AT&T Shouldn't Sunset Disused Voice Network Yet, Calif. Says by Kelcee Griffis - Law360 - August 12, 2021:
https://www.law360.com/articles/1412372/at-t-shouldn-t-sunset-disused-voice-network-yet-calif-says
(only attorneys or academic subscribers can access this article on the web)

Law360 (August 12, 2021, 5:12 PM EDT) -- The **Federal Communications Commission** should prevent AT&T from shutting down part of its legacy voice network in California until state regulators can determine whether the move disadvantages existing customers, according to the **California Public Utilities Commission**.

The regulator asserted Wednesday that the FCC shouldn't automatically grant AT&T's request to discontinue local home telephone services in certain areas with low subscriber numbers, as the state regulator is still reviewing the implications of the phase-out. According to the filing, if the FCC doesn't act, the service will receive regulatory permission to shut down effective Aug. 27 and subscribers will be transitioned to Frontier California Inc.'s network.

"The CPUC wants to ensure AT&T Corp. meets all California's requirements before receiving approval, and if approved, to ensure customer migration does not occur prematurely, cutting off service to customers during the COVID-19 pandemic," the state said.

The regulator also noted that it needs to ensure low-income customers and subscribers on tribal lands aren't inconvenienced during the transition.

On July 13, AT&T notified the FCC of its plans to discontinue "residential local service because demand has declined significantly" and transition the 2,700 affected customers onto Frontier's comparable network in the area. According to a notice AT&T sent to customers, they will be moved from three plan tiers that cost between $40 to $45 per month onto a single Frontier plan priced at $23 a month.Â

"AT&T Corp. is committed to ensuring that each customer has ample time to transition their service and will work with each customer and the new provider, as necessary, to ensure continuity of service if additional time is warranted," the company wrote.

Although AT&T first requested permission from the CPUC to shutter this part of the network, filing an application to discontinue service on May 14, the state said it still hasn't had enough time to wrap up its formal review of the matter.

The CPUC contended that "the FCC should not allow the Section 214 application to become automatically effective and should wait to approve until California completes its review of the state application."

Under the FCC's rules, carriers are required to file so-called Section 214 applications when they wish to stop servicing parts of their networks, sending notices to affected customers and giving the public time to comment on the changes. If the FCC takes no further action, the application is automatically granted at the end of a 31-day period.

--Editing by Jay Jackson Jr.

https://www.law360.com/articles/1412372/at-t-shouldn-t-sunset-disused-voice-network-yet-ca lif-says