

**Before the
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission**

In the Matter of Developing a Survey to Identify Factors Preventing the Widespread Availability and Use of Broadband Technologies))))	Docket No. UT-070986
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COMMENTS OF AT&T

AT&T Communications of the Pacific Northwest, Inc., TCG Seattle., TCG Oregon, SBC Long Distance, LLC d/b/a SBC Long Distance d/b/a AT&T Long Distance, AT&T Mobility LLC, on behalf of its operating entities in the state, (collectively “AT&T”) respectfully submits these brief comments in response to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (“Commission”) notice issued on August 9th in the above referenced docket. AT&T will be participating in the Commission’s workshop on September 7th.

AT&T supports the universal deployment of broadband and commends the State of Washington in taking this important initial step to determine the factors preventing the widespread availability and use of broadband technologies. AT&T appreciates the opportunity to comment on the scope, design and content of such survey.

Presumably, in order to determine the factors preventing the widespread availability and use of broadband technologies, the Commission will first need to determine broadband availability. AT&T supports the effective and efficient collection of data that is based on accurate information about the market. AT&T generally recommends that to conduct a comprehensive analysis of broadband availability an

expert third party should be retained to conduct a survey of consumers directly either via the telephone or similar methods. However, as the Commission must provide the legislature with a report by the end of 2007, there is little time to collect information on broadband deployment in the state. AT&T, therefore, suggests that the Commission review the Form 477 reports that all facilities-based providers of broadband connections are required to file with the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”). There are several advantages to this approach for collecting data in a short time period. First, all facilities-based providers of broadband connections must file this information with the FCC. Second, the information is current as providers are required to file twice a year with the last filing on September 1, 2007, based on June 30, 2007 data. Third, the FCC has already established a definition for broadband, 200 kbps in at least one direction, so that there can be consistency among providers for the analysis. Although most providers file the Form 477 as a confidential report with the FCC, the Commission can obtain these confidential responses directly from the FCC by contacting the FCC¹, provided the appropriate confidentiality protections are in place.

The Commission can utilize this information in assessing whether additional incentives should be introduced to entice broadband providers to offer service in a particular community. For example, a variety of incentive programs have been used to encourage broadband deployment in other jurisdictions, examples include: tax breaks and other investment incentives; government customers serving as “anchor tenants” for broadband deployment; and grant programs for broadband providers and/or consumers. In addition, the state of Kentucky has embarked on a comprehensive program to evaluate broadband availability and the needs of consumers in the state. ConnectKentucky, a

¹ 47 C.F.R. §43.11(c)

public/private partnership, creates localized eCommunity Technology Plans for individual communities designed to increase broadband deployment.

The Commission's analysis should also take into account the broadband needs of the consumers in a particular community. From a consumer perspective there is not necessarily a one-size-fits-all definition of broadband. Sectors of the community that should be evaluated should include consumers, small businesses, telemedicine and educational institutions.

In evaluating the factors that are preventing use of broadband technologies studying what consumers view as a barrier to adoption is also important. Often a barrier to consumers is the affordability of a computer and broadband service. The Commission should evaluate whether that is also the case in Washington. Policies can then be designed to maintain affordability of broadband services and computers. For example, in particularly low-income areas, program can be developed to target providing computers and improving online services to low-income consumers.

AT&T commends the Commission for its careful analysis of broadband deployment and penetration in the state. AT&T looks forward to participating in further discussions on this matter.

DATED this 7th day of September 2007.

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