

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)
)
Location-based Routing for Wireless 911 Calls) PS Docket No. 18-64
)

REPLY COMMENTS OF THE VOICE ON THE NET COALITION

The Voice on the Net Coalition (“VON”)¹ hereby submits this reply in response to comments filed to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-captioned proceeding.² In particular, VON supports those comments seeking a longer timeframe for covered text providers to implement location-based routing (“LBR”), if required, for text messages to 9-1-1. The technology industry is facing economic headwinds and staffing issues that will make this complicated implementation ever more challenging, and it’s critical that this is done properly with sufficient time for testing and confirming readiness for commercial use.

Background. In the NPRM, the Commission proposes to require covered text providers to deploy technology to support LBR and to use LBR to route all 911 texts originating on their IP-based networks to NG911-capable public safety answering points (“PSAPs”) that request it.³ According to the Commission, use of LBR will improve location information and significantly reduce misrouted 911 calls and texts, and the delays associated with transferring those calls and

¹ The VON Coalition promotes regulatory policies that enable Americans to take advantage of the promise and potential of IP-enabled communications. For more information, see www.von.org.

²See *Location Based Routing for Wireless 911 Calls*, PS Docket No. 18-64 (rel. Dec. 22, 2022) (“NPRM”); see also 88 Fed. Reg. 2565 (Jan. 17, 2023), establishing a reply comment deadline of March 20, 2023.

³ NPRM at para. 46.

texts to the appropriate PSAP.⁴ If adopted, covered text providers would have 18 months from the effective date of the final rules to implement the new requirements.⁵

Discussion. In response to the NPRM, the Competitive Carriers Association (“CCA”) raised technical and other concerns regarding the proposed LBR requirements for 911 texts, recommending a four-year implementation for non-nationwide wireless carriers.⁶ While providing LBR to PSAPs for text messages may be technically feasible, according to CCA, for non-nationwide carriers it will involve a large number of complex design considerations that seem likely to require non-standard network solutions that non-nationwide wireless carriers are particularly ill-suited to manage in an 18-month timeframe.⁷ In addition, deploying LBR for text messages is more complicated than voice, in part, because there are three different ways to terminate text messaging traffic over a 5G architecture.⁸ This will require providers to inventory their system capabilities and, depending on their network infrastructure, may require modifications to short message service centers as well as wireless carrier’s location acquisition, session management, and functional responsibilities.⁹

The fact that some providers are already providing LBR does not suggest that there are no other limitations or that all providers can meet the 18-month implementation timeframe (or that it should be shortened as some commenters suggest).¹⁰ More instructive is that it took AT&T, one of the largest and most sophisticated communications companies in the world, four years to deploy LBR, including the time to collaborate with network and handset vendors, followed by testing,

⁴ Id. at para. 1.

⁵ Id. at para. 33.

⁶ Comments of Competitive Carriers Association, PS Docket No. 18-64, filed Feb 16, 2023, at 19.

⁷ Id. at 16-17.

⁸ Id. at 17.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Comments of APCO International, PS Docket No. 18-64, filed Feb 16, 2023, at 3.

validation and deployment of proprietary LBR on its network.¹¹ The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions notes that protocols required to validate caller location information and location estimation technologies are still evolving, suggesting improvements may be forthcoming and that the Commission should provide flexibility for innovators in the 911 ecosystem.¹²

For the reasons described above, VON supports CCA's recommendation of a four-year LBR implementation for non-nationwide wireless carriers, including covered text providers. In addition, technology companies continue to manage economic headwinds, including layoffs that will create staffing challenges, uncertain capital markets and rising interest rates.¹³ While VON recognizes the important potential benefits of implementing LBR by covered text providers, not all PSAPs are even capable of receiving text messages¹⁴ and nationwide NG911 remains elusive without appropriate funding.¹⁵ A four-year implementation timeframe should give both PSAPS

¹¹ CCA Comments at 4-5 (citing Comments of AT&T Services, Inc, PS Docket No. 18-64, filed July 12, 2022, at 2-4).

¹² Comments of the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions, PS Docket No. 18-64, filed Feb 16, 2023, at 4-5.

¹³ See, *Tech Layoffs: US Companies that Have Cut Jobs in 2022 and 2023*, Crunchbase New, March 3 2023, found at <https://news.crunchbase.com/startups/tech-layoffs/> (last visited March 10, 2023); see also *Jerome Powell Says Fed Is Prepared to Speed Up Interest-Rate Rises*, Wall Street Journal, March 7, 2023, found at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/jerome-powell-to-testify-to-congress-on-outlook-for-rates-inflation-e4e7f1e3> (last visited March 10, 2023).

¹⁴ As of December 8, 2022, the FCC reported that there were 3,214 text-capable PSAPs listed in the FCC Text-to-911 Registry, out of a total of 5,467 PSAPs. Fourteenth Annual Report to Congress on State Collection and Distribution of 911 and Enhanced 911 Fees and Charges for the Period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021, dated December 30, 2022, at pages 3, 10.

¹⁵ *The Funding Needed to Upgrade Our Public Safety Infrastructure Just Went Away*, No Jitter, Feb. 1, 2023, found at <https://www.nojitter.com/e-911/funding-needed-upgrade-our-public-safety-infrastructure-just-went-away#:~:text=According%20to%20an%20estimate%20by,the%20President%20in%20late%202022> (last visited March 10, 2023); *FCC's spectrum auction lapse stalls next-generation 911 funding*, Statescoop, March 13, 2023, found at <https://statescoop.com/fcc-spectrum-auction-next-generation-911/>.

and covered text providers necessary time to acquire and test the most current technology and solutions available to support our critical 911 ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

VON requests the Commission to act consistent with the recommendations herein.

Respectfully submitted,

VOICE ON THE NET COALITION

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