

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Rules Governing the Use of Distributed Transmission System Technologies*, MB Docket No. 20-74; *Authorizing Permissive Use of the “Next Generation” Broadcast Television Standard*, GN Docket No. 16-142.

Good broadcast reception can sometimes be hard to come by, from harder-to-reach rural areas to densely populated urban ones. Today’s order seeks to change that by giving broadcasters greater flexibility regarding the use of a Distributed Transmission System, or DTS, which allows broadcast television stations to fill-in service gaps while economizing TV spectrum. This unlocks the benefits of DTS just when broadcasters are migrating to the next generation broadcast television standard—ATSC 3.0—which promises an exciting array of entertainment and information possibilities for consumers.

Typically, a broadcast television station operates by transmitting its signal from a single site located in the center of its authorized service area. The signals are strongest close to the transmission site and get progressively weaker the farther they travel, especially if they encounter certain non-uniform terrain. The transition to digital television made it possible for broadcasters to have the option to cover the areas that receive a weaker signal by using a DTS network, which sets up multiple, lower power transmission sites that fill in service gaps and use the same radiofrequency.

However, DTS technology has not been widely deployed. This is in part because our rules permit a DTS transmitter to extend outside of a station’s service area by a “minimal amount.” This standard is imprecise, and fails to provide clear rules for stakeholders, be they broadcasters or users of TV white spaces. Today’s order sets a clear, service-based standard that defines the spillover allowance and reiterates that DTS transmissions are not entitled to interference protection if they reach beyond a station’s authorized service area. The proposal will allow broadcasters more flexibility in placing their DTS transmitters, especially at the periphery of their authorized service areas. The new bright-line rule provides regulatory certainty for both broadcasters and for users of TV white spaces.

To ensure that broadcasters prioritize reception reliability for their local viewers, the Commission has decided to set the boundaries for a broadcaster’s authorized service area at the hypothetical maximum area that it could serve with a single, central transmitter. Any DTS transmitters must stay within the broadcaster’s authorized or hypothetical maximum area and must be necessary to ensure better local transmission—not intended to extend coverage beyond the authorized area. The Commission finds that this framework will ensure that broadcasters provide programming that is responsive to the needs and interests of their communities of license. Above all, consumers will see the benefits through improved service for hard-to-reach viewers, as well as improved indoor and mobile reception.

Navigating such a technically complex proceeding was certainly not easy, and I’m grateful to the staff that put in long hours to get it done: from the Media Bureau, Evan Baranoff, Ty Bream, Michelle Carey, Mark Colombo, John Gabrysch, Kevin Harding, Brendan Holland, Jamile Kadre, Barbara Kreisman, Evan Morris, Julie Salovaara and Sarah Whitesell; from the Office of Engineering and Technology, Chrysanthos Chrysanthou, Martin Doczkat, Gulmira Mustapaeva, Barbara Pavon, Ron Repasi, and Sean Yun; from the Office of Economics and Analytics, Eugene Kiselev and Andy Wise; from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities, Belford Lawson; and from the Office of General Counsel, Michael Carlson, David Konczal and Bill Richardson.