STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS

Re: *Amendment of the Commission's Rules to Promote Aviation Safety,* WT Docket No. 19-140; *WiMAX Forum Petition to Adopt Service Rules for the Aeronautical Mobile Airport Communications System (AeroMACS),* RM-11793; *Petition of Sierra Nevada Corporation for Amendment of the Commission's Rules to Allow for Enhanced Flight Vision System Radar under Part 87,* RM-11799; *Petition of Aviation Spectrum Resources, Inc. for Amendment of Sections 87.173(b) and 87.263(a) of the FCC's Rules to Allow Use of the Lower 136 MHz Band by Aeronautical Enroute Stations,* RM-11818; *Petition of Airports Council International-North America Regarding Aeronautical Utility Mobile Stations,* RM-11832

Legend has it that the first American aviation radio communication took place before World War I, when two members of the Army's newly formed Air Service sent a signal from a plane-mounted transmitter to a ground-based receiver. Within a few years, pilots were talking to each other and the ground from the air, although Morse Code remained the primary means of aviation communication till World War II. And into the 1950s, air crews relied not on radios but on astronavigation to determine their position, using a sextant, a map, the sun, the moon and the stars.

The pilots of those days would be amazed at the communications and navigation tools available to modern aviators. Today, our technology not only provides reliable communications between and among aircraft and the ground, but also highly accurate navigation tools, weather updates, collision avoidance, automatic flight control, flight recording, and flight management services. We can even check our work e-mails from the air now – I'm sure we all appreciate that.

Today's NPRM represents another step forward in ensuring that America remains a leader in aviation communications. We propose several rule changes to enable the use of 21st Century systems that make flying safer, including computer systems that will produce images of terrain and obstacles when the weather conditions are too poor for the pilots to see. We also propose rules to harmonize FCC policies with those of the FAA regarding the ADS-B system, which automatically broadcasts GPS-derived data on an aircraft's location, velocity, altitude and heading to other ADS-B-equipped aircraft and ground stations. ADS-B will allow pilots to have the same ability to see other aircraft in the sky as air traffic controllers. It will also pinpoint hazardous weather and terrain, identify ground obstacles, and give pilots important flight information, such as temporary flight restrictions. Ultimately, ADS-B will increase the number of flights possible and permit aircraft to fly more directly from Point A to Point B, saving time and money and reducing fuel burn and emissions.

While these proposed changes are laudable, I recognize that several of these proposals involve expanded operations in spectrum bands that already have existing licensees or other users, including some that involve public safety. For example, as we propose rules for a new broadband system for airport surface operations, we also must ensure appropriate spectrum coordination to avoid interference to Federal users and flight test operations in the same band. Interference to these operations could lead to a catastrophic accident. I fully support the efficient use of spectrum, but I will be paying close attention to any interference-related concerns.

Things have changed a lot since the early 20th Century, but America remains a center of innovation in aviation communications and navigation. I'm proud that the FCC is doing its part to encourage such progress and I support this item.

Thank you to the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for your work on this item.