

Competitors Cheer FCC's IP Transition Rules



News Analysis

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Competitive carriers are cheering the FCC's interim rules governing the transition to an all-IP network, while Republican commissioners are calling it "micromanagement," and incumbents say it will slow down investment in fiber.

In a 3-2 vote along party lines, the [Federal Communications Commission \(FCC\)](#) implemented rules that address how the New IP is practically implemented. It would require providers to not only directly notify retail customers of plans to retire copper networks at least three months in advance but also contact competitive carriers who interconnect with their networks six months in advance and provide replacement services "at rates, terms and conditions that are reasonably comparable to those of the legacy services."

It's that provision that is sticking in the craw of large incumbents, who say being forced to resell newer fiber facilities at the cost of older copper facilities is bad business and harmful to their investors. Their major voice in Washington, [United States Telecom Association \(USTelecom\)](#), says the FCC's position is firmly rooted in the past.

"We are concerned that today's FCC Orders handicap delivering on this compact in the name of keeping a regulatory structure under which Fax machines provide a communication service of such importance that they must be preserved," the association said in its statement.

The rules adopted today are interim but they do require incumbent carriers to get permission before retiring copper plant if it would disrupt existing customers or services. That requirement led Commissioner Ajit Pai to accuse his fellow commissioners of micromanaging in a way that will actually slow down the transition to an all-IP network, a charge which FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler dismissed.

[Competitive Telecommunications Association \(CompTel\)](#), the industry association for competitive carriers, was quick to cheer the ruling as "a win for competition, and a win for the future of new networks," according to a statement from its CEO, Chip Pickering.

Chris Ancell, CEO of [XO Communications Inc.](#), one of the companies that currently uses copper access lines it buys from incumbents to reach many of its SMB customers, said in his statement that the FCC realized "the significance of existing copper in incumbent and competitive networks that is relied upon to serve customers in combination with the existing and new fiber infrastructure built by all providers."

"We applaud the FCC's vote and salute Chairman Wheeler's leadership on this issue," added [Granite Telecommunications LLC](#)'s CEO, President and Founder Rob Hale in his statement. "By acting to maintain a dynamic, competitive market, the Chairman ensures that end users have multiple choices, lower prices and better service. As a result of the FCC's vote today, customers can continue to count on those advantages, even as technology evolves."

The FCC still has work to do in more broadly rewriting its special access rules for the new technology era. That rewrite will replace these rules, so the fighting might not be done yet.

— Carol Wilson, Editor-at-Large, [Light Reading](#)