

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Request for Comment on Petition for)	
Rulemaking to Update the Commission's)	GN Docket No. 15-178
Rules for Access to Support the Transition)	
from TTY to Real-time Text Technology;)	
and Petition for Waiver of Rules Requiring)	
Support of TTY Technology)	

**COMMENTS OF
THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Telecommunications Industry Association (“TIA”) hereby submits comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“Commission”) Public Notice¹ seeking comment on two petitions filed by AT&T Services, Inc., one seeking the Commission’s approval by way of rulemaking to use real-time text (“RTT”) communications as a substitute for text telephony (“TTY”) on internet protocol (“IP”)-based voice communications²; and the other seeking waiver of the Commission’s requirements to support TTY technology for devices and services “during the pendency of the rulemaking and until RTT is fully deployed to allow [AT&T] to offer VoIP [voice over internet protocol] services that do not reliably support TTY.”³

TIA’s members, the manufacturers of information and communications technology (“ICT”) products that will be implicated by TTY regulation changes, recognize the validity of beginning the conversation about how to appropriately develop and implement solutions that can replace TTY in a wireless, IP-based environment. Wireless handset manufacturers are committed to ensuring that people with disabilities continue to have access to communications services, especially as the wireless industry continues to innovate and deploy newer, more advanced technologies. Yet, we encourage the Commission to ensure any rulemaking effort has as its foundation the key principles of flexibility, technology neutrality, and feasibility, which will enable manufacturers to have the

¹ *Request for Comment on Petition for Rulemaking to Update the Commission’s Rules for Access to Support the Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology, and Petition for Waiver of Rules Requiring Support of TTY Technology*, Public Notice, GN Docket No. 15-178, DA 15-858 (rel. July 24, 2015) (“RTT PN”).

² *See* Petition of AT&T Services, Inc. for Rulemaking, PS Docket Nos. 11-153, 10-255, WC Docket No. 04-36, CG Docket Nos. 03-123, 10-213 (filed June 12, 2015) (“Rulemaking Petition”).

³ *See* Petition of AT&T Services, Inc. for Waiver, PS Docket Nos. 11-153, 10-255, WC Docket No. 04-36, CG Docket Nos. 03-123, 10-213 (filed June 12, 2015) (“Waiver Petition”).



needed regulatory space to address new concerns in a manner that is neither economically nor technically burdensome.⁴

TIA members generally agree with the sentiment that as more modern, IP-based wireless networks are deployed TTY technology is becoming increasingly obsolete. We believe, however, it is important to note that although RTT technology could serve as one alternative solution, the technology is still nascent and thus, industry is still developing various methods for replacing TTY technology. In our comments, we highlight the need for the Commission to recognize that AT&T’s petition represents *just one* possible way to replace TTY and should not be viewed as *the* solution. Additionally, we explain that there will be challenges in incorporating RTT technology since it is still in the early stages of development and has not been used before; factors that we ask the Commission to take into consideration. Below, we provide our responses to the specific questions raised by the Commission in the RTT PN.

II. COMMENTS

A. A Rulemaking Should Be Initiated, But It Should Be Limited in Scope and Consider the Still Nascent Nature of Real-time Texting Technology.

First, TIA and its members generally support the Commission initiating a rulemaking to determine whether the agency should modify “[the] accessibility rules to recognize RTT as a

⁴ See generally TIA Comments to U.S. Access Board Information and Communication Technology (“ICT”) Standards and Guidelines Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (filed May 28, 2015), available at http://www.tiaonline.org/sites/default/files/Sec%20%20508%20ICT%20NPRM%20Comments_Final.pdf (explaining TIA’s general thoughts on the nascence of RTT technology and the need for flexibility in any implementation requirements).



replacement for TTY technology.”⁵ The concept of real-time texting may have the potential to be one future mechanism to ensure consumers who are deaf, hearing impaired, or speech impaired continue to have access to voice communication as the wireless industry moves forward to a largely IP-based communications protocol. As AT&T explains in its Rulemaking Petition, wireless carriers are currently deploying various forms of Voice over Internet protocol (“VoIP”) services⁶ and TIA members believe that as a result of this transition, regulatory relief from TTY requirements will be necessary in the near future to afford industry the flexibility to identify appropriate alternative, accessible solutions as replacements to TTY. Thus, TIA members believe a rulemaking proceeding should be initiated by the Commission to begin a conversation on this issue.

It is important to recognize, however, that real-time texting is still a nascent technology idea and currently, there is no generally accepted understanding of what it will mean in practice and how it will be implemented. We stress that AT&T’s Rulemaking and Waiver Petitions are specific to its preferred implementation solution for RTT⁷ and this should be given consideration by the Commission if it decides to pursue a rulemaking. Furthermore, TIA encourages the Commission to ensure that any rulemaking is limited to issues surrounding the transition of cellular networks from time-division multiplexing (“TDM”) to IP, in line with AT&T’s petition. AT&T’s request is scoped

⁵ RTT PN at 2.

⁶ Rulemaking Petition at 2.

⁷ See Rulemaking Petition at fn. 1 (explaining what RTT will mean for AT&T in the context of this petition).



to address the potential use of RTT on cellular networks only⁸ and we, therefore, ask the Commission to ensure any rulemaking is confined to this context.

B. A Regulation Change Would Be A Positive Step Towards Furthering Development of Replacements for TTY.

TIA believes the impact of a rule change to accommodate the use of RTT as one alternative to TTY would be a step in the right direction that would not only facilitate industry efforts to develop other alternatives to TTY, but would also aid the continued transition to more IP-based, wireless voice communications. TIA emphasizes that AT&T is seeking approval for its preferred solution to be recognized as *an* alternative to TTY not *the* alternative. SMS, for example, serves as another alternative technology that is currently playing a role in text-to-911 services. Recognizing RTT as a TTY alternative will augment the advancement of other accessible approaches for emergency calling.

In order for RTT technology to successfully support the emergency communications needs of consumers with disabilities, interworking functionality must be developed, as indicated by AT&T in its Rulemaking Petition.⁹ Accessible voice communications involve a broad ecosystem of service and equipment providers with different technology solutions that may factor into the interworking solutions. Additionally, in the wireless context, RTT functionality involves a co-

⁸ *See id.* at 11 (“In particular, the Commission should determine that RTT is an acceptable mechanism to comply with two specific regulations: (1) Rule Section 20.18(c), which requires commercial mobile radio service (CMRS) providers to transmit 911 calls through means other than the mobile radio handset, e.g. TTY, the only current means to meet this requirement; and (2) Rule Section 64.603, which requires common carriers, including VoIP providers, to support toll-free dialing to all relay services, including TTY, via the “711” dialing code.”).

⁹ Rulemaking Petition at 8–9 (“Using an RTT-TTY interworking gateway that AT&T is building into its network, individuals using RTT will be able to communicate with TTY users and all PSAPs, without any added costs to the TTY user or the PSAP.”).



dependency between mobile handsets and the network. There must be support for the feature both on the handset and in the network. TIA recommends that any rules developed by the Commission focus on ensuring *interoperability* among all parts of the RTT system without mandating specific technological solutions. TIA further encourages the Commission to allow for flexibility in the implementation approach as well as a reasonable timeframe if the Commission decides to modify the rules to allow RTT. We believe that an approach allowing RTT to be either built-in or “added later” affording manufacturers needed flexibility would be the most practical approach to enable consumers to have access to an effective solution.

C. TTY Requirements Should Be Waived For All Covered Entities.

Finally, if the Commission decides to waive the TTY requirements, TIA recommends that it do so for all entities covered by the rules. Changes to the rules must provide industry with flexibility in implementation to ensure appropriate interoperability standards can be completed and should enable the ability to leverage new technology standards as they emerge. It would not be in the public interest for manufacturers to have to conform to RTT requirements that are tied to proprietary solutions. Therefore, TIA encourages wireless carriers to work with manufacturers and other stakeholders to ensure a flexible, technology neutral approach to implementation. With a flexible approach, TIA would be supportive of a waiver to begin the process of sun-setting the existing TTY rules.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, TIA agrees with the sentiment that discussion in the form of a rulemaking proceeding is needed about solutions to replace TTY and that AT&T’s RTT approach may be one possible alternative. We emphasize to the Commission, however, that any modification to the



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requirements must incorporate needed flexibility and consideration of the interests of all stakeholders, including handset manufacturers.

Respectfully submitted,

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