



Telephone Network Transition Collaborative

May 19, 2016

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) staff, Connect Ohio, Ohio 911 Program Office, Ohio Telecom Association (OTA), AARP Ohio, Ohio Consumers Counsel (OCC), Ohio Cable Telecommunication Association (OCTA), Ohio Poverty Law Center, Buckeye Hills-HVRDD, Cincinnati Bell, AT&T, QSI Consulting, Frontier Communications, Pro Seniors, and Hobbs Consulting.

Topics discussed:

- Reliability and Consumer Protection – Terry Etter, OCC & Patrick Phipps, QSI Consulting, Inc.
- Telephone Network Transition Collaborative/Consumer Education Subgroup – Katie Salvator, PUCO and Jason Well, PUCO.

Reliability and Consumer Protection questions and comments:

- PUCO staff asked that one of the OCC presentation slides be skipped because it contained information pertinent to an open PUCO proceeding and a commissioner and the assigned attorney examiner were present in the collaborative meeting.

Telephone Network Transition Collaborative/Consumer Education Subgroup questions and comments:

- A consumer advocate group representative thanked all the members of the subgroup for addressing the concerns of the consumer advocate agency and stated that the fact sheet compiled by the subgroup was factual and straightforward. The representative also stated that the fact sheet does not limit what each participant of the collaborative may convey.
- PUCO staff stated that the purpose of the fact sheet is to provide each member of the collaborative with factual information about the telephone network transition process that enables it to respond to constituent inquiries. PUCO staff also stated that collaborative members choosing to use the fact sheet may add their respective contact information to it.
- A consumer advocate group representative stated that newspapers will write what they want to write and that state legislative representatives questioned him on his contribution to the Marietta Times article published on Feb. 9, 2016. The representative

stated that when being interviewed, he makes a written record of the responses to the interviewer's questions for his own record as well as sends a copy to the interviewer and suggests that anyone being interviewed do the same. The representative stated that sometimes your word can be taken out of context and having a written record will help resolve any issues.

- A senior citizen advocate group representative stated that he had no objections to the information in the fact sheet but was not in a position to agree with the fact sheet and/or endorse documents released from the collaborative.
- PUCO staff asked if the subgroup discussed when the subgroup would talk to newspaper editorial boards.
- A PUCO staff presenter responded that the subgroup established no timeline to meet with the press since it is still early in the network transition process. A consumer advocate group representative asked if the frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet would go beyond the fact sheet.
 - A PUCO staff presenter responded that the FAQ sheet would consist of simple non-technical answers, given from the PUCO's perspective, to questions received through the PUCO Call Center.
- A consumer advocate group representative stated that it cannot answer a client's question about unreliable cell service when cell service may be more reliable or there may be less reliance on cell service due to other technologies in the future when the transition actually occurs. The representative then stated that because of this uncertainty, they are educating their clients to self-identify via the petition process when the ILEC in their area decides to withdraw BLES.

Closing remarks

- PUCO staff explained that the collaborative and subgroup need to monitor the triggers requiring further action with regard to consumer outreach and education and respond accordingly.
- PUCO staff stated that the FAQ sheet, which will be posted on the PUCO website, will allow the other members of the collaborative to see the types of questions that the PUCO is receiving from concerned consumers.
- PUCO staff stated that the presentations, given by a variety of collaborative participants, have helped complete the original plan of action to cover all the topics listed in the legislative directive that established the collaborative.
- PUCO staff indicated that PUCO staff has stayed in contact with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the FCC has conveyed that there is nothing new to report at this time, but there may be something to report later this summer.

- PUCO staff explained that the next step is to compile a summary/preliminary report on the progress and findings of the collaborative to inform the General Assembly that the collaborative has done what it was tasked to do. The summary/preliminary report should be released later this summer.
- PUCO staff stated that it may not be necessary to meet in June, unless an issue arises that triggers a need for the collaborative to meet.
- The PUCO staff stated the collaborative will reconvene in August to share the summary/preliminary report.
- The PUCO staff stated that the PUCO telephone network transition website will continue to be updated.
- A consumer advocate group representative asked what the PUCO is doing to address the FCC's changes to the Lifeline program.
 - PUCO staff stated that the Commission is discussing the ramifications of the FCC's changes and its effects on the PUCO's rules. Staff explained that the Order expands the Lifeline subsidy to broadband, removed certain eligibility programs, and preempted states that do not have a state Lifeline fund such as Ohio. PUCO staff further explained that the PUCO Lifeline rules include Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), National School Lunch (NSL), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which were removed from the list of eligible programs by the FCC Order. In addition, Staff stated that the FCC added Veteran's Pension and Survivor's Benefit Pension to the list of eligible programs and clarified that the federal poverty income level is 135% for states without a state Lifeline fund (Ohio is 150%). Lastly, PUCO staff indicated that the Order is not effective yet, but will probably be effective by the end of the year.
- A consumer advocate group representative asked will the preliminary report will be docketed or released via the PUCO telephone network transition website.
 - PUCO staff responded that there was no formal docket established for this collaborative therefore the preliminary report will likely not be docketed, but would be made available on the PUCO website. PUCO staff also explained that the PUCO staff would need to discuss establishing a formal docket for the collaborative with the PUCO chairman.
- PUCO staff stated that the PUCO has received compliments from other states that are following this collaborative process.

Action items

- Monitor for triggers that may necessitate the collaborative to reconvene or take other action.
- Compile the preliminary report and post to the PUCO website.

- Post and update the fact sheet and FAQs to the PUCO website.

Next meeting: TBA