

FCC Open Commission Meeting
En Banc on Digital Television Transition
March 5, 2009

**Panel 1: FCC and NTIA Reports on the
Events of February 17, 2009 and Future Plans**

Opening Remarks

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. Last month I reported on the various kinds of reception issues that people may encounter as a result of the DTV transition. These issues included possible loss of service due to changes in a station's coverage area or a change from a VHF channel to a UHF channel.

On February 11, 2009, we made available a new DTV mapping tool on the FCC's DTV web site. The mapping tool has proven to be extremely useful to consumers, the call centers, and our outreach team because it provides an easy way to determine what stations can be received at any given location. It was developed by two engineers in the Media Bureau, John Gabrysch and Alison Greenwald Neplokh, who deserve the credit for the mapping tool. I'd like to take a minute to show you how it works.

The mapping tool can be accessed directly from the www.DTV.gov web page. You can enter an address, zip code, coordinates, or even just move a cursor on a map, and the program will compute the stations that are available at that location. So I will type in the address for the FCC - - - and up comes a list of stations. The list includes the call sign, network affiliation, RF channel and virtual channel for each station. The stations that are highlighted in green have a strong signal at this location, the yellow a moderate signal, the tan a weak signal, and the red no signal.

You can click on each station and you will get more detailed information. Let's click on WJLA. An icon pops up on the map showing where the station's antenna tower is located. This is important so that you can point your antenna in the direction of the station. When you click on multiple stations you may find that they are located in different directions which may require special steps such as installing an antenna rotor to receive all of the stations. There is also a breakout list of information on the direction to the tower, the signal strength, and other information such as when the station may transition. All of this information is obtained or derived from our TV licensing data base.

You can also click on the highlighted text for "gain/loss" to bring up the coverage map for that station, showing the areas where there are predicted gains and losses in service. In this case, the map shows that the coverage for digital should generally be about the same as for analog.

Another useful feature is that you can switch the Google map view to see the terrain and, in satellite view, objects that are nearby. This can help to

diagnose whether there are hills or nearby buildings or objects that could be shadowing your reception.

The maps are designed to work hand-in-hand with our consumer antenna guide, which was updated on February 15, 2009. The antenna guide provides general information on antennas and shows the kinds of antennas that are typically needed to receive strong, moderate and weak signals.

One of the lessons learned from the transitions that occurred on February 17, 2009 is that a significant fraction of the calls received, more than 30%, dealt with reception issues. This suggests that there is more we can do to help educate and prepare people to anticipate, and where possible resolve, reception issues. In particular, we need to make people aware that, in addition to obtaining and hooking up a DTV converter box or digital TV, in some cases they may need to upgrade their antenna.

We plan to continue to refine and improve both the mapping tool and our antenna guide. We are working in collaboration with a number of the stakeholders, including the Association for Maximum Service Television, the Consumer Electronics Association, and Consumers Union, to provide better information and guidance to consumers about how to deal with reception and antenna issues.

The Commission has also recently proposed to amend the education requirements for broadcasters to require a station to disclose when 2 percent or more of its analog viewers are not expected to receive its digital signal due to a shift in the station's coverage area. We are also encouraging

stations to provide service to lost coverage areas such as by deploying low power translators and repeaters and distributed transmission systems and. Realistically, it may not be possible to deploy such equipment on a wide scale basis before June 12, 2009. That said, we anticipate that many broadcasters will make improvements in their coverage over time.

An additional lesson learned relates to the scanning of converter boxes. We discovered that in some cases when a current digital station was changing to a new digital RF channel, you needed to perform a complete new channel rescan. If you performed only an update scan, the box would not register the new channel because it perceived a conflict with the original channel. We are working on providing better guidance to consumers on the best way to conduct update scans.

In summary, we were able to make a great deal of progress towards enabling a smooth transition in the period leading up to February 17, 2009, but we also learned some important lessons that will help us to be better prepared for the greater number of stations that will transition by June 12. Mr. Chairman and Commissioners we appreciate all of your support and look forward to collectively meeting the many challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you.