

C Spire Wireless, a small, southern wireless provider formerly known as Cellular South, has an ambitious plan to build a fast, 4G LTE network to reach its 900,000 customers. To do it, C Spire bought \$192 million worth of 700 MHz wireless spectrum, which is considered some of the most valuable wireless spectrum that's still available because it can travel long distances and penetrate obstacles. Even if small carriers have more spectrum the big carriers can leverage deals with chip suppliers to make it difficult for competitors to get new devices for their networks.

But there's a problem. C Spire claims it hasn't been able to use this spectrum and hasn't been able to deploy its 4G network. It says the bigger carriers, especially AT&T, have used their market power to ensure chip designers and device makers make equipment compatible with their flavor of the technology, leaving smaller carriers in the cold. And without devices and network gear, C Spire says it's been sitting on a costly resource it can't use -- and thus can't deliver to you, the consumer. AT&T uses a different band plan (a set of technical standards for equipment) using 700 MHz spectrum (have their own band class)