



PUBLIC NOTICE

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ESTIMATE OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING SYSTEMS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

Each year, the Federal Communication Commission's Office of Economics and Analytics (OEA) publishes its estimate of spectrum auctions that it anticipates will commence over the course of the coming year. Specifically, section 309(j)(18) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, requires the Commission to make publicly available an estimate of what systems of competitive bidding for licenses or permits may be initiated during the upcoming 12-month period (Fiscal Year (FY) 2026).¹

Background. On March 9, 2023, the Commission's general authority to grant licenses or permits through systems of competitive bidding lapsed, subject to specified exceptions.² On December 23, 2024, the Spectrum and Secure Technology and Innovation Act was signed. Even though it did not restore general spectrum auction authority, the Act directed the Commission to initiate a system of competitive bidding for licenses for AWS-3 spectrum³ in its inventory as of that date no later than June 23, 2026.⁴ Subsequently, on July 4, 2025, amendments to the Communications Act provided the Commission with general authority, subject to specified exceptions, to assign licenses and permits using competitive bidding until September 30, 2034, and deleted the previously specified exceptions to the prior lapse in authority.⁵ OEA estimates that the systems of competitive bidding listed below may be initiated during the 12-month period following September 30, 2025. More detailed information concerning each of these matters has been and/or will be provided through orders and public notices.⁶

AWS-3. Consistent with the Spectrum and Secure Technology and Innovation Act, the Commission will conduct an auction that will offer flexible-use licenses for spectrum in the AWS-3 band.⁷ The AWS-3 spectrum available in the auction will be licensed on a geographic area basis,

¹ 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(18).

² Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-328, 136 Stat. 5232, § 901 (2022) (as codified at 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(11)): "The authority of the Commission to grant a license or permit under this subsection shall expire March 9, 2023, except that, with respect to the electromagnetic spectrum identified under section 1004(a) of the Spectrum Pipeline Act of 2015, such authority shall expire on September 30, 2025, and with respect to the electromagnetic spectrum identified under section 90008(b)(2)(A)(ii) of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, such authority shall expire on the date that is 7 years after November 15, 2021."

³ The AWS-3 bands are 1695–1710 MHz, 1755–1780 MHz, and 2155–2180 MHz.

⁴ Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, Pub. L. No. 118-159, Div. E, Title LIV, § 5401–5405 (Spectrum and Secure Technology and Innovation Act), § 5403 (mandating that the Commission initiate a system of competitive bidding for licenses for unassigned AWS-3 spectrum within 18 months of Dec. 23, 2024) (2024), <https://www.congress.gov/118/plaws/publ159/PLAW-118publ159.pdf>.

⁵ P. L. No. 119-21, § 40002(b)(1), 139 Stat. 72 (2025) (amending 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(11)).

⁶ This estimate should not be viewed as a substitute for information provided about these matters in Commission releases establishing rules, procedures, dates, and deadlines, along with other pertinent information, which can be found on the Commission's website and through the Electronic Document Management System database.

including licenses based on Economic Areas and Cellular Market Areas. The AWS-3 frequencies will be licensed in five and ten megahertz blocks, with each license having a total bandwidth of five, ten, or twenty megahertz.

Upper C-band. To comply with recent appropriations legislation, in FY 2026, the Commission will work toward a system of competitive bidding for licenses for at least 100 megahertz in the 3.98–4.2 GHz band.⁸ However, the Commission does not anticipate that bidding will commence in FY 2026.

Additional inventory. In the next twelve months, the Commission will also consider competitive bidding for licenses for spectrum in other services in its inventory that is well-suited for 5G and has been licensed in prior auctions, such as, without limitation, 600 MHz spectrum.

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⁷ See *Enhancing National Security Through the Auction of AWS-3 Spectrum Licenses; Applying New Average Annual Gross Revenue Benchmarks for Small Business Bidding Credits; Amendment of the Commission's Rules with Regard to Commercial Operations in the 1695-1710 MHz, 1755-1780 MHz, and 2155-2180 MHz Bands*, Report and Order and Second Report and Order, FCC 25-39, 2025 WL 2194367 (F.R.) (July 25, 2025).

⁸ Pub. L. No. 119-21, section 40002(b)(2).