

April 7, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Washington, DC 20536

Chairman Wheeler:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should proceed with caution before approving IB Docket No. 13-213 *Terrestrial Use of the 2473-2495 MHz Band for Low-Power Mobile Broadband Networks* Notice of Proposed Rulemaking due to concerns that have been raised by multiple stakeholders regarding its potential impact on individuals with hearing loss. As members of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus, we are extremely concerned over the unintentional consequences that could occur if this proposal is not thoroughly reviewed.

Specifically, the FCC is requested to verify that any proposed rulemaking authority should contain sufficient technical data to demonstrate that any change will not unduly harm the availability of Bluetooth for hearing assistance devices. Currently, wireless technology allows individuals with hearing loss to connect their hearing aids or other assistive listening devices to Bluetooth technology through their smartphones. Allowing companies to enter a new section of the wireless band could needlessly impact consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. The federal government should not stifle new and emerging innovations in order to benefit one particular company or industry.

Additionally, in previous meetings before the Commission, only demonstrations took place to illustrate a lack of interference - not actual testing. Given the innovativeness of Bluetooth technology, it is imperative that actual testing take place to determine the security of the proposed technology.

As the FCC finalizes its decision in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, we remain concerned over the unintended consequences that this proposal will impose on individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Congressional Hearing Caucus, Co-Chair  
Member of Congress

  
Mike Thompson  
Congressional Hearing Caucus, Co-Chair  
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2016

The Honorable David B. McKinley  
U.S. House of Representatives  
412 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman McKinley:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the potential impact on Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids or other assistive listening devices that could occur if terrestrial broadband services are authorized in the 2473-2495 MHz portion of the 2.4 GHz band, commonly referred to as Channel 14. I share your interest in ensuring that individuals with hearing loss are not negatively impacted by this proceeding.

In 2013, the Commission adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that raised complex technical questions regarding the proposed operation of Globalstar's terrestrial Wi-Fi network on Channel 14. The record in this proceeding includes interference concerns raised by Bluetooth stakeholders and other in-band and adjacent band spectrum users. The record specifically reflects concerns regarding the potential impact of the proposed operations on Bluetooth technologies such as those that may be used in connection with hearing aids or other assistive listening devices.

In light of these concerns, the draft Report and Order that I circulated included numerous conditions to help ensure that deployment of Globalstar's terrestrial Wi-Fi network would not have a significant detrimental impact on Bluetooth or other spectrum users, including with respect to hearing aids and assistive listening devices. Furthermore, the item reaffirms the Commission's commitment to carefully monitor the impact of the network on other spectrum users and to take action, if necessary, to protect the integrity of the unlicensed ecosystem. The Report and Order is before the other Commissioners for their consideration.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



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July 27, 2016

The Honorable Mike Thompson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
231 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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