

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Promoting Investment in the 3550-3700 MHz Band*, GN Docket No. 17-258

Thompson, North Dakota is a 1,000-person town that sits about 90 miles from the Canadian border. It has more churches than stoplights. The tallest structure you'll find along the town's dirt roads is a grain elevator owned by a farmers co-op. The closest Apple Store is a four-and-a-half hour drive away. It's the type of place that big companies could easily overlook when they plan 5G and next-gen broadband deployments.

But right now, a fixed wireless provider is using 3.5 GHz spectrum and an experimental FCC license to beam 100 Mbps broadband to the community. To do this, the provider attached an antenna to the top of that dusty grain elevator and from that height they can reach houses nearly eight miles away. Justin, one of the company's network technicians, took me up there on a snowy October day two weeks ago. He even pointed out a home about four miles away that topped out at 238 Mbps broadband, and he noted that the speeds would be even higher once the customer upgraded their in-home equipment. He talked optimistically about the 3.5 GHz band, and the company's fixed wireless offering, helping to close the digital divide.

The key, as his company put it, is to strike a balance “between the desire to adopt smaller license areas and the practical considerations that affect designing and deploying real-world wireless networks.” Auctioning licenses at the county level—not census tract—they say, represents the best compromise and will support next-gen deployments in Thompson and many rural communities just like it. Other providers serving rural America agree. And elected leaders from rural states, including Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska, all argue that county-sized licenses will serve the needs of their rural communities.

Not everyone agrees. Some larger providers want bigger license areas. Some smaller ones want census tracts. In the end, we adopt an approach that is not tailored to any particular technology or business model. Rather, our approach is targeted at ensuring robust investment and deployment from big cities to rural communities. It's suited to a wide variety of business models from broadband to next-gen IoT and industrial applications.

Commissioner O'Rielly deserves credit for his leadership on these issues and in this band. He worked hard to bridge the gaps between stakeholders and to ensure that this critical piece of mid-band spectrum will work in the real world.

And while there's no doubt we'll hear overheated rhetoric about the decision to license spectrum over counties versus census tracts, remember this: We're doing something we've never done before. We've never auctioned licenses over geographic areas as small as counties. We've never used a SAS to coordinate spectrum access. And we've never implemented a “use-or-share” regime that can both guard against spectrum warehousing and allow a WISP, a manufacturer, or any other entity to access the entire 3.5 GHz band—even channels that have been licensed to another provider. I am confident that our innovative and experimental approach to 3.5 GHz will succeed.

So I want to commend Commissioner O'Rielly again on his leadership and thank the teams in the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau and the Office of Engineering and Technology for their work on the item. It has my support.