



City of Virginia Beach

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September 13, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, District of Columbia 20554

RE: Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WC Docket No. 17-84; Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WT Docket No. 17-79

Dear Ms. Dortch,

The City of Virginia Beach writes to express its concerns about the Federal Communications Commission's proposed Declaratory Ruling and Third Report and Order regarding state and local governance of small cell wireless infrastructure deployment. The City of Virginia Beach has been working very closely with broadband providers and infrastructure providers over the past two years in an effort to allow the small cell installations needed to be able to provide the City's residents and visitors with all the benefits small cells and 5G technology will have to offer.

While we appreciate the Commission's efforts to engage with local governments on this issue and share the Commission's goal of ensuring the growth of cutting-edge broadband services for all Americans, we remain deeply concerned about several provisions of this proposal. Local governments have an important responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents, and we are concerned that these preemption measures compromise that traditional authority and expose wireless infrastructure providers to unnecessary liability.

- **The FCC's proposed new collocation shot clock category is too extreme.** The proposal designates any preexisting structure, regardless of its design or suitability for attaching wireless equipment, as eligible for this new expedited 60 day shot clock. When paired with the FCC's previous decision exempting small wireless facilities from federal historic and environmental review, this places an unreasonable burden on local governments to prevent historic preservation, environmental, or safety harms to the community. The addition of up to three cubic feet of antenna and 28 cubic feet of additional equipment to a structure not originally designed to carry that equipment is substantial and may necessitate more review than the FCC has allowed in its proposal.

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Here in Virginia Beach, virtually any City-owned pole to which a provider requests attachment will need to be replaced in order to accommodate this additional weight. While we are not opposed to this prospect, the expedited timelines will be very challenging to meet when assessing mutually acceptable replacement poles, leaving the City little choice but to either approve an application prematurely in order to meet the timeline, or deny such application and risk a legal challenge.

- **The FCC's proposed definition of "effective prohibition" is overly broad.** The draft report and order proposes a definition of "effective prohibition" that invites challenges to long-standing local rights of way requirements unless they meet a subjective and unclear set of guidelines. While the Commission may have intended to preserve local review, this framing and definition of effective prohibition opens local governments to the likelihood of more, not less, conflict and litigation over requirements for aesthetics, spacing, and undergrounding. As City Manager, I have organized a multi-departmental working group that meets regularly in order to address and resolve provider requests for infrastructure and equipment deployment in support of 5G. As effective as this may be, it is a very difficult task to ask the workgroup to draft a static set of guidelines that must be published in advance, without yet knowing the universe of what the "small cells" and related equipment will look like.
- **The FCC's proposed recurring fee structure is an unreasonable overreach that will harm local policy innovation.** We disagree with the FCC's interpretation of "fair and reasonable compensation" as meaning approximately \$270 per small cell site. Local governments share the federal government's goal of ensuring affordable broadband access for every American, regardless of their income level or address. That is why many cities have worked to negotiate fair deals with wireless providers, which may exceed that number or provide additional benefits to the community. Additionally, the Commission has moved away from rate regulation in recent years. Why does it see fit to so narrowly dictate the rates charged by municipalities? As one of the 20 states that has passed small cell legislation, our city is already complying with a host of restrictions, fee caps, and other limitations promulgated by the Virginia General Assembly. The potential for conflicting FCC rules would complicate and possibly delay deployments, and would further impact our ability to discern what is safest and most desirous to our citizens and visitors at the local level.

Our city has worked with private business to build the best broadband infrastructure possible for our residents. We oppose this effort to restrict local authority and stymie local innovation, while limiting the obligations providers have to our community. We urge you to oppose this declaratory ruling and report and order.

Sincerely,



David L. Hansen
City Manager

DLH/dmb