DOCKET NO. 126 - AN APPLICATION OF METRO MOBILE CTS OF HARTFORD, INC., FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF A CELLULAR TELEPHONE TOWER AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT IN THE CITY OF HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT.	:	Connecticut Siting Council
	:	April 9, 1990

O P I N I O N

On September 28, 1989, Metro Mobile CTS of Hartford, Inc., (Metro Mobile) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) to construct, maintain, and operate a cellular telecommunications tower, associated equipment, and building in the City of Hartford, Connecticut.

A determination of public need for cellular telephone service has been pre-empted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Under Connecticut State law, the Council must balance the need to develop the proposed site as a cellular telephone facility with the need to protect the environment, including public health and safety.

In finding a proposed tower site, an applicant must locate a site or existing tower to share, offering the necessary coverage that would not have a substantial effect on the environment and be adequately distant from wetlands, public recreation areas, and adjacent homes. Because Metro Mobile does not have the authority to take land through eminent domain, acquisition of a site requires consent of the property owners to lease or sell the property. These requirements restrict the number of potential tower sites within defined search areas.

The proposed or alternate site would function as a secondary cellular facility, located near the intersection of three existing, primary cellular facilities in Hartford, Bloomfield, and Windsor, Connecticut. Cellular service demand is soon expected to exceed the call-handling capacity of the facilities in Hartford and Windsor. The proposed Hartford site would provide additional overlapping coverage between these three cells for the continuous transfer of calls in the Hartford-Bloomfield-Windsor region, in which there are presently weak signals and interference. The proposed and alternate sites would provide similar coverage and call-handling capability throughout the area.

The proposed site would be leased and developed along the north-western boundary of a privately owned 1.83-acre lot located at 439-455 Homestead Avenue. The proposed 153-foot, self-supporting monopole tower and antenna structure would be located approximately 10 feet east of a CL&P right-of-way which has 115-kV electric utility lines and 15 feet east of an abandoned railroad line owned by the Connecticut DOT. The fall zone of the tower could encompass a commercial laundry building on the lessor's property, CL&P transmission lines, and a car wash on abutting property to the north of the lessor's property. Metro Mobile would construct a single story equipment building, measuring 20 feet by 30 feet, on the site. Vehicle access to the proposed site would be over an existing driveway on land of the lessor. Utilities would be routed overhead from existing lines along the western boundary of the lessor's property. No site clearing or backfilling would be required at the site.

The alternate site would be leased and located on the western boundary of a 1.63-acre lot at 45 Granby Street. The 153-foot, self-supporting monopole tower and antenna structure would be located 70 feet east of a CL&P right-of-way with 115-kV electric lines and 30 feet east of an abandoned railroad line owned by the Connecticut DOT. The fall zone of the alternate tower could encompass a church on the lessor's property and CL&P transmission lines. A single story equipment building, measuring 20 feet by 30 feet, would be constructed on the site. Vehicle access to the cell site would be over an existing gravel driveway on a proposed 25-foot wide easement through land of the lessor. Utilities from existing utility poles along Granby Street would be routed to the facility. Removal of small shrubs would be required.

Electromagnetic radio frequency power density is a health and safety concern of the Council. However, the power density level measured at the base of the proposed and alternate towers would be 0.0737 milliwatts per square centimeter (mW/cm^2). This power density is well below the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) safety standard of 2.92 mW/cm^2, as adopted by the State in Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-162. The power density would rapidly decrease as distance from the tower increases.

No wetlands or watercourses exist at either site. No water flow and/or quality changes would be expected to result from the construction and operation of either the proposed or the alternate facilities.

There are no existing records of federally endangered or threatened species or Connecticut species of special concern occurring in the area of the proposed or alternate sites, according to the latest available information from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Natural Resources Center.

The proposed site is located in an industrial zone and is surrounded by commercial land uses in the immediate area, with industrial uses intermixed to the south. Visual impact in the immediate area of the site would be to automobile traffic along Albany Avenue, Homestead Avenue, and Westbourne Parkway, which are major traffic arteries.

At the commercially zoned alternate site, the visual impact shifts to residential receptors. To the west, north, and east of the alternate site are residential properties and dwellings.

Although both the proposed and alternate sites would have fall zones that extend onto property and structures of abutting property owners, the area of the sites is well developed with commercial and industrial services. Consequently, it is not likely that these services would be affected, visually or otherwise. The development of a cellular telecommunications tower at either of these locations would be an efficient and suitable site location and would have few environmental effects. Because the proposed site is in an already heavily urbanized and non-residential area, and visual impacts would be limited to passing traffic, it is superior to the alternate tower site, as the alternate tower would be visible to permanent residences in the immediate area.

The proposed tower's fall zone is in very close proximity to electric transmission lines and commercial structures. Because of this possible safety hazard, the Council will order that the tower be designed and constructed of a higher standard to withstand 125 mph winds with two-inch radial ice accumulation.

Based on its record in this proceeding, the Council is of the opinion that the effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of a cellular tower and associated equipment building at the proposed site, including the effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; public health and safety; scenic, historic, and recreational values; forests and parks; air and water purity; and fish and wildlife are not significant either alone or cumulatively with other effects, are not in conflict with the policies of the State concerning such effects, and are not sufficient reason to deny the application for the proposed site.

The Council will require Metro Mobile to submit a Development and Management (D&M) plan for approval prior to the commencement of any construction at the proposed site. This D&M plan shall include detailed plans of the site preparation with a soil boring report; plans, design details, and specifications for the tower foundation; and a site plan with placement of the tower as far removed from abutting properties and structures as possible.