



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF T-MOBILE
BEFORE THE 35TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, & TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

January 24, 2024

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Housing, Transportation & Telecommunications, Senators, legislative staff, and all present today. T-Mobile appreciates the opportunity to again appear before this Committee to discuss the current status and the future of telecommunications in the Territory as well as other topics. T-Mobile provides the following written testimony to this honorable Committee outlining T-Mobile's services and operations in the Territory.

Almost two years ago T-Mobile launched its brand in the territory, after its merger with Sprint. We operate two stores, located in St Thomas and St Croix, bringing top quality wireless service, competitive rate plans and best in class customer service to Virgin Islanders.

I. Ongoing network or other issues impacting the quality of service.

T-Mobile offers wireless services for both consumers and businesses through our retail and other channels across the nation, including the USVI. T-Mobile currently has no fixed broadband service and backhaul for T-Mobile is provided by third party vendors.

T-Mobile continuously searches for initiatives and opportunities that advance the public interest, while investing corporate capital to building and renewing a wireless infrastructure that accommodates the growing consumer demand across the U.S. Virgin Islands. The goal is to improve speeds, coverage, and quality. Our investment includes new updates to wireless towers, antennas, and small cells to transmit 5G wireless signals that form the backbone of next-generation networks. Our efforts to date have paid off and as per an independent third-party report published by Ookla®, T-Mobile is the fastest 5G network in the USVI.

Faster, more responsive, and able to connect more devices, 5G will help unlock innovation and investment. 5G can bring a wide range of economic and social benefits to the USVI, including creating new jobs in technology and access to health care and education—issues and opportunities that are often underserved in smaller communities.



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II. Status of present infrastructure projects and plans for future developments.

As the wireless industry evolves to 5G, older technologies networks have been retired. T-Mobile retired its UMTS networks to free up resources and spectrum that will help us strengthen our entire network and move all customers to more advanced technologies like 4G, and 5G networks providing a more feature-rich experience for customers. As a result of T-Mobile's aggressive campaign to modernize the wireless service in the USVI, the vast majority of T-Mobile customers now have 5G compatible phones. To further maintain connectivity, T-Mobile utilizes 600MHz, low band spectrum technology on its cell sites for better indoor coverage and longer-range outdoor coverage.

In terms of coverage, T-Mobile has expanded coverage in areas that had been identified as having connectivity issues. During the last months of 2023, T-Mobile invested in three new cellular sites: St. John West, Blue Mountain, St. Croix and Tutu Wintberg Peak in St. Thomas. As mentioned in the previous hearing, a new site was approved for St. John and is expected to be in service by March 2024. T-Mobile also expects to deploy two more sites in St. Thomas later this year. T-Mobile continues to identify suitable sites to further improve coverage and capacity.

As part of our continuity and contingency plan, T-Mobile has installed battery backup banks in one hundred percent (100%) of our cell sites and over than ninety percent (90%) have generators as redundancy in case of a power outage. T-Mobile is committed to safeguarding the interests of our customers, employees, and stakeholders in the event of an emergency or significant business disruption. As a result, T-Mobile maintains an enterprise-wide Business Continuity Program designed to provide effective responses to a wide variety of disruptive events. Our Response Team is ready to provide cross functional operational and logistical support in the event of an emergency for prompt situational assessment of business impacts, support requests, employee assistance, security measures, materials supply and complementary emergency resources.

T-Mobile maintains organized and integrated disaster plans and procedures. T-Mobile has made a significant investment in our network's redundancy, reliability, and resiliency. For times when impacts are unavoidable, we have a fleet of rapid response equipment (Generators, COWs & Satellite technology) situated strategically across the country to facilitate expeditious recovery. These multi-layered investments are designed to deliver best-in-class service continuity.





III. Plans for improving and expanding customer service.

At T-Mobile, we are customer obsessed. That's what inspires us and drives us to look for new ways to keep our customers seamlessly connected to what they love. In 2014, we became "The Uncarrier," a business model based on listening to the customer and addressing the industries' pain-points.

Our Customer Service, which we call Care, has been consistently recognized for its superior service by entities such as JD Power. Our Care model is a Total Experience approach, customer centric, where Retail stores, Engineering and Care report to the same organization. We can identify customer pain points and provide a resolution faster. Care has tech agents that can evaluate technical-impacting issues and escalate with Engineering resources, as needed. T-Mobile seeks to listen to its customers and monitors any potential issues in its social media network, customer service calls and customer service surveys to immediately address any concerns and proactively provides guidance to customers on how to request assistance from our team of experts when needed.

For this reason, T-Mobile will invest approximately \$500,000.00 to update and upgrade our St. Croix retail location and undergo major renovations, similar to those made to the St. Thomas retail location in 2023. Remodeling is scheduled to begin the first week of March and is expected to be completed by May 2024. In order to maintain the continuity of our services during this construction period, a trailer pop up store with the capacity to provide all of our on-site services, will be imported so as not to interrupt the quality of service that T-Mobile strive to provide to its customers. Both retail locations are set up as Emergency Hubs and are equipped with all necessary items to support store personnel and to assist customers after a catastrophic event.

T-Mobile is not only investing in its infrastructure, but it is also investing in customer service. T-Mobile now has a certified technician based in St. Thomas to ensure that a qualified person is available and can address any issues with our network in a timely manner. Further, to support our technician and customers, T-Mobile has a warehouse established on St. Thomas with an inventory of parts to repair our systems quickly and properly to avoid service interruption for our subscribers.

We have expanded our call center hours, from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. for the benefit of our subscribers. We have also engaged bilingual customer service representatives to





better assist our customers. Regarding customer service, an independent third-party conducts and monitors most of our customer service surveys, helping us maintain the objectivity and neutrality of the process and turn the data received into actionable plans to improve our customers' experience. According to surveys received in the last quarter of 2023, 9.3 out of 10 are very satisfied with the service received, 87% responded that the situation for which they went to request service was resolved during the first interaction, and 7 out of 10 recommend T-Mobile as a wireless provider to others.

T-Mobile maintains USVI specific handles in various social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which are specially catered to residents of the Territory. T-Mobile's Marketing Team is strategically expanding its efforts and investment to boost traffic and followers on these social media channels, aiming to enhance online presence and engagement. We have also engaged the services of local talent for our marketing campaigns.

In addition, eligible USVI subscribers were recently included in our base communications via MMS and SMS so they will have first notice of offers, services and products.

IV. Issues and challenges regarding coordination between telecommunications providers and government agencies.

T-Mobile continues to establish its presence and brand in the Virgin Islands of United States and would like to acknowledge the assistance received from government agencies and local functionaries whenever needed.

Since our launch in territory back in 2022, T-Mobile and its Engineering Team have been working in strengthening the network and availability of 5G and other technologies for our clients in the Territory. In doing so, the main barrier or obstacle has been obtaining permitting and the long process to defend those permits when duly obtained but challenged by neighbors or other entities. The challenge process may last years, creating uncertainty about investment, delaying the development of our network and making it very difficult to find places to develop new telecommunications sites. Also, and related to technology, our team's experience is that it can be very difficult and bureaucratic to set up new accounts for power service and to have new power meters installed.





V. Affordability of internet access in general

T-Mobile's Regulatory and Government Affairs team are constantly looking into federal programs and funding opportunities to continue bringing affordable and best in class internet access to the Territory and particularly to its students.

Although T-Mobile is not a participant of the Affordable Connectivity Program, we are closely monitoring any developments from the Federal Communications Commission and Congress, as this program is scheduled to wind down by April 2024 unless additional funding is assigned by Congress.

