

"Without access to interoperable devices, Lower 700 MHz A Block licensees have been significantly hindered in planning for, securing financing for, and purchasing equipment," the RCA said.

For instance, United Wireless in Kansas built an LTE network on its lower 700 MHz licenses, only to discover the band 12 devices it had been promised by its vendor were unavailable. As of this June, United Wireless had an LTE network but no phones to offer its customers.

AT&T points out that there have been successful band 12 deployments despite the lack of interoperability, most notably U.S. Cellular's LTE network in the Midwest.

The FCC is currently considering whether to re-establish interoperability in the 700 MHz band, a proposal that AT&T says would require substantial changes to its network.

AT&T has lobbied strongly against the interoperability mandate, calling it "pointless" and "poor policy." AT&T argues that even with interoperability across the lower 700 MHz band, Channel 51 interference will still preclude many A block licensees from using their spectrum.

The FCC has not indicated when it will issue a decision in the interoperability rulemaking.