STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS

Re:  

Expediting Initial Processing of Satellite and Earth Station Applications; Space 
Innovation; IB Docket No. 22-411, IB Docket No. 22-271; Report and Order and Further 
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (September 21, 2023)

When we proposed to streamline our satellite application rules just last December, I said 
that supporting U.S. leadership in commercial space meant moving at the speed of space-based 
innovation. I also said that it meant creating a path toward regulatory approval even for 
applications that propose something new—and perhaps even especially for systems that 
challenge the old playbook.

That’s why I’m pleased we’ve reached an order so quickly. That’s why I’m also pleased 
that we’ve set the right tone for the rest of this proceeding, and for the licensing process in 
general, by elevating accountability, practicality, and innovation.

In this item, we’re accelerating our process for reviewing satellite applications before we 
accept them for filing—and we’re providing timeframes for the FCC to complete that important 
process. That’s accountability.

At the same time, we’re eliminating outdated rules that led to time-consuming squabbles 
about what words like “unbuilt” mean without actually doing much to advance the public 
interest. We’re also committing to shed more daylight on the licensing process and to explain 
what our requirements mean for prospective licensees in practice. That’s practicality.

While we’re taking steps to accelerate licensing for all systems, we’re also removing 
specific hurdles that tend to slow down and deter applications for groundbreaking ones. 
Furthermore, we’re creating a new streamlined process for earth station applications with the 
hope of facilitating next-gen upgrades and new “as-a-service” business models. That’s 
innovation.

I’m also glad to see that we revised the item to advance these goals even more than the 
draft item already did. At my request, we’re no longer shutting the door to timeframes for 
deciding applications on the merits after they’re accepted for filing. In fact—at my colleague 
Commissioner Simington’s request—we’re committing to build a stronger record on whether 
and how we can do that in the Further Notice. We’re also more clearly conveying that while we 
must ensure new systems comply with our rules, we don’t intend to micromanage operators’ 
design choices—especially ones that are irrelevant to our jurisdiction. Finally, we’re taking 
steps to make our streamlined procedure for earth stations more practically useful.

This item is an important first step toward expedition, and my hope and expectation is 
that there will be much more to come. I thank the Space Bureau for its excellent work on this 
item, and for its Herculean efforts, day in and day out, to support space innovation.