

June 14, 2019

**Ex Parte**

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Transforming the 2.5 GHz Band*, WT Docket No. 18-120

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On Thursday, June 13, 2019, the following parties met with Erin McGrath, Legal Advisor to Commissioner Michael O’Rielly, and Christopher McGillen, Legal Intern for Commissioner O’Rielly, about the above-captioned proceeding: Jim Goldstein and Gardner Foster from Sprint Corporation, Steve Coran on behalf of Wireless Internet Service Providers Association (WISPA) and Midcontinent Communications (MidCo), Mary O’Connor on behalf of Wireless Communications Association International (WCAI), Ed Lavergne on behalf of the Catholic Technology Network, Todd Gray on behalf of the National EBS Association (NEBSA), John Schwartz, President, Voqal and Stephanie Weiner on behalf of Voqal, the North American Catholic Educational Programming Foundation, Inc. (NACEPF), and Mobile Beacon.

These companies and organizations represent diverse stakeholders, including incumbent 2.5 GHz licensees and operators as well as those who seek access to currently unassigned 2.5 GHz licenses (EBS white space). In our meeting, we discussed our joint support for rationalizing the current circular Geographic Service Areas (GSAs) to county-based geographic boundaries.<sup>1</sup> All of these stakeholders agree rationalization is a key step to modernizing the 2.5 GHz band and promoting intensive use of both currently licensed EBS spectrum and new EBS spectrum licenses.

While the record to date reflects different approaches to county-based rationalization, these stakeholders have come together and now jointly recommend the following four-part rationalization approach. First, the Commission should rationalize the outdated circular GSAs to the county boundary, where an existing licensee’s GSA covers a minimum threshold of 25 percent of the geography of a county. Second, rationalization should take place automatically using a process similar to the one implemented in 2005 when EBS GSAs were expanded to their

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<sup>1</sup> See *Transforming the 2.5 GHz Band*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 33 FCC Rcd. 4687, 4692–93 ¶¶ 11–18 (2018).

current 35-mile radius circles.<sup>2</sup> Third, rationalization should apply equally to all current GSAs and license holders that satisfy the 25 percent threshold. And fourth, no current licensed GSA should be reduced in size.

This approach presents a fast and fair way to accelerate 2.5 GHz deployment and ensure the most intensive use of EBS spectrum. In particular, a 25 percent threshold for county-boundary rationalization strikes a reasonable balance—it would immediately fill in many slivers of territory and accelerate deployment in areas adjacent to current GSAs, while facilitating easier entry in the substantial areas that would remain EBS white space.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, of the approximately 45 million people now living in EBS white space, automatic county-based rationalization would immediately accelerate deployment to 14 million in GSA-adjacent areas, leaving 31 million people to be served by new deployments.

The parties have agreed that while using a 25 percent threshold will result in fewer additions to incumbent license holders' GSAs as compared to smaller thresholds proposed by some of the parties in this proceeding, thus leaving more EBS white space for future licensing, the benefits for all stakeholders in 2.5 GHz would be substantial. The jointly recommended approach helps achieve numerous goals in this proceeding—it modernizes the 2.5 GHz band to be more consistent with other geographically-based wireless bands (including the Broadband Radio Service), it accelerates deployment of 2.5 GHz spectrum in new areas by existing licensees with fewer interference concerns, and it results in a more consistent and usable spectrum environment for future licensing of the remaining EBS white space.

Attached are both a nationwide map and two targeted localized maps which show examples of how a county-based rationalization approach using a 25 percent threshold would help fill in operational gaps and still lead to available spectrum opportunities for additional EBS white space licensing.

Sincerely,

Jim Goldstein  
Gardner Foster  
Sprint Corporation

Steve Coran, representing  
Midcontinent Communications

Steve Coran  
Counsel for Wireless Internet Service  
Providers Association

Mary O'Connor  
Counsel for Wireless Communications  
Association International

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 4692 ¶ 11 n.27.

<sup>3</sup> Representations of these slivers are depicted in the attached maps, which were distributed and discussed at the meeting.

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch

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John Schwartz  
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Enclosures

Cc: Erin McGrath  
Christopher McGillen





