Backroads Broadband

Dear Sirs,

My name is Neal Silvers and I am the owner of Backroads Broadband. We are a small WISP located about 50 miles south of Dallas, TX. Our headquarters are in the town of Corsicana, TX.

We started business in November 2015 with the goal of providing the fastest, most reliable Broadband internet in the area. My background is in telecommunications. I started working in this field over 38 years ago for a company installing central office equipment for MCI. Soon after starting I was employed by a company named Qwest Microwave.

I have been working with microwave ever since. This experience was what I brought to the WISP field along with the fact that I worked for Ericsson for about two years as a trainer on their datacom products, specifically the ACC, Juniper and Torrent router products.

In the last couple of years we have made what I think are good inroads into a reliable stable WISP. Now it seems we are starting to feel the pain. By that I mean to say we are running into issues with available spectrum in order to operate efficiently.

We currently have around 350 customers, as I stated earlier we are still small, but even so we are finding it hard to serve everyone who would like to have reasonable speeds for their internet service. We deliver 15 Mbps and this dictates the number of customers we can load on a sector. This being the case, there just isn’t enough spectrum available to serve everyone that wants service. We have exhausted the 5 GHz band in areas along with the 2.4 GHz band. We also are finding it harder and harder to find available space for our backhaul radios that connect our sites and help to distribute the load. I have used 3.65 GHz but that is now in jeopardy. I am currently working on designs that use 11 GHz, but that too is getting crowded. With the new CBRS allocations, I fear going forward with any more 3.65 GHz links and the 5GHz band is really starting to get unusable for backhaul since we are trying to run sectors in this area.

I know the argument that maybe I should look into 3.5 to 3.7 GHz and run the LTE gear, but the price for this gear is just out of reach if I truly want to make my service affordable to residents in this rural area.

Customers are demanding reasonable installation prices along with good speeds, and they deserve it, but I have to also make a business plan that allows for a reasonable return on investment so I am really locked into a lower price for my CPE equipment. This equipment does exist but it is not in the 3.5 to 3.7 GHz band. It is in the 2.4 and 5 GHz bands.

If we could get backhaul equipment in the 3.7 to 4.2 GHz range then it would be a game changer in the fact that I could move some of my current backhaul links out of the 5 GHz band and free up Space for additional access points so I can serve more customers there.

I know that being only 50 miles south of Dallas; one would think there is adequate internet access here. That would be a wrong assumption. Additionally, one would think the bigger carriers would cover this area, but again this assumption is wrong. We are just too rural an area, and I have to think that there just isn’t enough money in it for the carriers.

Please consider this when determining who gets specific access to certain bands. I speak for many WISP who are spending their own hard earned money to develop systems to hopefully improve the communities they live in. The service we provide enables students living in rural areas to do simple things like homework and also enable others to do things like work from home.

In order for us to grow and keep up with the bandwidth demands we desperately need your help to provide us with additional spectrum availability that is easy to access. If it is costly to use, then the business plan just isn’t there to make what we do profitable enough for us to survive. We are a vital part of our communities and hope you see this when making your decisions.

Respectfully,

Neal Silvers