

May 2, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

Over the past week, representatives of Ligado Networks LLC (“Ligado”) have been meeting with Commission staff to discuss the draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) to reallocate the 1675-1680 MHz band from exclusive use by federal users to shared use between those federal operations and new, non-federal terrestrial wireless use<sup>1</sup> and to discuss the critical importance of lower mid-band spectrum to the future of 5G.

Ligado commends the Commission for moving forward with the NPRM. We are pleased that the NPRM initiates implementation of a policy goal of reallocating this band, which has been supported by two successive Administrations and embraced by Congress on a bipartisan basis over many years. Ligado hopes the Commission moves promptly to a final order that will establish a process to auction or assign for a fee this spectrum band.

As Ligado has made clear repeatedly over the past three years, reallocation of the 1675-1680 MHz band to shared terrestrial use is an essential component of Ligado’s spectrum plan to make 40 megahertz of lower mid-band spectrum available for 5G services, including Internet of Things (“IoT”) services. Ligado’s proposed spectrum plan will make available in the near-term a substantial block of mid-band spectrum that will fill a gap in the Commission’s well-developed “all of the above” 5G spectrum policy. As the Commission knows, and as has been widely-reported, mid-band spectrum is needed to complement other higher-band spectrum to ensure we have the coverage and mobility our next generation networks will require, and to help the United States keep pace with other nations.

Ligado commends the Commission for proposing in the NPRM generally the same service rules as those that apply for the 1670-1675 MHz band. However, there are two key deviations that could interfere with the maximization of this spectrum: the proposal to license the band on a partial economic area (“PEA”) basis rather than to offer a national license and the proposal to use the spectrum as only a downlink band. Both of these provisions are quite different from the Commission’s rules for the 1670-1675 MHz band. The proposal to license it on a PEA geographic basis is challenging in this particular context given the need for close coordination with the 1670-1675 MHz band, since there is no guard band separating the two

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<sup>1</sup> See *In the Matter of Allocation and Service Rules for the 1675–1680 MHz Band*, Draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WT Docket No. 19-116 (rel. Apr. 18, 2019), available at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-357088A1.pdf>.

bands, and the 1670-1675 MHz band is licensed on a national basis. In addition, a PEA licensing scheme here could lead to inefficient utilization of the band. As the NPRM itself recognizes, 5G service will be particularly useful for powering IoT technologies, and some of the greatest demand for IoT service will come from industrial users, such as transportation or logistics providers, who are national enterprises that require a provider in all geographies. Given the need for close coordination with the 1670-1675 MHz band, that outcome could lead to the inefficient allocation of this prime, lower mid-band spectrum, and a delay in deployment during those coordination negotiations that the United States simply cannot afford.

The other deviation is in the proposal to have this spectrum designated for downlink only. The rules for the 1670-1675 MHz band permit use of that band for uplink, downlink, or TDD. Given the critical need for close coordination of these two bands, we would ask that the NPRM invite comment on whether the 1675-1680 MHz band should also be permitted to be used for uplink, downlink, or TDD.

The NPRM rightly points out that this band is limited in size. As a result, it is especially important to make efficient use of every kilohertz. One way to do that is to align the band plan for this spectrum with the band plan for the adjacent spectrum by allocating this spectrum on a national basis and allowing the licensee the flexibility it needs to coordinate with the neighboring licensee. We respectfully urge the Commission to do so.

We hope the Commission will consider the important issues raised here and seek input on them as they are relevant to the usability and value of this spectrum as the Commission decides how to auction or assign this spectrum.

We appreciate your leadership and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ivan Seidenberg  
Chairman



Doug Smith  
Chief Executive Officer