

Statement on GOP Spectrum Auction Proposal
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During my tenure as Deputy Administrator at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I was responsible for coordinating and overseeing FAA's implementation of spectrum law and policy to ensure that deployment of 5G C-Band could safely co-exist with aviation safety. Government and industry stakeholders, including the aviation and telecommunications sectors, learned valuable lessons from the past deployment of the 5G C-Band.

We must avoid the mistakes of the past to allow for the successful deployment of additional spectrum that does not jeopardize aviation safety or unduly constrain the National Airspace System (NAS). These lessons are particularly important given the current challenges facing the NAS and the concerted bipartisan effort to modernize the NAS for the safety, efficiency, and economic competitiveness of the U.S. aviation sector and the flying public.

In November 2024, the FAA convened a cross-government, cross-industry meeting regarding potential Congressional action to restore the Federal Communications Commission's statutory auction authority and authorize the sale of additional spectrum in the upper C-band. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the necessary conditions and timeline to achieve that goal in a manner that allows wireless services and aviation to coexist safely and without interference over the next 5-15 years. (A copy of FAA's meeting summary is attached.) As described in the summary, the meeting attendees generally agreed on the sequence of critical path actions that are necessary *prior* to a new auction to ensure the safe coexistence of wireless and aviation uses.

Safety Step Sequence (5-15 years):

1. Congressional funding for new radio altimeter standards
2. Preliminary performance capabilities established
3. RTCA completion of new standards (not to occur before March 2027)
4. FAA Technical Standard Order publication
5. FCC service and auction rules incorporating safety requirements
6. FAA rulemaking requiring new equipment be installed on aircraft
7. FCC auction initiation
8. FAA final rule publication
9. New radio altimeter compliance

Any attempt to auction and deploy this spectrum within two years would be dangerous. It would force aviation users in the system to fly without proper safety equipment, or risk widespread flight cancellations and resulting disruptions to consumers. Either way, we cannot recreate the chaos of 2021 and 2022. Even telecommunications companies acknowledged at the meeting that safety measures must be in place first.

The next generation of radio altimeters requires complex integration far beyond simple filtering—manufacturers need years for development and testing. RTCA has already stated the foundational standards won't be ready before 2028.

Congress should amend this legislation to:

- Complete all safety steps before any auction takes place;
- Establish realistic timelines based on technical requirements; and
- Ensure existing voluntary agreements continue until new equipment is deployed.

I urge Congress to correct these significant safety risks before enacting this legislation. Without these amendments, we will repeat the costly mistakes of the past, when inadequate preparation led to widespread flight disruptions, billions in economic losses, and emergency government intervention. The technical requirements for safe coexistence are achievable, but we need realistic timelines that prioritize safety over revenue generation to achieve necessary safety steps. Failure to do so will endanger aviation safety and force the FAA to further constrain operations in the NAS to mitigate safety risks.

Attachment (Cross-Industry Engagement on 5G Spectrum Opportunities, Nov. 7, 2024, Meeting Summary)