REMARKS OF
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OPEN RAN SOLUTIONS SHOWCASE
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Good morning! Welcome to the FCC's Open RAN Solutions Showcase. Thank you to everyone for joining us.

We have not one, but two full days of content lined up for you. Now . . . I get it. After many months of virtual events, online fatigue may be kicking in and that may sound like a lot, but we decided to supersize this effort because (1) we had too many good panels to pack into one day and (2) because Open RAN technology is a really big deal.

If you're watching this, I bet that you have a pretty good grasp of what Open RAN is and why it's important. So I'm going to forego the Open RAN 101. Because today is about moving beyond the basics. It's about moving from idea to execution. It's about going from vision to action and shaping the future of connectivity.

Now I'm of the opinion that a good idea is a terrible thing to waste. But let's be honest—a lot of us end up leaving ideas—even really good ones—exactly where we found them: lolling around in our heads. But that's not a problem for the vendors who are joining us for this showcase. The presenters you will hear from today come from the frontiers of wireless innovation. They are reinventing what's possible with our wireless networks. I'm excited to hear from them. And for those interested, this showcase will offer an opportunity to get behind this innovation and learn how to become a part of their open and interoperable version of the future.

I'm especially excited to kick off this showcase because a few years ago I was actually the first at the Federal Communications Commission to speak about the power of opening radio access networks. And we've come a long way since then.

Back then, if you were building out a wireless network, you had only four major vendors for mobile network equipment to choose from, none of which hailed from the United States. That meant you were likely to deploy your network using proprietary, end-to-end gear from one major vendor. And as you started to think about upgrading to 5G, vendor lock-in loomed large.

Back then, the vendors that were growing the fastest were from China, in part because the Chinese government was deploying powerful industrial policies to make their equipment less costly than the alternatives.

Back then, national security agencies were sounding the alarm about the serious risks that came with having this equipment installed in our networks. That's because it could provide foreign interests with the ability to jeopardize our communications and undermine our national security.

Back then, some said Open RAN was little more than "pie in the sky." There were no Open RAN deployments anywhere in the world. There were no Open RAN policy coalitions thinking about the future. There were only a handful of companies interested in Open RAN in the United States.

But we've come a long way since then. A really long way. I'm no longer the only one at the FCC talking about Open RAN. There's momentum building in this agency and across government. One company has already made it into the history books as the first to launch an Open RAN network—and it is winning customers every day. One nationwide provider right here in the United States has committed to building a nationwide 5G network using Open RAN by 2023. Open RAN hardware and software is now projected to reach 10 percent of the total market during the next few years. And most notably—we are no longer thinking about wireless equipment just in an end-to-end way. Instead, we are thinking about it as a more diverse and modular architecture. And when we do that, we are finding there are lots of companies in the United States that can compete really well in this market.

Now many of you are here because you will soon take on the complex task of removing Huawei and ZTE equipment from your networks, wherever it may exist. You will evaluate base station after base station, router after router, until you have rooted out equipment that could undermine our national security. This will not be easy. Removing insecure equipment from existing networks after installation is hard because historically these systems were closed and deeply integrated, with little opportunity to mix and match equipment from different vendors. In some cases, this will mean starting over from scratch.

But thanks to the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act and a nearly $1.9 billion appropriation from Congress, going forward we can do this differently. And we can plan to do this soon. That's because yesterday I announced that October 29 is the target date for opening the filing window for the $1.9 billion Reimbursement Program to support the removal of insecure equipment from our communications systems. That means carriers can start planning now for their applications and new networks.

There is a lot of work to do. As we strive to meet this target, the FCC will continue to work to ensure that secure alternatives exist for carriers taking advantage of this program. We want companies cutting out high-risk hardware from their networks to have the opportunity to use a range of trusted alternatives. That means traditional end-to-end proprietary gear. But it also means newer opportunities like Open RAN.

Of course, we're here today to help jump-start innovation in this technology in the United States. But that's not all we're doing right now. In addition to this showcase, today I will ask my colleagues to vote on another initiative at the FCC that will help spur the development and deployment of Open RAN technology. If this decision is adopted at our August open meeting, the FCC will establish Raleigh, North Carolina and Boston, Massachusetts as innovation zones and research testbeds for 5G and Open RAN. These innovation zones will provide unique opportunities for operators, vendors, vertical interests, and other government agencies to work together to support these new technologies.

History tells us that when you give innovators in the United States a sandbox to test new ideas, good things follow. Here's hoping that creating two new sandboxes to explore wireless innovation will unlock exciting new breakthroughs in Open RAN technology.

And that brings me back to all of you. The FCC can do its best to create conditions that foster innovation and investment. But, at the end of the day, we're counting on all of you to develop and deploy these technologies. So thanks to all of you for being a part of this two-day collaboration. Working together, we have an opportunity to build a bigger market for more secure 5G equipment. And that will help unlock the benefits of 5G technology for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you, and have a great showcase!