

SUMMARY OF WIRELESS BROADBAND PUBLIC NOTICE



On May 5, 2004, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) formed the Wireless Broadband Access Task Force “to take a hard look at what we can do to extend the reach of broadband services to underserved areas and to provide increased competition in areas that already have access to broadband.”¹ The Task Force immediately issued a public notice soliciting comment on the status of wireless broadband deployment. Comments were due June 3, 2004. Reply Comments were due July 1, 2004. Copies of the Public Notice and other documents relevant to the task force can be found on the FCC’s Wireless Broadband Access Task Force Page at <http://www.fcc.gov/wbatf/>.

Scope of Notice

The Notice asks interested parties to file comments on how best to encourage deployment of wireless broadband services, whether from licensed providers or from providers using unlicensed technologies. While parties are encouraged to discuss what systems they use, how they are deploying, and general recommendations they think will help spur wireless broadband deployment, the Notice stresses that this is not a rulemaking proceeding or the place to address other pending issues such as the regulatory treatment of voice over IP (VOIP).

Specific Questions

To guide interested parties, the Notice asks 12 specific questions the Task Force would like to address.

- 1) What broadband solutions (wireless or wireline) are available and do they compete with each other?
- 2) Is there enough spectrum (licensed or unlicensed) for wireless broadband.
- 3) Do licensed and unlicensed spectrum technologies compliment each other?
- 4) What works better for distributing spectrum: unlicensed (anyone uses subject to interference), licensed (using auctions), or first come, first served?
- 5) How can the Commission’s rules take advantage of the flexibility of wireless?
- 6) What regulatory incentives would encourage deployment of advanced services for licensed wireless? For unlicensed?
- 7) What is the geographic distribution of wireless broadband?
- 8) What rules must change to encourage deployment of mesh networks or other new network architectures?
- 9) What applications are offered by wireless providers, both licensed and unlicensed?
- 10) Are there model projects or systems the FCC should know about?
- 11) Can the FCC facilitate the deployment of municipal wireless networks? How?
- 12) What barriers to entry exist for WISPs or other providers of unlicensed services?

¹ Announcement of Formation of Task Force By Chairman Powell.

How To Participate

Although the official comment dates have passed, the FCC will continue to take comment in the record until the Task Force issues its report. The Public Notice has the docket number GN Docket No. 04-163. Interested parties can review filed comments or can themselves file comments through the FCC's electronic comments filing system (ECFS), at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/ecfs/>. (For ECFS purposes, the Docket Number is just 04-163.)

Anyone can file a comment using nothing more than a standard web browser. You do not have to be a lawyer or even a U.S. citizen. Media Access Project maintains a resource page explaining the FCC and its filing process, <http://www.mediaaccess.org/fcc/>.

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