



# NABOB

National Association of  
Black Owned Broadcasters

June 6, 2022

Ms. Marlene Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
47 L Street NE  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: FM Booster Rule Change, MB Docket Nos. 20-401, 17-105; RM-11854**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

We, the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (“MMTC”) and the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters (“NABOB”), write in response to the recent Public Notice seeking comment on the in-depth engineering studies analyzing experimental deployments of FM booster geo-targeted content in two different operating environments: San Jose, CA and Jackson, MS. These studies, which we have had reviewed by Dennis Wallace of the engineering consulting firm Meintel, Sgrignoli, & Wallace, LLC (see attachment), contain impressive results and convince us that the technical questions that were raised by some commenters in this proceeding have been fully and satisfactorily answered. We respectfully suggest that now is the time for the Commission to move forward and allow FM broadcasters the choice of using technology to deliver hyper-local content to their audiences *like every other form of media*, including broadcast television.

It is worth reviewing briefly how we got to this point. On December 1, 2020, the full Commission on a unanimous and bipartisan basis adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to adopt a small change to its FM booster rules that for the first time would enable radio broadcasters to do what every other form of media can do: offer consumers hyper-local content such as news, weather, traffic, and advertisements and thus promote localism. The Commission adopted the NPRM after hearing supportive comments from a number of parties, including the undersigned, dozens of small and medium-size radio broadcasters, many prominent civil rights groups, and the National Association of Broadcasters (“NAB”).<sup>1</sup> When the comments in

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to NAB and MMTC and NABOB (who were joined in their support letter by 21 national public interest, civil rights, and business advocacy organizations), dozens of small broadcasters filed supportive comments, including: AlwaysMountainTime; Double-R Communications; Commonwealth Broadcasting Corporation; Center Broadcasting Company, Inc.; Educational Communications of Colorado Springs; Keyhole Broadcasting, LLC; KM Radio of Atlanta, LLC; KWTO, Inc.; Lake Broadcasting, Inc.; Legend Broadcasting, LLC; Marshall (continued...)

response to the NPRM were filed in February 2021, NAB stated that now they had technical questions that had to be answered. In response, NABOB and MMTC filed comments indicating that NAB had raised some legitimate questions, and we encouraged all interested parties to conduct tests to address those questions. We are pleased to say that is exactly what happened.

In September 2021, engineering firm Roberson and Associates (“RAA”) filed in the docket a lengthy report and presentation describing the testing RAA had conducted at the request of GeoBroadcast Solutions LLC (“GeoBroadcast”) at KSJO(FM) in San Jose, CA, a station owned by Silicon Valley Asian Media Group LLC. Those tests results showed that geo-targeting technology works with both analog and HD systems; its operations did not affect performance of the EAS system; and the transition area between the geo-targeted zone and the main station’s signal is entirely within the control of the broadcaster deploying the technology and can be designed to take up only a tiny portion of the station’s service area and be infrequent, transitory, and unobjectionable.

In the course of discussing the results from the San Jose test, we understand that staff indicated that the geography of San Jose, with its many hills, was not found in all parts of the country and testing in a flat geography may be worthwhile. In response the RAA team worked with Roberts Radio Broadcasting, LLC, licensee of WRBJ-FM, to stage a second experimental demonstration in Jackson, MS – which in terms of geography and other road and building features is the polar opposite from the San Jose site. The results from that study also were submitted to the record and the results are similar to the San Jose testing, showing that geo-targeting technology works in a variety of different environments.

To enable NABOB and MMTC to better assess these studies, we asked Dennis Wallace, Managing Partner of Meintel, Sgrignoli, & Wallace, LLC, a well-regarded engineering consulting firm with deep experience in the broadcast arena, to review these studies and provide us with his views on the studies’ methodology and conclusions. Mr. Wallace’s complete review is attached, and importantly it provides the following list of conclusions:

## **CONCLUSIONS**

MSW reviewed the field test report written by RAA and provides the following observations:

1. The scope and methodology of the field tests provided much needed data regarding the FM Booster Local Origination proposal.
2. Equipment utilized for the field test are considered “off-the-shelf” commercially available equipment.

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University Board of Governors; New Life Broadcasting, Inc.; Northeast Broadcasting Company, Inc.; Phillips Broadcasting Company, Inc.; Q Media Properties, LLC; WAY-FM Media Group, Inc.; Stereo Broadcasting; Williams Media Group; and Wennes Communications Stations, Inc.

3. The geography of the field tests at WRBJ-FM provided an excellent demonstration of the local origination concept while providing difficult transition regions to test.
4. The geography of the field tests at KSJO-FM provided more hilly terrain and provided an opportunity for demonstration of the system in a terrain shielded environment (which is not uncommon in areas where booster stations would be useful).
5. The transition regions in both the KSJO-FM and WRBJ-FM field tests were minimal (*de minimus*) and should pose only “fleeting” disruptions to the listener experience for the brief transit time through the transition region. There should be no discernable degradation to the service to most listeners.
6. The multipath analysis conducted by RAA provides an objective measure of the transition region and potential impairment to listening. The benchmark of 20% chosen for the RAA analysis seems conservative and should limit the impairments noticed by listeners.
7. The EAS signal operated as normal and were re-transmitted appropriately by the FM Boosters. The tests demonstrate that no adverse impacts to EAS operations should be experienced

In closing, we support this rule change because it would enable deployment of technology that could give small and minority broadcasters new tools to serve their listeners. They will be able to deliver content to their audiences – including community news, traffic, weather, and advertisements – that speaks directly to their local interests. We also envision small businesses for whom radio advertising is too expensive today now being able to take advantage of radio as an advertising medium. We understand that some radio stations may not want to use this technology. That is their choice. We ask only that the Commission give FM radio broadcasters the same capability that it gave to TV broadcasters five years ago, and that every other media has enjoyed for many years: the ability to deliver hyper-local content to their audiences.

Please direct any questions to the undersigned.

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch  
June 6, 2022  
Page 4 of 4

Respectfully submitted,

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Council