



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

December 3, 2019

CBS Operations Inc.
Daniel G. Ryson
1725 DeSales Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Re: Request for Modification and
Waiver of Phase Assignment
WTOG(TV), St. Petersburg, FL
Facility ID No. 74112
LMS File No. 0000086884

Dear Licensee,

On October 18, 2019, CBS Operations Inc. (CBS), the licensee of WTOG(TV), St. Petersburg, Florida (WTOG or Station), filed a *Request for Modification and Waiver of Phase Assignment* requesting to modify the post-incentive auction transition phase assigned to the Station in the *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice* from Phase 7 to Phase 9.¹ For the reasons below, we grant CBS's request for waiver and modify the Station's phase assignment to Phase 9, as conditioned herein.

Background. Pursuant to the *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, individual stations may request waiver and modification of their phase assignment.² A waiver is appropriate where the particular facts would make strict compliance inconsistent with the public interest and deviation from the general rule would relieve hardship, promote equity, or produce a more effective implementation of overall policy on an individual basis.³ The Media Bureau (Bureau) has stated it will evaluate such requests on a case-by-case basis to assess the impact on the transition schedule, including the impact on other broadcasters as well as viewers, in order to facilitate a timely and orderly transition.⁴ The Bureau determined that it would view favorably requests that are compliant with the Commission's rules and

¹ See *Incentive Auction Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice: The Broadcast Television Incentive Auction Closes; Reverse Auction and Forward Auction Results Announced; Final Television Band Channel Assignments Announced; Post-Auction Deadlines Announced*, GN Docket No. 12-268 et al., Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 2786 (WTB & MB 2017) (*Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice*). See LMS File No. 0000086884 Exhibit Supporting Waiver of Phase Assignment Date (Waiver Request).

² See *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Adopt a Post-Incentive Auction Transition Scheduling Plan*, MB Docket No. 16-306 and GN Docket No. 12-268, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 890, 912-14, paras. 47-52 (IATF & MB 2017) (*Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*).

³ See *Northeast Cellular Telephone Co. v. FCC*, 897 F.2d 1164, 1166 (D.C. Cir. 1990); *WAIT Radio v. FCC*, 418 F.2d 1153, 1159 (D.C. Cir. 1969); 47 CFR § 1.3 (waiver for good cause shown). See also *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 913-14, para. 51 and n.171.

⁴ See *id.* at 912-14, paras. 49-52. See also *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Announce Procedures for the Post-Incentive Broadcast Transition*, MB Docket No. 16-306 and GN Docket No. 12-268, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 858, 881-82, para. 73 (IATF & MB 2017).

have little or no impact on the transition schedule.⁵ Requests that the staff determines would be likely to delay or disrupt the transition schedule will be viewed unfavorably.⁶

WTOG is currently licensed to operate on channel 44. It was reassigned to channel 19 in the *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice* and is currently assigned to transition Phase 7, which has a phase testing period start date of October 19, 2019, and a phase completion date of January 17, 2020. The Station is located in the Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida, Designated Market Area (Tampa DMA). A total of 11 stations were repacked in the Tampa DMA, with 10 stations, including WTOG, being assigned to transition Phase 7 and one station being assigned to Phase 9. According to CBS, “despite [its] continuing best efforts, the process of identifying and establishing a viable, long-term site for the [WTOG] main and auxiliary facilities has not yet been successful.”⁷ Initial plans to utilize a broadband antenna with two other stations fell through and staying on the Station’s existing tower is not possible due to structural and environmental concerns.⁸ According to CBS, “prospective sites have been identified [and] negotiations have been initiated with site owners...[h]owever, because specific design work cannot be completed until arrangements are in place progress has been temporarily stalled.”⁹ As a result, CBS requests that the Station’s transition phase assignment be modified from Phase 7 to Phase 9, which has a testing period start date of March 14, 2020, and a phase completion date of May 1, 2020.

CBS states that WTOG is currently operating in the 600 MHz band and asserts that the instant phase change will not create any new linked-station sets or result in increased temporary pairwise interference greater than two percent during the transition period.¹⁰ CBS believes the overall impact on viewers will be minimal as viewers in the Tampa DMA must already rescan during Phase 9.¹¹ Nevertheless, in order to mitigate any viewer disruption caused by the change in phase, CBS commits to conduct additional consumer outreach beyond what is required by the Commission’s rules through additional on-air crawls and social media outreach.¹²

Discussion. Upon review of the facts and circumstances presented, we find that CBS’s request to modify the phase assignment for WTOG to transition to its post-auction channel satisfies the requirement for a waiver and is in the public interest. We agree that changing the Station’s transition phase to Phase 9 should not have an adverse impact on the overall transition schedule or a negative impact on other stations or viewers. Staff has confirmed that the phase change will not create any new linked-station sets or increased temporary pairwise interference. By moving WTOG to Phase 9, the total number of rescan

⁵ *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 912-13, para. 49 and n.163.

⁶ *Id.*; see *Incentive Auction Task Force and Media Bureau Remind Repacked Stations of Certain Post-Auction Transition Requirements and Deadlines*, Public Notice, 33 FCC Rcd 8240, 8244-45, para. 14 (IATF & MB 2018) (*Transition Reminder Public Notice*).

⁷ Waiver Request at 2.

⁸ *Id.* at 2-3.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 3-4. See *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 897, para. 16 (allowing temporary increased pairwise (station-to-station) interference of up to two percent during the transition period).

¹¹ Waiver Request at 4.

¹² *Id.*

periods in the Tampa DMA will remain the same.¹³ To ensure that viewers are fully informed about the repack and to minimize any viewer confusion caused by the Station's change in phase, CBS has agreed to increase consumer education and outreach beyond what is required by the Commission's rules. Modifying WTOG's transition phase will ensure that the Station is able to continue to serve its viewers without interruption. As a result, we find the facts and circumstances discussed above outweigh any viewer burden caused by a change in the Station's transition plans or a short delay in access by wireless licensees to the Station's pre-auction channel.

We remind CBS that pursuant to the Spectrum Act, the Station is eligible for reimbursement from the TV Broadcast Relocation Fund (Fund) of costs "reasonably incurred . . . in order for the licensee to relocate its television service from one channel to the other."¹⁴ Additional expenses incurred such as expenses resulting from changes in a Station's transition plan that are not related to the post-incentive auction channel change, may not be reimbursable from the Fund.

Accordingly, we **GRANT** CBS's *Request for Modification and Waiver of Phase Assignment* and modify the transition phase assignment for WTOG **from Phase 7 to Phase 9**, subject to all the commitments made in its waiver request and compliance with all Commission rules applicable to transitioning stations.¹⁵ Testing on the Station's post-auction channel **may not begin until 12:01 am local time on March 14, 2020**, and WTOG is required to cease operating on its pre-auction

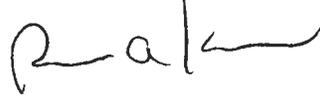
¹³ *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 898-99, paras. 20-21 (establishing a two rescan periods per DMA limitation for assigning stations to transition phases).

¹⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 1452(b)(4)(A)(i). *See also Incentive Auction R&O*, 29 FCC Rcd at 6821, para. 622 ("The appropriate scope of 'costs reasonably incurred' necessarily will have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.").

¹⁵ *See generally* 47 CFR § 73.3700 and *Transition Reminder Public Notice*, 33 FCC Rcd 8240.

channel no later than 11:59 pm local time on May 1, 2020.¹⁶ The Station's construction permit expiration date will also be modified to correspond to its new phase completion date.¹⁷

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Kreisman
Chief, Video Division
Media Bureau

Cc: (via electronic mail):
Daniel Ryson, Esq.
Anne Lucey, Esq.

¹⁶ Each transition phase has a designated testing period on which a station in that phase may begin testing equipment on its new channel and a designated phase completion date when a station must cease operation on its pre-auction channel. The phase completion date is the date that will be listed in that station's construction permit as its construction deadline and is the date the station must cease operation on its pre-auction channel. *See Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 2806, para. 64. A station that commences testing on its post-auction channel before the beginning of its assigned testing period will be operating in violation of Commission rules.

¹⁷ *Id.* ("The phase completion date is...[also] the date listed in each station's construction permit as its construction deadline"). If a station must commence operations on its post-auction channel at variance from the parameters authorized in its construction permit, it must file for and be granted special temporary authority prior to commencing operations. *See* 47 CFR § 73.1635. A station that needs additional time to complete construction of its post-auction facility beyond its construction permit expiration date must file for a 180-day extension of its construction permit in accordance with Section 73.3700(b)(5)(iv). Stations needing additional time to construct after a 180-day extension is granted, will be subject to the Commission's tolling provisions. 47 CFR § 73.3700(b)(5)(iv). Grant of an extension of time to construct does not relieve a station of the requirement that it ceases operation on its pre-auction channel by its assigned phase completion date.