



Notice of Ex Parte

17-79 – Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment

March 15, 2018

To the Chairman and Commissioners of the FCC,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback during the rulemaking process. Avista Utilities continues to work very closely with wireless carriers and infrastructure providers in the rapid deployment of wireless service throughout our entire service territory. As a utility facility owner, Avista appreciates the Federal Communication Commission's efforts to streamline more efficient deployment policies while maintaining local authorities' abilities to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of their communities. The ability to protect and enhance neighborhood aesthetics is a core function of city government and one in which Avista gladly participates. We feel that it is paramount for electric utilities to maintain individual discretion to establish safety requirements, while respecting possible aesthetic impacts in the right of way. Avista has created standards to not only meet those needs but to conform to the expectations of governing authorities, property owners and citizens. We strongly believe that this is the best approach for the expedient roll out of these burgeoning technologies.

I am writing you today to express my concern regarding the interpretation of the Commission's proposed small cell exclusion definition that would hinder and not enhance the deployment of new small cell attachments. I believe that, if adopted as written, the revised language would in some cases produce deployments that are more unsightly not less so. This would undoubtedly undermine the very purpose of protecting aesthetics that we presume the Commission intends to preserve. Our priorities must and always will remain the safe and reliable delivery of energy but Avista is committed to the accommodation of wireless broadband facilities. Facility owners must be able to make decisions that work best for their stakeholders and public partners. In recently constructed deployments, working in partnership with one of our wireless partners, we decided, mutually for safety and aesthetic reasons, to consolidate all small cell equipment into a single streamlined unit for pole top attachments. The proposed 3rd feet limit for each antenna would require the unit to be sectionalized therefore taking up more space on the pole, siting equipment on the ground in the right of way, and creating access issues for utility workers who also access the pole for other reasons. We urge the Commission to err on the side of local discretion, in respect to enclosures that support local aesthetic determinations, by making it clear that the 3rd feet limit applies to the antenna only. That change would provide clarity in situations where equipment enclosures would support aesthetic requirements and safety goals while still including the definition of small cells. This appreciated flexibility will serve the goal of efficient and expedient deployments that is shared by utilities, jurisdiction's having authority, wireless carriers and the Commission.

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