

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
UTILITIES COMMISSION
RALEIGH**

DOCKET NO. P-100, SUB 137c

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of
Area Code Relief for North Carolina's)
336 Numbering Plan Area)

**COMMENTS OF THE
PUBLIC STAFF**

NOW COMES THE PUBLIC STAFF – North Carolina Utilities Commission (Public Staff), by and through its Executive Director, Christopher J. Ayers, and provides the following comments in response to the Order Establishing Procedures, Scheduling Hearing and Requesting Comments (Order) issued by the North Carolina Utilities Commission (Commission) on March 11, 2014.

1. On September 7, 2000, NeuStar, Inc., in its role as the North American Numbering Plan Administrator (NANPA), and acting on behalf of the telecommunications industry (Industry), filed a petition with the Commission seeking approval of the consensus Industry recommendation that an all-services distributed overlay be implemented as the relief plan for the 336 numbering plan area (NPA). The Industry developed this recommendation after considering several alternatives to furnish relief before number exhaust of the 336 area code, including the all-services distributed overlay and three alternate geographic splits. At the time of its filing, NANPA projected the 336 area code to exhaust its available NXX codes during the fourth quarter of 2002.

2. The four alternatives proffered to the Commission by NANPA were: Alternative #1, an all-services distributed overlay; Alternative #2, a geographic split that encompasses the Winston-Salem, Greensboro and High Point rate centers, creating a circular geographic area; Alternative #3, a geographic split with the boundary line following rate center boundaries in a northeastern to southwestern direction, placing the High Point rate center to the west of the line and the Summerfield, Monticello, Reidsville, Gatewood and Ruffin rate centers to the east; and Alternative #4, a geographic split with the boundary line following the rate center boundaries in a northeastern to southwestern direction, placing the High Point rate center on the eastern side of the line and the Summerfield, Monticello, Reidsville, Gatewood and Ruffin rate centers on the western side.

3. As a result of implementation of number conservation measures such as thousands block number pooling, as well as the reduced demand for number resources, the projected exhaust date was significantly extended. In a June 18, 2003, filing, NANPA informed the Commission that the exhaust date for the 336 area code was projected to occur during the second quarter of 2009. In a subsequent filing on June 25, 2004, NANPA advised the Commission of a further revision of the projected exhaust date for the 336 area code to the second quarter of 2010.

4. On July 22, 2013, NANPA notified the Commission that the projected exhaust date for the 336 area code based on the April 2013 numbering

resource forecast had been revised to second quarter 2016.¹ As set forth in its federal contract, NANPA is required to begin planning for a new area code 36 months prior to the projected exhaust date. As part of this process, NANPA updated Alternatives #1 - #4 and the respective geographical maps associated with each alternative. NANPA also updated the projected exhaust date of the four relief alternatives based upon the April 2013 numbering resource forecast.

5. On January 21, 2014, the Commission issued an Order Requesting Comments and Scheduling Public Hearings. The Order set a date for the submission of comments from the general public, required the publication of a public notice, set a date for the submission of comments and reply comments from parties to this docket, and scheduled a public-hearing.

6. On January 28, 2014, AT&T North Carolina filed a motion requesting a the current customer notice requirements, public notice, and hearing date be extended by no less than 60 days due to the short time period allowed for the companies to publish the public notice. On January 29, 2014, Time Warner Cable Information Services (North Carolina) (TWCIS (NC)) filed comments in support of AT&T's Motion. On January 31, 2014, the Commission issued an Order Holding Docket in Abeyance.

7. The Commission issued an Order reinstituting the proceedings on March 11, 2014. The March 11 Order set the date by which comments from the general public and the formal parties to this proceeding must be received as

¹ The most recent NPA Exhaust Forecast (April 2014) now projects the exhaust date for the 336 area code as the third quarter 2016.

June 10, 2014, with reply comments due no later than June 17, 2014. A public hearing was scheduled for June 23 and 24, 2014.

8. North Carolina currently has eight area codes assigned to six specific geographic areas. Four of those geographic areas, including the 336 area, have an individual area code number. The other two, the 704/980 and 919/984 areas, use a distributed overlay where two area codes are used within the same geographic area.

9. Of the four alternatives provided by NANPA, the Industry recommended a distributed overlay for relief of the 336 area code in the September 2000 petition. If this alternative is selected, a new area code would be assigned to the same geographic area as the existing 336 area code. Existing customers would retain their current telephone numbers, and new customers would be assigned numbers from either of the two codes depending on number availability.

10. The other three alternatives would require geographic splits dividing the current 336 area into two parts, with one part maintaining the current 336 area code and the other being assigned a new code. The only significant difference between the three geographic split alternatives is the specific areas that would retain the current 336 area code and areas that would be assigned the new area code. Existing customers on the 336 area code side of the split would be able to retain their current telephone number, while customers on the other side would be assigned new telephone numbers based on the new area code.

11. The Public Staff joined with the Industry in filing a proposed order with the Commission on April 23, 2001, that recommended approval of the distributed overlay alternative. The Public Staff continues to believe the distributed overlay alternative is the best option for providing number relief for the 336 area code for many of the same reasons stated in NANPA's original September 2000 petition. As pointed out in that petition, unlike a geographic split, a distributed overlay would not force communities to be separated by a NPA boundary that would require a mixture of seven and ten-digit dialing. The geographic split alternatives would divide at least four counties and create confusing mixtures of seven and ten-digit local dialing. Additionally, in contrast to the geographic split alternatives, a distributed overlay would not force customers to change their existing telephone numbers, and any future NPA relief would be more easily implemented without disruption or confusion.

12. The chief disadvantage of the distributed overlay is that mandatory ten-digit dialing is required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) between and within the old area code and the new area code. In this instance, however, each of the geographic split alternatives would require a significant increase in ten-digit dialing by customers for local calls to nearby areas separated by a different area code. Thus, the chief advantage of the geographic split alternatives would not be present for the 336 area code.

13. The Commission has approved distributed overlays for the last two NPA relief proceedings, the first involving relief for the 704 NPA implemented in April 2001 in Docket No. P-100, Sub 137a, followed by relief for the 919 NPA

implemented in March 2012 in Docket No. P-100, Sub 137b. The Public Staff is aware of only one significant issue regarding these two distributed overlays -- an increase in the number of users mis-dialing 911 when attempting to make a ten-digit dialed call in the 919 NPA overlay area. However, so long as the new NPA for the 336 NPA distributed overlay does not start with "91," this issue should not occur in the 336 NPA.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, the Public Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the distributed overlay as the relief mechanism for the 336 area code and request that the assigned NPA for the 336 NPA distributed overlay not begin with "91."

This the 10th day of June, 2014.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I do hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the foregoing Comments on each of the parties of record in this proceeding or their attorneys of record either by electronic delivery or by deposit in the U.S. Mail, postage prepaid.

This the 10th day of June, 2014.

Electronically submitted
s/ Lucy E. Edmondson