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For Immediate Release

FCC CONSIDERS ALLOWING NEW WIRELESS MIC TECHNOLOGY

Agency Will Seek Comment on Spectrum Access for New Tool for Large Venues

WASHINGTON, April 22, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission today began a proceeding to consider allowing Wireless Multi-Channel Audio Systems (WMAS). This is an emerging wireless microphone technology that would enable more microphones per megahertz of spectrum, an efficiency that can greatly benefit music venues or convention centers with multiple performers or speakers.

The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted today seeks public comment on allowing WMAS on a licensed basis in frequency bands where wireless microphones already are currently authorized, including the TV bands, the 600 MHz duplex gap, and in portions of the 900 MHz, 1.4 GHz, and 7 GHz bands. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also explores using this technology on an unlicensed basis. WMAS technology is already permitted in Europe under the applicable European Telecommunications Standards Institute standards.

WMAS allows microphones to operate using wider bandwidth channels than the Commission's rules currently allow by digitally combining multiple microphone signals. The technology also uses a more efficient operating protocol, which results in a larger number of wireless microphones being able to operate in the available spectrum.

The Notice adopted at today's Open Commission Meeting proposes changes that are not intend to impact incumbent spectrum operations that share spectrum bands with wireless microphones. The proposed rules would amend the Commission's Part 74 licensed radio device rules—technically called low-power auxiliary station (LPAS) devices—to support efficient use of the spectrum and implement interference protection standards. It also seeks comment on whether the Commission should also permit WMAS to operate on an unlicensed basis under the FCC's Part 15 rules.

Action by the Commission April 22, 2021 by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 21-46). Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel issuing a separate statement.

ET Docket No. 21-115; RM-11821

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).