

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, WT Docket 17-79

As a football fan, I'm still shaking my head at the Atlanta Falcons' epic collapse in the Super Bowl against the New England Patriots. As a regulator, what concerns me even more are the stories I've heard about the roadblocks to deploying wireless infrastructure that companies encountered leading up to the big game.

Tens of thousands of fans flooded Houston's NRG Stadium in February to send many terabytes of data in the form of texts, pictures, and videos. In order to handle this massive increase in network traffic, wireless carriers knew in advance they'd have to upgrade their infrastructure in order to boost network capacity in and around the stadium.

But meeting this commitment was much harder than it should've been. For instance, one company ended up paying thousands of dollars per utility pole for purposes of meeting historic preservation requirements. Now, it's hard to imagine that there is much to preserve, historically speaking, in the parking lot of NRG Stadium. After all, initial construction started in the early 2000s. Yet this company was forced to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in total to complete this review—excessive costs that both delayed construction and were ultimately passed on to consumers.

This case isn't unique. I have heard time and time again how current rules and procedures impede the timely, cost-effective deployment of wireless infrastructure.

This will only become a bigger problem as our wireless networks evolve. A key feature of the transition from 4G to 5G is a change in network architecture. The future of wireless will evolve from large, macro-cell towers to include thousands of densely-deployed small cells, operating at lower power.

As networks evolve, our rules should too. Historic preservation and environmental review regulations designed for large macro-cell towers just don't make sense for small cells that can be the size of a pizza box. And cities shouldn't impose unreasonable demands or moratoria on wireless siting requests. This simply penalizes their own constituents who want better mobile service. To address these issues, we are seeking ideas for updating state, local, and Tribal infrastructure review to meet the realities of the modern marketplace.

If we do our job—if we can make the deployment of wireless infrastructure easier, consistent with the public interest—then we can help close the digital divide in our country. This is especially true for low-income and minority communities, which disproportionately rely on wireless service as their primary or sole on-ramp to the Internet. Working with our partners at the federal, state, local, and Tribal levels, I hope we can take another meaningful step towards bringing high-speed Internet access to all Americans and maintaining our nation's global leadership in the wireless space.

I'd like to thank the dedicated staff of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, including Paul D'Ari, Steve DelSordo, Angela DeMahy, Chas Eberle, Aaron Goldschmidt, Garnet Hanly, Leon Jackler, Don Johnson, Erica Rosenberg, Hilary Rosenthal, Jennifer Salhus, David Sieradzki, Michael Smith, Jill Springer, Jeff Steinberg, Joel Taubenblatt, Suzanne Tetreault, Peter Trachtenberg, and Mary Claire York. I would also like to thank David Horowitz, Andrea Kelly, Marcus Maher, Lee Martin, Linda Oliver, and Anjali Singh from the Office of General Counsel; Lyle Ishida and Dan Margolis from the Office of

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