

Satellite System May Include Alaska

Briefing Senator Ted Stevens recently, MCI Lockheed Satellite Corporation stated they have a proposal pending before the Federal Communications Commission that could include Alaska in a national satellite communications system.

Based on a distance insensitive rate structure, Lockheed's multiple use satellite could provide long distance audio and video communication intra-state and interstate at less cost than current long distance communications.

Distance insensitive means that satellite technology costs have no relationship to distance. Current costs are based on the distance of communications over land lines, but a satellite can deliver a signal to any point in its area of coverage at almost a uniform cost.

Lockheed's satellite would

contain a total of 48 transponders — which are transmit-receive units. At least four transponders would be devoted to Alaska use.

Each unit could handle between 200 and 400 voice circuits. Roughly equivalent to the circuiting required for one video channel for television.

Senator Stevens advised the Lockheed delegation he would only support a satellite system that would provide video capability (TV) to Alaska without extra carrying charges to be borne by Alaskan residents.

He said, "Rural Alaskans live behind a cultural curtain and that is highly detrimental to children, in particular. Television will make the difference whether or not they will be subject to cultural lag, and be able to compete with children from

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Satellite . . .

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the lower 48.

The economy of rural Alaska cannot support even nominal carrying charges for a TV signal. Therefore, it is essential that a proposed national satellite system have the ability to deliver TV signals to Alaskans on the same basis as anywhere else in the U.S. — without additional cost."

Senator Stevens said he believes the technology is there but the understanding of Alaska's unique needs has not been considered in the early planning stages. The senator complimented Lockheed to provide for Alaska's needs when they refine their proposal for FCC action.