

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**

Re: *Amendment of Part 101 of the Commission's Rules to Facilitate the Use of Microwave or Wireless Backhaul and Other Uses and to Provide Additional Flexibility to Broadcast Auxiliary Service and Operational Fixed Microwave Licensees; Petition for Rulemaking filed by Fixed Wireless Communications Coalition to Amend Part 101 of the Commission's Rules to Authorize 60 and 80 MHz Channels in Certain Bands for Broadband Communications, WT Docket No. 10-153, RM-11602*

In my view, two of the FCC's top priorities should be removing regulatory barriers to infrastructure investment and broadening the stock of spectrum available for commercial broadband use. Much attention obviously is focused on some of the more high-profile proceedings addressing these objectives, such as reform of the Universal Service Fund and implementation of our new incentive auction authority. But we should not overlook steps that we can take to loosen regulatory bottlenecks in other important areas.

Backhaul presents one such opportunity; it is a critical step in the transmission of communications signals. For instance, it does little if any good for a customer with a mobile device to have a strong connection with a nearby tower, or for her wireless network to have a comprehensive nationwide footprint, if the communications link between the tower and her network is clogged, constrained or non-existent. Wireless backhaul in particular can be a vital network component in areas where wireline infrastructure, such as fiber or copper, is difficult or prohibitively expensive to deploy. Facilitating greater use of wireless backhaul thus can enable infrastructure investment and help address our pressing spectrum needs.

I am therefore pleased to support today's item, which continues reform of our Part 101 rules addressing microwave services. The actions taken in this item extend the Commission's efforts to make it easier and more economical to deploy microwave backhaul to meet consumers' growing demand for mobile services.

There are plenty of well-considered reforms in this item, but I am particularly optimistic about our decision to adopt a Rural Microwave Flexibility Policy. This policy will provide licensees the opportunity to obtain a waiver from existing efficiency standards in uncongested rural areas. These waivers will allow licensees to utilize longer links and fewer intermediate relay stations in these areas, yielding significant savings and making it more cost-effective for providers to deploy infrastructure. For example, the cost of a single intermediate relay station can be \$500,000. I would especially like to thank the Chairman for setting forth the expectation that the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau will act on these waiver applications within 90 days, absent extraordinary circumstances. This will help add certainty to operators' business models when they make their deployment plans. I am hopeful that this reform, along with the others that we adopt today, will accelerate infrastructure investment and improve the quality of mobile service enjoyed by rural Americans.

Backhauling mobile data traffic to the Internet is quickly becoming a more substantial component of the cost of operating a mobile network. Today's item will help to reduce those expenses, but as our Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking suggests, there is more we can do. I look forward to reviewing the record that will be compiled in response to the Second Further Notice. I will also carefully examine the views of commenters as to whether it is time to institute a comprehensive review of our Part 101 antenna standards. In short, if anyone has ideas for how we can further remove regulatory barriers to the use of wireless backhaul, I'm ready to listen.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the hard-working staff of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for their perseverance on this complex, but important, proceeding. I especially appreciate the recent briefing on the nuts and bolts of this item I received from John Leibovitz, Melissa Tye, Blaise Scinto, and John Schauble.