

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of:)	
)	
Charter Communications Entertainment I, LLC)	
d/b/a Charter Communications)	CSR-5983-E
)	
Petition for Determination of Effective)	
Competition in Sixteen Missouri Communities)	
)	

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Adopted: October 30, 2002

Released: November 1, 2002

By the Deputy Chief, Policy Division, Media Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Charter Communications Entertainment I, LLC d/b/a Charter Communications (“Charter”) has filed with the Commission a petition pursuant to Section 76.7 of the Commission's rules for a determination of effective competition in sixteen communities in Missouri (the “Communities”).¹ Charter alleges that its cable systems serving the Communities are subject to effective competition pursuant to Section 623(a) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (“Communications Act”), and Section 76.905(b)(1)-(2) of the Commission's rules, and seeks revocation of the certifications of the local franchising authorities in the Communities to regulate basic cable service rates.² Charter claims the presence of effective competition in fifteen of the Communities stems from the competing services provided by two direct broadcast satellite (“DBS”) providers, DirecTV, Inc. and EchoStar Communications Corporation (“EchoStar”). Within the Village of Norwood Court, Charter contends that effective competition exists under the low penetration test. No opposition to the petition was filed.

II. DISCUSSION

2. In the absence of a demonstration to the contrary, cable systems are presumed not to be subject to effective competition,³ as that term is defined by Section 76.905 of the Commission's rules.⁴

¹ 47 C.F.R. § 76.7. The Communities are: Ballwin, Bellefontaine Neighbors, Berkeley, Calverton Park, Creve Coeur, Crystal Lake Park, Ellisville, Fenton, Florissant, Frontenac, Ladue, Manchester, Norwood Court, Riverview, Town and Country, and Twin Oaks.

² 47 U.S.C. § 543(a); 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

³ 47 C.F.R. § 76.906.

⁴ 47 C.F.R. § 76.905.

The cable operator bears the burden of rebutting the presumption that effective competition does not exist with evidence that effective competition is present within the relevant franchise area. Based on the record in this proceeding, Charter has met this burden.

A. The Competing Provider Test

3. Section 623(1)(1)(B) of the Communications Act provides that a cable operator is subject to effective competition if the franchise area is (a) served by at least two unaffiliated multi-channel video programming distributors ("MVPD") each of which offers comparable video programming to at least 50 percent of the households in the franchise area; and (b) the number of households subscribing to programming services offered by MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceeds fifteen percent (15%) of the households in the franchise area.⁵

4. Turning to the first prong of the competing provider test, DBS service is presumed to be technically available due to its nationwide satellite footprint, and presumed to be actually available if households in a franchise area are made reasonably aware that the service is available.⁶ Charter has provided evidence of the advertising of DBS service in news media serving the Communities.⁷ We find that the programming of the DBS providers satisfies the Commission's program comparability criterion because the DBS providers offer more than 12 channels of video programming, including more than one non-broadcast channel.⁸ Charter has demonstrated that the Communities are served by at least two unaffiliated MVPDs, namely the two DBS providers, each of which offers comparable video programming to at least 50 percent of the households in the franchise areas. Charter has also demonstrated that the two DBS providers are physically able to offer MVPD service to subscribers in the Communities, that there exists no regulatory, technical, or other impediments to households within the Communities taking the services of the DBS providers, and that potential subscribers in the Communities have been made reasonably aware of the MVPD services of DirecTV and EchoStar.⁹ Therefore, the first prong of the competing provider test is satisfied.

5. The second prong of the competing provider test requires that the number of households subscribing to MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceed 15 percent of the households in a franchise area. Charter sought to determine the competing provider penetration in fifteen of its franchise areas by purchasing a report from SkyTrends that identified the number of subscribers attributable to the DBS providers within the Communities on a five-digit zip code basis.¹⁰ However, rather than simply accepting SkyTrends' figures, Charter assumes that some of the DBS subscribers identified in the report may actually live in zip codes outside of the Communities.¹¹ To account for such a possibility, Charter has devised a formula that compares U.S. Census household data for the Communities and the relevant zip

⁵ 47 U.S.C. § 543(1)(1)(B); *see also* 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(2).

⁶ *See MediaOne of Georgia*, 12 FCC Rcd 19406 (1997).

⁷ Petition at 5 and Exhibit 1.

⁸ *See* 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(g). *See also* Petition at 5-6 and Exhibits 2, 3. Exhibit 2 contains the nationwide channel lineups of DirecTV and EchoStar and Exhibit 3 includes the channel line-ups for Charter's cable systems serving the Communities.

⁹ Petition at 4-6.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 6.

¹¹ *Id.* at 6-7.

codes in order to derive an allocation to apply against the DBS subscriber count.¹² Charter also reduces the estimated DBS subscriber count by 15 percent to reflect the possibility that some households have subscribed to both cable and DBS service and to take into account commercial or test accounts.¹³ The Commission believes that Charter's methodology is sound since it seeks to accurately quantify subscribers using the best available DBS subscriber data.

6. Charter asserts that it is the largest MVPD in fifteen of the Communities because Charter's subscribership exceeds the aggregate DBS subscribership for those franchise areas.¹⁴ Based upon the aggregate DBS subscriber penetration levels as reflected in Attachment A, calculated using 2000 Census household data,¹⁵ we find that Charter has demonstrated that the number of households subscribing to programming services offered by MVPDs, other than the largest MVPD, exceeds 15 percent of the households in these fifteen Communities. Therefore, the second prong of the competing provider test is satisfied. Based on the foregoing, we conclude that Charter has submitted sufficient evidence demonstrating that its cable systems serving these fifteen Communities are subject to effective competition.

B. The Low Penetration Test

7. Section 623(l)(1)(A) of the Communications Act provides that a cable operator is subject to effective competition if fewer than 30 percent of the households in its franchise area subscribe to its system's cable service.¹⁶ Charter serves 29 out of the 583 households in Norwood Court reported by the 2000 Census, resulting in a 0.05 subscriber penetration rate.¹⁷ On this basis, we find that Charter has established that its cable system serving Norwood Court is subject to effective competition.

¹² *Id.* at 6-7 and Exhibits 4-6.

¹³ *Id.* at 8. According to documentation previously provided to the Commission, SkyTRENDS' zip code subscriber numbers are inflated by roughly ten percent "due to dual receivers, and limited commercial and test accounts." *See Charter Communications*, DA 02-1919 at n.13 (MB rel. Aug. 6, 2002). Since then, SkyTRENDS has reportedly revised its inflation estimate from ten to fifteen percent. Petition at n.23.

¹⁴ Petition at 6 and Exhibit 4.

¹⁵ *See id.* at Exhibit 6.

¹⁶ *See* 47 U.S.C § 543(l)(1)(A); 47 C.F.R. § 76.905(b)(l).

¹⁷ Petition at 9 and Exhibits 4, 6 (29 Charter subscribers ÷ 583 Norwood Court 2000 Census Households = 0.0497).

III. ORDERING CLAUSES

8. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the petition for a determination of effective competition filed by Charter Communications Entertainment I, LLC d/b/a Charter Communications **IS GRANTED**.

9. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the certifications to regulate basic cable service in Ballwin, Bellefontaine Neighbors, Berkeley, Calverton Park, Creve Coeur, Crystal Lake Park, Ellisville, Fenton, Florissant, Frontenac, Ladue, Manchester, Norwood Court, Riverview, Town and Country, and Twin Oaks, Missouri **ARE REVOKED**.

10. This action is taken pursuant to authority delegated under Section 0.283 of the Commission's rules.¹⁸

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Steven A. Broeckaert
Deputy Chief, Policy Division, Media Bureau

¹⁸ 47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

ATTACHMENT A

CSR-5983-E

**COMMUNITIES SERVED BY
CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS ENTERTAINMENT I, LLC
D/B/A CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS
SUBJECT TO THE COMPETING PROVIDER TEST**

Communities	CUIDS	CPR*	2000 Census Households⁺	Estimated DBS[‡] Subscribers⁺	Charter Subscribers⁺
Ballwin	MO0230 MO0889	17.8	11,797	2,099	7,109
Bellefontaine Neighbors	MO0341	16.5	4,388	725	2,355
Berkeley	MO0299	16.6	3,600	597	1,931
Calverton Park	MO0300	16.2	494	80	262
Creve Coeur	MO0207	16.4	6,988	1,146	5,089
Crystal Lake Park	MO0208	22.1	204	45	142
Ellisville	MO0231	20.7	3,209	664	2,086
Fenton	MO0211	25.4	1,587	403	982
Florissant	MO0079	20.2	20,399	4,124	12,609
Frontenac	MO0212	22.0	1,297	285	984
Ladue	MO0213	17.3	3,414	592	2,470
Manchester	MO0232	17.9	7,206	1,291	4,656
Riverview	MO0345	16.5	1,331	220	535
Town and Country	MO0214	17.4	3,593	624	2,748
Twin Oaks	MO0241	16.3	166	27	118

*CPR = Percent of competitive DBS penetration rate.

⁺See Petition at Exhibits 4-6.

[‡]DBS subscriber estimate includes 15% reduction.