

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Location-Based Routing For Wireless 911 Calls*, PS Docket No. 18-64.

In an emergency, every second counts. But too often, those seconds dribble away because a wireless 911 call is misrouted. Just ask the family of Shanell Anderson.

Shanell was delivering newspapers in suburban Atlanta a few days before Christmas in 2014 when her car took a wrong turn and plunged into a pond. Critically, for purposes of this story, that pond was in Cherokee County, but only one hundred yards from the Fulton County line. Unable to escape her vehicle, which quickly became engulfed by water, Anderson used her cell phone to dial 911.¹ She reached a 911 dispatcher in Fulton County and provided her exact address. But the dispatcher could not locate the address Shanell provided because it was for a location in Cherokee County. Precious minutes passed. By the time authorities in Fulton County figured out that they needed to transfer Shanell's call to Cherokee County, it was too late. Although first responders were able to pull her body from the submerged car and restart her heart, she fell into a coma and died a week later.

This tragedy happened because today's 911 system routes a wireless 911 call to a call center based on the location of the cell tower that's closest to the caller, rather than the caller's location. In Shanell's case, that meant her call was misrouted to Fulton County, because the cell tower nearest to her was located there—rather than Cherokee County, where she was actually calling from. With this *Notice of Inquiry*, we aim to understand just how common this problem is, how we can avoid potentially deadly delays in responding to wireless 911 calls, and which location-based routing technologies could help.

Underscoring the importance of this inquiry is that every 911 call center I visit these days reports that the majority of emergency calls come from wireless phones. Just last month, on the 50th anniversary of the first 911 call, I visited with Karima Holmes, Director of the Office of Unified Communications in the District of Columbia. Ms. Holmes told me that the District received approximately 10,000 misrouted 911 calls in 2017 alone; these calls had to be transferred to Maryland authorities. And, conversely, many thousands of calls received in Maryland had to be transferred to the District.² These statistics are startling. And it makes you wonder how many more have faced a fate like Shanell's—or could.

I want to thank the staff for all their hard work on this item: Rochelle Cohen, Lisa Fowlkes, David Furth, Roberto Mussenden, Erika Olsen, Linda Pintro, Austin Randazzo, Emily Talaga, and Michael Wilhelm from the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; and David Horowitz and Doug Klein from the Office of General Counsel.

¹ Brendan Keefe & Phillip Kish, Lost on the Line: Why 911 is Broken, *USA Today*, (Jan. 2015), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/local/investigations/2015/01/31/911-location-problems-/22645139/>.

²Ajit Pai, FCC Chairman, Winning the Wireless Future, *FCC Blog* (Mar. 1, 2018), <https://www.fcc.gov/news-events/blog/2018/03/01/winning-wireless-future>.