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June 24, 2016

VIA ECFS

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

Re: Notice of Ex Parte Communication – 3.5 GHz Spectrum Access System (“SAS”) Administrator(s) and Environmental Sensing Capability (“ESC”) Operator(s) Applications, GN Docket No. 15-319

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On June 22, 2016, Kara Azocar, Regulatory Counsel, Federal Affairs, General Communication, Inc. (“GCI”), along with Jessica Gyllstrom of Telecommunications Law Professionals PLLC, met with Becky Schwartz, Paul Powell, Brian Regan, and Kamran Etemad of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (“WTB”), Robert Pavlak of the Office of Engineering and Technology (“OET”) and Chip Fleming of the International Bureau (“IB”).

During the meeting, GCI stressed the importance of timely investigation and resolution of interference complaints in instances where 3700-4200 MHz band (“C-Band”) Fixed Satellite Services (“FSS”) earth stations receive harmful interference from Citizen Broadband Radio Service Devices (“CBSDs”) and other end user device operations in the adjacent 3.5 GHz band. The FCC has directed the WTB and OET (collectively, the “Bureaus”) to “review complaint receipt and resolution procedures during the [Spectrum Access System (“SAS”)] approval process” in the context of “reports of interference or requests for additional protection from C-Band licensees.”¹ In particular, the Commission required SAS applicants to “demonstrate the ability to promptly respond to reports of interference during the SAS approval process.”²

GCI expressed a general concern that the SAS applications submitted during the “first wave” from prospective SAS administrators did not adequately demonstrate how interference issues would be addressed or resolved in a timely fashion. GCI noted a global concern that applications only stated that such investigations or resolutions would be “timely” or “prompt”, without providing the appropriate level of detail surrounding these timeframes that would allow the Bureaus to make informed decisions during their review of the SAS applications.

¹ In the Matter of Amendment of the Commission’s Rules with Regard to Commercial Operations in the 3550-3650 MHz Band, GN Docket No. 12-354, Order on Reconsideration and Second Report and Order, FCC 16-55, ¶ 301 (rel. May 2, 2016).

² Id. ¶ 148.



As discussed on the record in the related 3.5 GHz proceeding,³ GCI's customers rely heavily on the presence of uninterrupted, contiguous service in order to communicate in their day-to-day lives in rural Alaska, especially in emergency situations. GCI's C-Band sites assist in providing a vast array of critical services across Alaska, including: (1) Measured Toll Service ("MTS") to remote Alaska villages, which many times is the only option for connecting to emergency officials in critical situations; (2) long-distance private line (special access) services to FAA and other critical government agency circuits; (3) telehealth services through GCI's ConnectMD service, which allows for specialists and medical services to reach remote areas that could not otherwise receive such assistance and (4) distance-learning services through GCI's SchoolAccess program, which provides broadband access, video conference, and state-of-the-art digital tools to provide high-quality content to students and library patrons in rural and underserved regions of Alaska.

Due to the critical nature of these services and the resulting need for dependable service, FSS service providers need to be able to rely on the fact that 3.5 GHz users are operating in the band in compliance with the Commission's rules and are utilizing the SAS in an effective manner. Ensuring compliance with the rules in order to avoid interference issues should continue to be the primary goal throughout this process. While it may be possible at times for the FSS licensee to reliably detect the occurrence of interference, this investigative process can oftentimes be extremely challenging and very burdensome due to the limited information available to the FSS licensee during a network outage. Accordingly, in the event that operations in the 3.5 GHz band result in interference, these issues must be mitigated as soon as possible by the SAS and the interfering user.

Therefore, GCI stressed that any interference issues need to be addressed by the SAS within hours, rather than days. Specifically, GCI recommended that harmful events to C-Band FSS stations caused by operations in the 3.5 GHz Band should be required to be addressed by the SAS administrator within two hours of the time that the SAS becomes aware of the issue, whether through notification by the interfering user, monitoring by the SAS or otherwise reported by the FSS licensee.

If GCI's C-Band stations receive harmful interference, critical services may be affected, which may have a significant impact on GCI customer safety. Consequently, GCI encouraged the Bureaus, during their review of the SAS applications, to continue to recognize the critical services that are provided by C-Band FSS stations and seek additional, detailed and targeted information from applicants regarding the "prompt" and "timely" timeframes and processes associated with the investigation and resolution of interference issues.

³ See e.g., General Communication, Inc., Notice of Ex Parte, WT Docket No. 12-354 (filed Jan. 8, 2016); General Communication, Inc., Notice of Ex Parte, WT Docket No. 12-354 (filed Sept. 21, 2015); Reply Comments of General Communication, Inc., WT Docket No. 12-354 (filed Aug. 14, 2015).



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Please direct any questions to the undersigned.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jessica Gyllstrom

Jessica DeSimone Gyllstrom
of TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAW PROFESSIONALS PLLC

cc (via email): Becky Schwartz
 Paul Powell
 Brian Regan
 Kamran Etemad
 Robert Pavlak
 Chip Fleming