



Carr Statement on the Biden Administration's Spectrum Malaise

The Administration's Spectrum Implementation Plan Promises More Inaction

WASHINGTON, DC, March, 12 2024—FCC Commissioner Carr issued the following statement:

It's no secret the United States has fallen into a malaise when it comes to one of the most important drivers of economic growth and global competitiveness. Over the last three years, America has slipped far behind other countries when it comes to spectrum—the airwaves that power so many of the modern technologies that can grow economies. And today, the Biden Administration has confirmed that we will continue to slip even further behind.

Late last year, the Biden Administration released its much anticipated [National Spectrum Strategy](#). I [noted](#) at the time that the Administration had committed to freeing up exactly zero megahertz of spectrum at a moment when our global competitors and adversaries alike were passing us by.

Today, the Biden Administration released a [plan](#) to implement that spectrum strategy, and it only confirms that the Administration will be kicking the can down the road.

The U.S. sorely needs more licensed mid-band spectrum now for commercial use to keep pace with consumer demand and our geopolitical rivals. In last year's National Spectrum Strategy, the Administration identified only two bands that it will even think about on that front: 3.1-3.45 GHz and 7.125-8.4 GHz. So, one might have expected the implementation plan to prioritize these bands with the utmost urgency.

But the Biden Administration's plan announces that both band studies won't be complete until October 2026. Meaning, neither band is likely to see the light of day until 2028 at the earliest under this plan. But remember, that's the best case. The Administration has provided no assurance that these bands will *ever* be opened up for commercial use.

So what does this implementation plan deliver? In fairness, there are some interesting ideas, particularly on the R&D front. But the plan is mostly a cavalcade of promises and process—an exhausting list of 36 action items, more study groups, more white papers, more aspirational deadlines, more landmines for interagency gridlock and industry infighting, and perhaps most troubling, the intent to funnel the FCC's spectrum work into a new bureaucratic process known as the Interagency Spectrum Advisory Council. Virtually none of the Administration's 36 tasks have begun. Many won't start for months. And most have nothing to do with releasing more spectrum.

Others are not standing still. Under this Administration, we now have a deficit of, on average, nearly 200 megahertz compared to other countries in mid-band spectrum available for commercial wireless use. And our deficit relative to China is now projected to be more than 1,200 megahertz by 2027.

We need bold action—not more plans to plan. The progress we made under the prior Administration shows tangible results are possible. From 2017 through 2020, the FCC freed up roughly 6,000 megahertz of spectrum for licensed use alone, plus thousands of additional megahertz of spectrum for unlicensed use. Many of these bands were not layoffs; they too involved complex incumbencies, entrenched opponents, and technical challenges. For my part, I put out an actual spectrum [plan](#) in March of 2021 that identified specific frequencies and a timeline to move with the same pace, cadence, and urgency that we did during the last Administration.

If this Administration won't act, Congress must. That's why I applaud the strong spectrum leadership shown by Senator Cruz, Senator Thune, and Senator Blackburn who introduced the [Spectrum Pipeline Act of 2024](#) earlier this week. Their smart legislation would restore the FCC's auction authority and put the government on a shot clock to release—not just study—2,500 megahertz of spectrum, including 1,250 megahertz for full-power commercial licensed use. That's a real spectrum implementation plan. And that is precisely the decisive and thoughtful approach needed to get the U.S. back on track.

When it comes to spectrum, it is time to turn things around.

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