and opportunities in an all-IP network. This testbed will be an engineering "sandbox" that examines security, number authentication, traceability, efficiency, portability, reliability, competition, and emergency dialing protocols.

(3) Ongoing Data Initiative

Finally, the FCC is exploring ways to improve its data gathering efforts. This includes improving the consumer complaint process, conducting structured observations of NG911 deployment and otherwise improving information on key questions about consumer values. As part of this, the FCC will work with state, local, and Tribal governments to better share data.