

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Use of the 5.850-5.925 GHz Band*, ET Docket No. 19-308.

Congress has tasked the FCC with developing a sustainable communications ecosystem that both meets public safety needs and allows new and innovative technologies to flourish. To do so, we must closely monitor and periodically adjust our spectrum allocations to respond to the needs of today and anticipate the needs of tomorrow. Today we revisit our decision to allocate the 5.9 GHz band to Dedicated Short Range Communications (DSRC) in light of the explosion of innovation in the nearby Wi-Fi bands, the unmet potential of DSRC technology in consumer vehicles, and the promise of new Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything (C-V2X) technology.

Twenty years ago, the FCC saw promise in using wireless communications spectrum to make transportation safer. I believe that conclusion was correct -- Intelligent Transportation System services are critically important and will save lives. Unfortunately, DSRC has fallen short of our expectations. As of today, only one manufacturer has incorporated DSRC technology into its cars in the U.S.—and even then, into only one of its models. Vehicle manufacturers instead use cellular networks and unlicensed spectrum to meet public safety and consumer needs and are turning to 5G networks to implement functionality that was originally intended for DSRC. C-V2X did not exist only a few years ago, and today we are proposing to dedicate up to 30 megahertz for its use. I am pleased that, rather than continuing to be wed to a technology that appears to be stuck in neutral, this agency is showing it can shift into the fast lane of innovation.

Our decision comes at an important time. The problem of Internet Inequality is resulting in significantly different opportunities – in terms of employment, education, civic engagement – for those with high-speed internet service versus those without. The new unlicensed spectrum that we propose to make available today can play a role in connecting people in those unserved communities. In my travels, I've heard repeatedly about how unserved or underserved individuals rely on the Wi-Fi in cities and anchor institutions like schools and libraries. Greater access to faster public Wi-Fi will help disconnected consumers access necessary government services, job opportunities, education and training.

This item also promises to help address another issue that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable. Many of us have paid for fast home broadband service only to experience slow speeds or devices that struggle to connect. The cause, in many cases, is congested Wi-Fi channels in that location. There simply isn't enough Wi-Fi capacity to go around, and the big broadband stream to your home ends up getting reduced to a trickle by the time it gets to your device. This happens regardless of whether you pay for 100 Mbps speeds or a 15 Mbps plan.

Under the proposed approach, however, the 5.9 GHz band can be joined with adjacent unlicensed spectrum to create 160 megahertz of Wi-Fi channels, relieving that congestion and allowing consumers to make the most of their broadband connections, at whatever speed they can afford. This will be particularly helpful for low-income consumers, who are more likely to live in dense urban environments that are subject to the worst Wi-Fi congestion. I look forward to hearing from industry and others about these points.

Finally, I'd like to thank Commissioners O'Rielly and Rosenworcel for their leadership on these issues. I also thank the Office of Engineering and Technology staff for their work on this item.