

Comments of Edward A. Schober, PE

MM Docket No. 26-20

Application Limit for New Noncommercial Educational Reserved Band FM Translator Station Applications in 2026 Filing Window

Mr Schober is a consulting engineer for hundreds of commercial and noncommercial AM, FM and Translator stations. Providing engineering counsel for the last 45 years. His qualifications are well known to the FCC.

He is also the licensee of of FM Translator station W250AK, Rio Grande, NJ and a member of the licensees of AM station WXVA, Winchester VA, FM Translator W221EQ, Front Royal, VA and W275BV, Winchester VA.

Mr. Schober comments to support the FCC's intention to require that the applicants for new FM Translators :

- Are required to be the licensees of the proposed primary noncommercial educational or LPFM station.
- That each applicant entity may file no more than ten applications nationally.
- That tribal applicants with a primary station as an LPFM station may file no more than four applications nationally.
- That other applicants with a primary station as an LPFM station may file no more than two applications nationally.

Mr Schober believes that this effort is laudible, in that it avoids the landslide of applications for FM Translators distant from the primary station. There are additional considerations that Mr Schober believes would enhance the public interest and equitable distribution of authorizations. He requests the Commission to consider these options separately, and not discard them all because some may seem too complicated.

- Where an applicant has existing FM translator licenses, in either the NCE band or the Non-Reserved band, the total count of existing translators should be included in the translator cap for this window. Some licensees will be ineligible.
- When an licensee entity has a majority of its board or other governing body also serving as the majority of another licensee, all both or all the entities will be considered as a single entity.
- If an applicant wishes to surrender one or more existing FM translator authorizations, conditioned on a grant of a translator authorization in this window, the entity should be permitted one additional translator application for each translator license or LPFM license surrendered.
- The applicants should be prohibited from transferring existing translators or the primary station to a different party in order to increase the number of NCE FM translator applications eligible to file in this window.
- LPFM stations are designed to provide service to a specific local area, and not provide wide area coverage. LPFM station applicants should not be permitted to own NCE FM translators whose 60 dbu coverage extends more than 50 km from the LPFM primary station's 60 dbuV contour, excepting that tribal entities and public safety entities described by §73.855(b) should

- be permitted any number of FM translators within their reservation, homeland, jurisdiction or area of responsibility.
- Where valid mutually exclusive applications are tendered, the distance from the FM translator's 60 dbu contour to the primary station's 60 dbuV contour (up to perhaps 50 km, with zero distance most preferable) should be considered as a primary factor in the awarding of the FM translator authorization.
 - If a noncommercial full power station or an LPFM station's F(50,50) 60 dbuV or AM 2 mV/m contour serves only a portion of an urbanized area, and a proposed new NCE FM translator's F(50,50) 60 dbuV serves a portion (or all) of that same urbanized area, the distance between service contours will be considered zero.
 - Mutually exclusive applications with greater distance than 50 km between the proposed and primary station contours should be withheld until all the more local applications are granted, then the remaining applicants given an opportunity to amend.
 - Fill in translator applications should be evaluated as having zero distance between primary and translator contours, provided that at least half of the fill in translator's F(50,50) 60 dbuV is shown to have primary station service of less than 70 dbuV using the irregular terrain model.
 - The Commission could assign whatever weight it chooses to assign to fill in FM translators that will carry HD-2, HD-3, or HD-4 programming of the primary station.
- Tribal entities and entities described by §73.855(b) should be permitted any number of NCE FM translators whose 60 dbuV contour remain at least 90% within their reservation or area of jurisdiction, provide they have no other NCE FM translator applications that are outside the physical area of jurisdiction or responsibility.
- Applicants for new FM translators within the window should be exempt from the cap if all the applications, and the principal community of the primary station are within the same minor insular outlying area, provided the applicant has no applications outside that minor outlying area. (USVI, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, etc.)
- For the purpose of greatest frequency utilization and efficiency. Waivers of §74.1204(a)(3) or (a)(4) should be granted to authorize NCE FM translators co-channel to the primary station, or to other co-channel NCE FM translator applications repeating the same primary station, provided that the F(50,10) 54 dbuV of the new NCE FM translator remains within the F(50,10) 40 dbuV contour of the primary station. These waivers must be conditioned that all other stations are fully protected, and proven FM synchronization methods must be used. Single frequency networks have been shown to be reliable and very effective at improving FM service without technical interference. The nature of noncommercial educational FM stations does not entail the competitive issues that are raised with commercial broadcast stations, so there is no controversy concerning the expansion of the service contour of NCE FM stations.

Mr Schober believes that implementing these methods assuring that NCE FM translators are limited so that the FCC staff is not overwhelmed, the applications to be granted are equitably reviewed and that the public interest is best served.

Respectfully submitted,

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