

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

Docket No. 7168

Joint Petition of AT&T, Inc., BellSouth)
Corporation, and BellSouth Long Distance, Inc.,)
for Approval of a Transfer of Control)

Order entered: 6/7/2006

I. INTRODUCTION

On March 31, 2006, AT&T, Inc. ("AT&T"), BellSouth Corporation ("BellSouth"), and BellSouth Long Distance, Inc. ("BSLD") (together the "Petitioners"), filed a Telecommunications Merger and/or Acquisition Request for Approval Form ("Application") and petition ("Petition") requesting authority from the Vermont Public Service Board ("Board"), pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 107, for approval of the transfer of control of BSLD to AT&T, through a merger between AT&T and Bellsouth.

On April 24 and June 1, 2006, the Vermont Department of Public Service ("Department") filed letters with the Board recommending the Board approve the transfer of control because the proposed transaction would not detrimentally impact Vermont consumers or cause them inconvenience or confusion. The Department further recommended the Board approve the Application without further investigation or hearing.

The Board has reviewed the Application and the accompanying documents and agrees that approval should be granted without hearing.

II. FINDINGS OF FACT

Based upon the Application and accompanying documents, we hereby make the following findings of fact.

1. BSLD was issued a Certificate of Public Good (CPG No. 321) to provide telecommunications services in Vermont on March 20, 1998. The CPG was amended on August 30, 2005, to allow service to the local exchange. BSLD is a wholly-owned subsidiary of BellSouth. Application at 1.

2. AT&T and BellSouth are not authorized to provide telecommunications services in

Vermont. Application at 1-2.

3. Pursuant to the merger of AT&T and BellSouth, Bellsouth will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of AT&T and AT&T will acquire indirect control of BSLD. Petition at 2.

4. Following the transaction, BSLD will continue to operate under its current name and tariff. Accordingly, the transfer will not cause any inconvenience for Vermont consumers. Application at 3-4.

5. The proposed transaction will promote the public interest by enhancing the ability of BSLD to provide more innovative products, which may, in turn, lead to the increased telecommunications competition in Vermont. Application at 6.

III. DISCUSSION

The proposed transaction requires approval by the Board under 30 V.S.A § 107. This statute conditions approval of a proposed transfer of control upon findings that the transfer of control will promote the public good (30 V.S.A § 107). This standard is met in this case.

Under 30 V.S.A. § 107(a), "[n]o company shall directly or indirectly acquire a controlling interest in any company subject to the jurisdiction of the [Board] . . . without the approval of the [Board]." "Controlling interest" is defined as "ten percent or more of the outstanding voting securities of a company" or such other interest as the Board determines "to constitute the means to direct or cause the direction of the management or policies of a company." 30 V.S.A. § 107(c)(1).¹ In order to approve the acquisition of such a controlling interest, the Board must first find that it will "promote the public good." 30 V.S.A. § 107(b).

After reviewing the Application, we conclude that 30 V.S.A. § 107 applies because the transaction contemplated will result in BSLD becoming an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of AT&T. We further conclude that the transfer of control will not affect the services that BSLD currently provide to customers. BSLD will continue to offer service at the same rates, terms and conditions. The proposed transaction will also allow BSLD to strengthen its competitive position, which may, in turn, result in enhanced competition among providers of telecommunications services in Vermont. The resulting transfer of control, therefore, will

1. The statute also provides that "[t]he presumption that ten percent or more of the outstanding voting securities of a company constitutes a controlling interest may be rebutted by a company under procedures established by the board by rule." 30 V.S.A. § 107(c)(1).

promote the public good. For all of these reasons, we conclude that the proposed transaction meets the standards set forth in 30 V.S.A. § 107 and should be approved.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The transfer of control of BSLD should be approved because the transaction will promote the public good of the State of Vermont and will not result in obstructing or preventing competition. 30 V.S.A. § 107(b).

V. ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED by the Public Service Board of the State of Vermont that:

1. The transfer of control of BellSouth Long Distance, Inc., will promote the public good and, therefore, is approved.
2. Petitioners shall file a letter notifying the Board of the completion of the transaction within one week of such completion.

DATED at Montpelier, Vermont, this 7th day of June, 2006.

s/James Volz)	PUBLIC SERVICE
)	
)	
s/David C. Coen)	BOARD
)	
)	
s/John D. Burke)	OF VERMONT

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: June 7, 2006

Attest: s/Susan M. Hudson
Clerk of the Board

NOTICE TO READERS: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Board (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: Clerk@psb.state.vt.us).

Appeal of this decision to the Supreme Court of Vermont must be filed with the Clerk of the Board within thirty days. Appeal will not stay the effect of this Order, absent further Order by this Board or appropriate action by the Supreme Court of Vermont. Motions for reconsideration or stay, if any, must be filed with the Clerk of the Board within ten days of the date of this decision and order.