

WTTW(TV) – Request for Extension of STA
LMS File No. 87046

Window to the World Communications, Inc., licensee of noncommercial educational TV station WTTW(TV), Chicago, Illinois (“WTTW”), hereby requests a six month extension of its special temporary authority to operate from an interim antenna pending construction of its permanent post-auction facilities. As set forth herein, WTTW has been unable to construct its permanent facilities due to rare and exceptional circumstances beyond its control and thus continued STA is necessary.

Background

WTTW was assigned to transition from Channel 47 to Channel 25 in Phase 6 of the repack. WTTW’s repack plan called for, among other things, replacement of the station’s main antenna, which is to be located on the west tower at Willis Tower in Chicago. Due to engineering, weather, and permitting considerations, the installation of the west tower antenna authorized under the WTTW construction permit was not able to be completed in time to meet the October 18 phase transition date. Additionally, WTTW experienced an equipment failure on its pre-repack channel in late August, 2019, forcing the station to operate with reduced power in the months leading up to the end of Phase 6 (*see* LMS File No. 82400). To restore full-power over-the-air service to its viewers and avoid a catastrophic equipment failure, WTTW decided to transition to Channel 25 operations on October 15, 2019, rather than on October 18, 2019, when most other stations in the Chicago DMA began broadcasting on their post-repack channels. Because Willis Tower is a shared transmission site hosting primary and auxiliary facilities for multiple television broadcasters on two separate towers, all of WTTW’s repack work has been, and will continue to be, subject to extensive coordination.

As a result of these challenges, WTTW was unable to utilize its authorized main antenna at the start of channel 25 operations when it transitioned on the morning of October 15, 2019. WTTW did, however, transition as required to channel 25 operations utilizing interim facilities and is currently operating on these interim facilities pursuant to a grant of special temporary authority (*see* LMS File No. 87046). WTTW had hoped to transition to its permanent facilities by the end of 2019, but the station and its contractors encountered weather delays that prevented installation during the Chicago winter. Now installation of WTTW’s new antenna and one of the two needed air conditioning units has been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, WTTW’s contractors cannot say when they might be able to complete installation.

It currently appears almost certain that the installation of WTTW’s permanent facilities will not occur before the April 15, 2020, expiration of WTTW’s construction permit and STA. By a separate filing, WTTW is requesting tolling of its repack construction permit. WTTW therefore requests an extension of its existing STA to allow it to provide continued service to its viewers pending construction of its permanent facilities.