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For Immediate Release

FCC BEGINS MAJOR 5G SPECTRUM AUCTION

Auction of Mid-Band Spectrum Will Further American 5G Leadership

WASHINGTON, December 8, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today kicked off its latest 5G spectrum auction, making available 280 megahertz of prime mid-band spectrum in the 3.7-3.98 GHz band—a portion of the C-band. This is the FCC’s largest mid-band 5G spectrum auction to date.

“This is a big day for American consumers and U.S. leadership in 5G,” said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. “By freeing up this wide swath of critical mid-band spectrum, the FCC is paving the way for Americans to receive fast 5G wireless services. Together with the recent success of our 3.5 GHz band auction, our work to auction the 2.5 GHz and 3.45 GHz bands in 2021, and the other ground-breaking spectrum auctions we’ve held since 2017, our 5G FAST Plan is in full swing. American consumers and businesses will benefit from this FCC’s efforts for years to come.”

Chairman Pai proposed and instituted a plan to repurpose the C-band quickly. As a result, this mid-band spectrum will be available to deliver next-generation connectivity to American consumers and businesses years ahead of schedule. The FCC successfully secured commitments from fixed satellite companies to move quickly out of the 3.7-3.98 GHz band and into the upper portion of the C-band, which will free up this crucial mid-band spectrum for 5G wireless services.

The first round of the clock phase of the auction will start today at 10 a.m. ET. This auction will offer 5,684 new flexible-use overlay licenses based on Partial Economic Areas (PEAs) for spectrum in the 3.7–3.98 GHz band. This spectrum holds the potential to be prime spectrum for 5G services given its combination of geographic coverage and capacity, and the FCC’s auction procedures will ensure the assignment to auction winners of contiguous spectrum blocks allowing wide channel bandwidths that support 5G deployment.

Satellite operators currently using the C-Band have agreed to repack their operations out of the band’s lower 300 megahertz (3.7-4.0 GHz) into the upper 200 megahertz (4.0-4.2 GHz). The first phase of this transition—the clearing of 120 megahertz of spectrum from 3.7-3.82 GHz in 46 of the nation’s top 50 PEAs—will conclude by December 5, 2021. The second phase—clearing the lower 120 megahertz of spectrum in the remaining PEAs, plus an additional 180 megahertz from 3.82-4.0 GHz nationwide—will conclude by December 5, 2023.

This effort is an important component of Chairman Pai’s comprehensive strategy to Facilitate America’s Superiority in 5G Technology (the 5G FAST plan): <https://www.fcc.gov/5G>. For more information on Auction 107, visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/auction/107>.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).