



NEWS

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See *MCI v. FCC*, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FCC EXPLORES RULES FOR DIGITAL AUDIO BROADCASTING

Goal is to Promote the Introduction of Digital Radio Services for Americans

Washington, DC – The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) today took an important step toward bringing digital radio services to American consumers as part of the broader digital migration that is underway across all media. Digital audio broadcasting (“DAB”) technology offers the possibility for enhanced sound quality, improved reception, and new services such as datacasting, multiplexing and subscription services.

In October 2002, the FCC selected in-band, on-channel (“IBOC”) as the technology enabling AM and FM radio broadcast stations to begin digital operations. At that time, the FCC announced notification procedures allowing AM and FM radio stations to begin digital transmissions immediately on an interim basis using the IBOC system developed by iBiquity Digital Corporation. The FCC concluded that the adoption of a single IBOC transmission standard would facilitate the development and commercialization of digital services for terrestrial broadcasters. The FCC, however, deferred consideration of final operational requirements and related broadcast licensing and service rule changes. In today’s *Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making* (“*FNPRM*”), comment is sought on what rule changes and amendments are necessary due to the advent of digital audio broadcasting. The FCC also today adopted a companion *Notice of Inquiry* (“*NOI*”) addressing other matters relevant to the discussion on DAB.

iBiquity’s IBOC is a method of transmitting near-CD quality audio signals to radio receivers along with new data services such as station, song and artist identification, stock and news information, as well as local traffic and weather bulletins. With IBOC, a radio station is also capable of splitting its digital channel so that it may broadcast multiple streams of digital audio programming. Importantly, IBOC allows broadcasters to use their current radio spectrum to transmit AM and FM analog signals simultaneously with new digital signals.

Today’s *FNPRM* and *NOI* address several topics relevant to DAB, including:

- Comment is sought on what changes and amendments to the FCC’s technical rules are necessary to further the introduction of DAB. Specifically, comment is sought on proposals to allow AM nighttime digital service. The *FNPRM* also asks questions concerning DAB’s affect on FM translators. Questions regarding interference are also raised for comment.

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- Comment is sought on the types of digital services the FCC should permit radio stations to offer. Specifically, should a radio station be allowed to offer a high definition service, a multiplexed service, a datacasting service, or a combination of all of these possibilities? Comment is also sought on whether a radio station should be permitted to offer subscription services.
- Comment is sought on how the FCC's existing public interest, programming, and operational rules should be applied to DAB.
- The *FNPRM* asks questions of concern to noncommercial stations ("NCE") and low power FM ("LPFM") stations. Comment is sought on the impact DAB will have on NCE and LPFM stations and how these services may introduce DAB to the public.
- Comment is sought on appropriate policies the FCC may adopt to encourage broadcasters to convert from an analog-only radio service to a hybrid analog/digital radio service, and eventually, to an all-digital radio service.
- Subjects raised for comment in the Notice of Inquiry include digital audio content control and international issues.

Action by the Commission, April 15, 2004 by FNPRM and NOI (FCC 04-99). Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps, Martin and Adelstein, with Chairman Powell, Commissioners Copps and Adelstein issuing statements.

MB Docket No. 99-325

Comments due: June 16, 2004

Replies due: July 16, 2004

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