

(B) if such programming is provided by means of an open video system for which the Commission has approved a certification under section 573 of this title, such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of this part, but shall be subject to parts I through IV of this subchapter only as provided in 573(c) of this title.

(4) Election to operate as open video system

A common carrier that is providing video programming in a manner described in paragraph (1) or (2), or a combination thereof, may elect to provide such programming by means of an open video system that complies with section 573 of this title. If the Commission approves such carrier's certification under section 573 of this title, such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of this part, but shall be subject to parts I through IV of this subchapter only as provided in 573(c) of this title.

(b) Limitations on interconnection obligations

A local exchange carrier that provides cable service through an open video system or a cable system shall not be required, pursuant to subchapter II of this chapter, to make capacity available on a nondiscriminatory basis to any other person for the provision of cable service directly to subscribers.

(c) Additional regulatory relief

A common carrier shall not be required to obtain a certificate under section 214 of this title with respect to the establishment or operation of a system for the delivery of video programming.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, § 651, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title III, § 302(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 118.)

§ 572. Prohibition on buy outs

(a) Acquisitions by carriers

No local exchange carrier or any affiliate of such carrier owned by, operated by, controlled by, or under common control with such carrier may purchase or otherwise acquire directly or indirectly more than a 10 percent financial interest, or any management interest, in any cable operator providing cable service within the local exchange carrier's telephone service area.

(b) Acquisitions by cable operators

No cable operator or affiliate of a cable operator that is owned by, operated by, controlled by, or under common ownership with such cable operator may purchase or otherwise acquire, directly or indirectly, more than a 10 percent financial interest, or any management interest, in any local exchange carrier providing telephone exchange service within such cable operator's franchise area.

(c) Joint ventures

A local exchange carrier and a cable operator whose telephone service area and cable franchise area, respectively, are in the same market may not enter into any joint venture or partnership to provide video programming directly to subscribers or to provide telecommunications services within such market.

(d) Exceptions

(1) Rural systems

Notwithstanding subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier (with respect to a cable system located in its telephone service area) and a cable operator (with respect to the facilities of a local exchange carrier used to provide telephone exchange service in its cable franchise area) may obtain a controlling interest in, management interest in, or enter into a joint venture or partnership with the operator of such system or facilities for the use of such system or facilities to the extent that—

(A) such system or facilities only serve incorporated or unincorporated—

(i) places or territories that have fewer than 35,000 inhabitants; and

(ii) are outside an urbanized area, as defined by the Bureau of the Census; and

(B) in the case of a local exchange carrier, such system, in the aggregate with any other system in which such carrier has an interest, serves less than 10 percent of the households in the telephone service area of such carrier.

(2) Joint use

Notwithstanding subsection (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier may obtain, with the concurrence of the cable operator on the rates, terms, and conditions, the use of that part of the transmission facilities of a cable system extending from the last multi-user terminal to the premises of the end user, if such use is reasonably limited in scope and duration, as determined by the Commission.

(3) Acquisitions in competitive markets

Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier may obtain a controlling interest in, or form a joint venture or other partnership with, or provide financing to, a cable system (hereinafter in this paragraph referred to as "the subject cable system"), if—

(A) the subject cable system operates in a television market that is not in the top 25 markets, and such market has more than 1 cable system operator, and the subject cable system is not the cable system with the most subscribers in such television market;

(B) the subject cable system and the cable system with the most subscribers in such television market held on May 1, 1995, cable television franchises from the largest municipality in the television market and the boundaries of such franchises were identical on such date;

(C) the subject cable system is not owned by or under common ownership or control of any one of the 50 cable system operators with the most subscribers as such operators existed on May 1, 1995; and

(D) the system with the most subscribers in the television market is owned by or under common ownership or control of any one of the 10 largest cable system operators as such operators existed on May 1, 1995.

(4) Exempt cable systems

Subsection (a) of this section does not apply to any cable system if—

(A) the cable system serves no more than 17,000 cable subscribers, of which no less than 8,000 live within an urban area, and no less than 6,000 live within a nonurbanized area as of June 1, 1995;

(B) the cable system is not owned by, or under common ownership or control with, any of the 50 largest cable system operators in existence on June 1, 1995; and

(C) the cable system operates in a television market that was not in the top 100 television markets as of June 1, 1995.

(5) Small cable systems in nonurban areas

Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier with less than \$100,000,000 in annual operating revenues (or any affiliate of such carrier owned by, operated by, controlled by, or under common control with such carrier) may purchase or otherwise acquire more than a 10 percent financial interest in, or any management interest in, or enter into a joint venture or partnership with, any cable system within the local exchange carrier's telephone service area that serves no more than 20,000 cable subscribers, if no more than 12,000 of those subscribers live within an urbanized area, as defined by the Bureau of the Census.

(6) Waivers

The Commission may waive the restrictions of subsections¹ (a), (b), or (c) of this section only if—

(A) the Commission determines that, because of the nature of the market served by the affected cable system or facilities used to provide telephone exchange service—

(i) the affected cable operator or local exchange carrier would be subjected to undue economic distress by the enforcement of such provisions;

(ii) the system or facilities would not be economically viable if such provisions were enforced; or

(iii) the anticompetitive effects of the proposed transaction are clearly outweighed in the public interest by the probable effect of the transaction in meeting the convenience and needs of the community to be served; and

(B) the local franchising authority approves of such waiver.

(e) "Telephone service area" defined

For purposes of this section, the term "telephone service area" when used in connection with a common carrier subject in whole or in part to subchapter II of this chapter means the area within which such carrier provided telephone exchange service as of January 1, 1993, but if any common carrier after such date transfers its telephone exchange service facilities to another common carrier, the area to which such facilities provide telephone exchange service shall be treated as part of the telephone service area of the acquiring common carrier and not of the selling common carrier.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §652, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §302(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 119.)

¹ So in original. Probably should be "subsection".

§ 573. Establishment of open video systems

(a) Open video systems

(1) Certificates of compliance

A local exchange carrier may provide cable service to its cable service subscribers in its telephone service area through an open video system that complies with this section. To the extent permitted by such regulations as the Commission may prescribe consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity, an operator of a cable system or any other person may provide video programming through an open video system that complies with this section. An operator of an open video system shall qualify for reduced regulatory burdens under subsection (c) of this section if the operator of such system certifies to the Commission that such carrier complies with the Commission's regulations under subsection (b) of this section and the Commission approves such certification. The Commission shall publish notice of the receipt of any such certification and shall act to approve or disapprove any such certification within 10 days after receipt of such certification.

(2) Dispute resolution

The Commission shall have the authority to resolve disputes under this section and the regulations prescribed thereunder. Any such dispute shall be resolved within 180 days after notice of such dispute is submitted to the Commission. At that time or subsequently in a separate damages proceeding, the Commission may, in the case of any violation of this section, require carriage, award damages to any person denied carriage, or any combination of such sanctions. Any aggrieved party may seek any other remedy available under this chapter.

(b) Commission actions

(1) Regulations required

Within 6 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall complete all actions necessary (including any reconsideration) to prescribe regulations that—

(A) except as required pursuant to section 531, 534, or 535 of this title, prohibit an operator of an open video system from discriminating among video programming providers with regard to carriage on its open video system, and ensure that the rates, terms, and conditions for such carriage are just and reasonable, and are not unjustly or unreasonably discriminatory;

(B) if demand exceeds the channel capacity of the open video system, prohibit an operator of an open video system and its affiliates from selecting the video programming services for carriage on more than one-third of the activated channel capacity on such system, but nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to limit the number of channels that the carrier and its affiliates may offer to provide directly to subscribers;

(C) permit an operator of an open video system to carry on only one channel any video programming service that is offered by more than one video programming provider