

# FAQ for Franchise Agreement



## **What is a franchise fee?**

A franchise fee is a fee charged by local governments to utilities and other private companies that use public land, such as rights-of-way, to conduct business. The franchise fee is a fee charged to companies to compensate for the use of public property. In the case of cable television, the FCC has ruled that cable companies MAY itemize that fee on their bills and pass the fee through to the consumer. They are not required to do so.

## **Why does the franchise fee fluctuate?**

The franchise fee is a percentage of gross revenue. As revenue varies, the fee will vary. Various court rulings have adjusted the percentage that is collected but it should remain in the vicinity of 5%.

## **Why is Charter Communications the only cable company in St. Tammany Parish?**

At this time, Charter Communications is the only cable company that has requested a franchise to do this type of business in the parish. Charter has a franchise from the parish to provide service but it is not an exclusive franchise. St. Tammany Parish welcomes competition.

## **Is Charter Communications allowed to raise rates?**

Charter Communications is a private business and as such has control over its pricing policy. The industry was deregulated in 1996.

## **What cable issues does St. Tammany Parish regulate?**

The federal government has restricted local government oversight on rates to the minimum basic package only. The Parish does, however, regulate customer service concerns, installations, and other service issues. If you have an issue with a cable company, call 898-5243.

## **How do I reach Charter Communications?**

Call 1-888-821-4559. If you have difficulty in obtaining service from Charter, please call St. Tammany Parish at 898-5243, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. You may also e-mail a request to [chartercomplaints@stpgov.org](mailto:chartercomplaints@stpgov.org).

## **I have a new home. Do I have to pay to have cable brought to my house?**

The Parish's agreement with Charter states that the company will provide free lines from the rights-of-way to your home up to 200 feet. If the extension is longer than 200 feet, you may be charged a per foot fee.

### **When will cable be available in my new subdivision?**

Charter must install cable to all new subdivisions located within one-half mile of existing cable no later than six months after other utilities are installed providing fifty percent of the lots are under construction. Regardless of home construction, service must be provided within one year if the new subdivision is within one-half mile of existing cable.

### **I live in a rural area. When will I receive cable?**

Service must be made available within 45 days under the following conditions: The proposed area must be contiguous to an existing service area. The population shall have at least fifteen dwellings per mile where 70% of the residents express a willingness in writing to subscribe to cable services.

### **How do I make a formal complaint about the cable company?**

Write to St. Tammany Parish Cable Franchise Authority, P.O. Box 628, Covington, LA 70434.

### **How do I reach the Federal Communications Commission?**

Call 1-888-CALL-FCC or 1-888-225-5322