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NEWS RELEASE

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PSC EXAMINING OPTIONS FOR AREA CODE 270 *Number shortage projected for late 2007*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 11, 2007) – With area code 270 projected to run out of available phone numbers in late 2007, the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) has opened a proceeding to determine how to create a new area code in the western half of the state.

The North American Numbering Plan Administration (NANPA), which is responsible for allocating phone numbers to telecommunication providers, on Aug. 31 issued a notice that the pool of available numbers will be exhausted in the fourth quarter of next year.

NANPA earlier this year had projected that the area code 270 number pool would last into the first quarter of 2009. However, rapid growth in the area and the increased need for new phone numbers led to that projection being revised.

On July 19, the PSC, after receiving new information from NANPA, opened a case to examine the options for area code 270. A procedural schedule for the case has not yet been established, but it will include public meetings and other opportunities for residents of area code 270 to make their wishes known to the PSC.

New area codes can be established in one of two ways.

An existing area code can be split geographically. That has been the history in Kentucky. Area code 270, which covers the western half of Kentucky, was created from a portion of area code 502 in April 1999 and area code 859 was carved out of area code 606 a year later.

A new area code also can be created as an “overlay” on an existing area code. This option, which has been used mostly in major metropolitan areas, requires 10-digit dialing for local calls.

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Although an area code can, in theory, include as many as 10 million potential phone numbers, there actually are far fewer numbers available for use. Certain sequences of numbers are not used. Remaining numbers are allocated to telecommunication companies in groups of 10,000 known as NXX codes, or groups of 1,000 known as NXX-X blocks. A company may not use all the numbers in a code or block.

Number exhaustion occurs when there are no NXX codes or NXX-X blocks remaining.

The notice from NANPA triggered interim procedures, including the rationing of new NXX codes, that are intended to delay number exhaustion in area code 270 until a decision is made on a new area code. The interim procedures will remain in place until a longer-term relief plan is developed in the coming weeks.

PSC Chairman Mark David Goss said the commission is committed to an open process as it considers the creation of Kentucky's fifth area code.

“We want to hear from the telecommunication industry, from businesses that might be affected by the change, and from area code 270 residents,” he said. “We fully recognize that the decision we make will have a significant impact on the economy and on people's daily lives.

“To make the best decision for Kentucky, we will need a full understanding of the issues,” Goss said. “That is why we will actively seek public input.”

Documents in the area code 270 case can be found on the PSC Web site, which is psc.ky.gov. The case number is 2006-00357.

The PSC is an agency within the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and has approximately 110 employees.

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