



Speak out about the proposed Frontier-Verizon local telephone merger

Verizon, the second largest local telephone provider in Ohio, wants to transfer its landline services to Frontier, which serves a small portion of Williams County. Frontier, which serves 480 residential customers, would add Verizon's 435,000 residential customers in 77 counties if the merger is approved. The deal does not include Verizon's wireless business.

On the national level, Frontier serves approximately 2.3 million customers in 24 states. The merger would add 4.8 million Verizon telephone lines in 14 states to Frontier's business.

On June 10, the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) requested the merger be closely examined by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) and that local public hearings be scheduled to provide consumers with opportunities to express their opinions. On Aug. 18, the OCC filed in opposition to the merger on behalf of residential customers.

Under state law, the PUCO cannot approve a merger unless the companies demonstrate the transaction promotes the public convenience and will result in adequate service at reasonable rates.

OCC position

The OCC believes the merger should be rejected by the PUCO.

The OCC has cited the lack of consumer benefits and potential pitfalls of a merger of the two companies. The OCC is especially concerned about whether Frontier is capable of making needed improvements to Verizon's Ohio residential local telephone service if the merger is approved at the state and federal levels.

The OCC recommends the following conditions if the PUCO approves the merger:

- A commitment that the merged company will, within three years, make broadband service available to 90 percent of residential customers in its Ohio service areas and 100 percent within five years;
- To ensure reasonable rates, elimination of the \$1.25 monthly Access Recovery Charge presently paid by Verizon's Ohio customers; and
- Improving service quality performance in Verizon's Ohio communities.

What consumers can do

The PUCO has scheduled six local public hearings in the following areas for consumers to express their opinions:

- **New Philadelphia**, Sept. 8, 6 p.m., Salvation Army Building, 809 Emmet Ave, N.W.
- **Marion**, Sept. 9, 6 p.m., City Hall, City Council Chambers, 233 W. Center St.
- **Portsmouth**, Sept. 10, 6 p.m., Scioto County Welcome Center, 342 Second St.
- **Troy**, Oct. 6, 6 p.m., Miami County Safety Building, 201 W. Main St.
- **Athens**, Oct. 7, 6 p.m., Athens Community Center, 701 E. State St.
- **Norwalk**, Oct. 8, 6 p.m., Ernsthausen Community Center, 100 Republic St.

The OCC urges consumers to attend and testify at the local public hearing nearest them. The OCC suggests consumers speak out about issues that are relevant to the merger case, such as service quality issues, the availability of broadband service and the rates they pay. Public officials and community groups also can make a difference by testifying about the case. Testimony will become a permanent part of the case record and the PUCO will consider the sworn statements before reaching a decision. The PUCO will decide at the state level whether the local telephone operations of Frontier and Verizon can merge.

The OCC will attend each public hearing to offer assistance to consumers and answer questions. In addition, the OCC offers its "How to Testify at Local Public Hearings" fact sheet at www.pickocc.org/tag/testify to help consumers learn more about expressing their opinions.

Consumers who cannot attend a public hearing can write a letter to the PUCO. All letters and envelopes should reference Case No. 09-454-TP-ACO and be sent to: Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, Attn: Docketing Division, 180 E. Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215.

For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

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