

Spectrum Policy at MWC 2025: Recapping CTIA's Everything Policy Program

October 15, 2025

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) has jump-started U.S. spectrum policy with ambitious spectrum auction requirements to repurpose a minimum amount of spectrum on a specified timetable. On October 14, at CTIA's Everything Policy Program in Las Vegas as part of Mobile World Congress (MWC), expert stakeholders across the wireless ecosystem discussed how increasing access to spectrum resources will support deployment of next-generation wireless networks. We want to highlight two panel discussions: The first panel on "Implementing America's Renewed Spectrum Roadmap" featured experts from AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, Ericsson, and Intel, who discussed how the U.S. will achieve the spectrum policy vision in the OBBBA. The second panel on "Unleashing Wireless Innovation and Deployment Through Deregulation" featured experts from AT&T, T-Mobile, American Tower, and Southern Linc, who discussed the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) deregulatory efforts with respect to infrastructure rules.

During the first panel, industry stakeholders discussed how one major focus of the OBBBA is mid-band spectrum, which is critical for 5G and beyond. The panelists explained that mid-band spectrum – and especially C-band spectrum (3.7-3.98 GHz) – serves as the backbone of commercial wireless networks today, and the anticipated Upper C-band (3.98-4.2 GHz) auction will enable additional deployments and spectrum efficiency. The OBBBA requires the auction of at least 100 megahertz in the Upper C-band by 2027, though panelists indicated optimism that the Upper C-band auction could exceed that amount. They also explained that a successful Upper C-band auction will require coordination between the FCC, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and National Telecommunications and

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Information Administration (NTIA) to ensure compatibility with radio altimeters operating in the adjacent band, and called for this process to be expedited as much as possible.

Following the Upper C-band auction, panelists said they expect spectrum in the 2.7-2.9 GHz band to be next for auction to help achieve the OBBBA's overall 800-megahertz spectrum auction target. Panelists explained that spectrum in the 7 GHz band (7.125-7.4 GHz) is also likely to be auctioned in the near term, but the propagation characteristics are not as favorable for wireless networks. As alternatives, panelists expressed interest in reexamining the CBRS band (3.55-3.7 GHz), which currently operates with a shared model between federal and non-federal users (and among non-federal users), and encouraging NTIA to make swift progress on the 4 GHz band (4.4-4.94 GHz). The industry experts cautioned against achieving the OBBBA's goals in an entirely piecemeal fashion, highlighting that 6G networks will require large blocks of contiguous spectrum.

In a brief, pre-recorded statement shown after the first panel, NTIA Administrator Arielle Roth indicated that NTIA's priority is to meet and hopefully exceed its OBBBA target to identify 500 megahertz of spectrum for full-power commercial use. Administrator Roth indicated NTIA will turn its focus to the 4 GHz band as federal incumbents in the band have shown a willingness to repurpose the spectrum. She highlighted the need for contiguous spectrum for next-generation networks, which the 4 GHz band can provide.

In the second panel, panelists discussed the FCC's "Build America Agenda" and the deregulatory steps the FCC is taking to eliminate or mitigate regulations that inhibit wireless investment and infrastructure deployment in the United States. Panelists explained the FCC has already deleted a number of unnecessary or outdated regulations through the *Delete Delete Delete* proceeding, but there are more opportunities for infrastructure reform – particularly with respect to National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act implementing regulations that can be burdensome for wireless providers. The industry experts called for the FCC to consider how streamlined state and local reviews of small cell deployments could be expanded to cover additional wireless facilities, as well as implementing "shot clocks" and proportionate fees to further encourage wireless investments. Lastly, the panelists emphasized that reform for the FCC's various online databases would improve infrastructure deployment by making the application and approval process easier to navigate.

Wiley has a deep and experienced bench of lawyers who handle wireless issues for clients. Wiley's Telecom, Media & Technology Practice has a wealth of expertise on spectrum management and regulations, and our team of engineers and attorneys include former government officials that are deeply involved with all aspects of the United States government's spectrum management regime.

Are you at #MWC25 this week? We'd love to catch up! Reach out to anyone in the Wiley delegation: Megan Brown, Josh Turner, Henry Gola, Shiva Goel, Kevin Rupy, Kat Scott, Sara Baxenberg, Diane Holland, Alex De Bianchi, Steve Conley, and Kelly Laughlin. Stay tuned to Wiley Connect for more updates from the conference!