



Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554

February 24, 2020

KTKA Television, LLC  
Thomas J. Vaughan  
3121 Rivershore Lane  
Port Charlotte, FL 33953

Re: Request for Modification and  
Waiver of Phase Assignment  
KTKA-TV, Topeka, KS  
Facility ID No. 49397  
LMS File No. 0000105761

Dear Licensee,

On February 10, 2020, KTKA Television, LLC (KTL), the licensee of KTKA-TV, Topeka, Kansas (KTKA-TV 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 8 to Phase 10.<sup>1</sup> For the reasons below, we grant KTL's request for waiver and modify the Station's phase assignment to Phase 10, as conditioned herein.

*Background.* Pursuant to the *Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*, individual stations may request waiver and modification of their phase assignment.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> The Bureau determined that it would view favorably requests that are compliant with the Commission's rules and

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<sup>1</sup> 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. 0000105761, Transition Phase Wavier Request (Waiver Request).

<sup>2</sup> 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 (MB 2017) (*Transition Scheduling Adoption Public Notice*).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 (MB 2017).

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

KTKA-TV is currently licensed to operate on channel 49. It was reassigned to channel 16 in the *Closing and Channel Reassignment Public Notice* and is currently assigned to transition Phase 8, which had a phase testing period start date of January 18, 2020, and has a phase completion date of March 13, 2020. The Station is located in the Topeka, Kansas, Designated Market Area (Topeka DMA). A total of two stations were repacked in the Topeka DMA, with both stations, including KTKA-TV, being assigned to transition Phase 8. According to KTL, KTKA's transition has been delayed by weather and tower access issues as the result of other collocated tenants.<sup>7</sup> As a result, KTL requests that the Station's transition phase assignment be modified from Phase 8 to Phase 10, which has a testing period start date of May 2, 2020, and a phase completion date of July 3, 2020.

KTL states that because the Station is currently operating in the 600 MHz band it will not cause any interference issues to any other broadcast stations by changing its transition phase.<sup>8</sup> In its request, KTL acknowledges that the number of rescan periods could increase,<sup>9</sup> but that KTMJ-CD, Topeka, Kansas, is simultaneously requesting a phase change to Phase 10<sup>10</sup> which, if granted, would mean that the number of rescan periods in the Topeka DMA will remain at one. In order to mitigate any viewer disruption caused by the change in phase and additional rescan period, KTL commits to providing additional consumer outreach beyond what is required by the Commission's rules through the use of its digital and social media outlets, including the station's website.<sup>11</sup>

*Discussion.* Upon review of the facts and circumstances presented, we find that KTL's request to modify the phase assignment for KTKA-TV 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 10 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 KTKA-TV to Phase 10, the total number of rescan periods in the Topeka DMA will remain the same since we are concurrently granting KTMJ-TV's phase change request.<sup>12</sup> To ensure that viewers are fully informed about the repack and to minimize any viewer confusion caused by the Station's change in phase, KTL has agreed to increase consumer education and outreach beyond what is required by the Commission's rules. Modifying KTKA-TV's transition phase will ensure that the Station is able to continue to serve its

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

<sup>6</sup> *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*).

<sup>7</sup> Waiver Request at 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 3. 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).

<sup>9</sup> Waiver Request at 3.

<sup>10</sup> See LMS File No. 0000105619.

<sup>11</sup> Waiver Request at 3.

<sup>12</sup> See LMS File No. 0000105619.

viewers without interruption. As a result, we find the facts and circumstances discussed above outweigh any viewer burden caused by an increase in the number of rescan periods in the Topeka DMA and a short delay in access by wireless licensees to the Station's pre-auction channel.

We remind KTL 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."<sup>13</sup> 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** KTL's *Request for Modification and Waiver of Phase Assignment* and modify the transition phase assignment for KTKA-TV **from Phase 8 to Phase 10**, subject to all the commitments made in its waiver request and compliance with all Commission rules applicable to transitioning stations.<sup>14</sup> Testing on the Station's post-auction channel **may not begin until 12:01 am local time on May 2, 2020**, and KTKA-TV is required to cease operating on its pre-auction channel **no later than 11:59 pm local time on July 3, 2020**.<sup>15</sup> The Station's construction permit expiration date will also be modified to correspond to its new phase completion date.<sup>16</sup>

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Kreisman  
Chief, Video Division  
Media Bureau

Cc: (via electronic mail): Glenn S. Richards, Esq.

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<sup>13</sup> 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.").

<sup>14</sup> *See generally* 47 CFR § 73.3700 and *Transition Reminder Public Notice*, 33 FCC Rcd 8240.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> *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.