

## All ACES



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## Many Frustrated as FCC Rules to Reallocate 5.9 GHz Spectrum Away from Transportation Safety

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted unanimously on November 18 to redeploy the majority of the 5.9 GHz band of wireless radio spectrum once reserved for advanced vehicle safety technologies. The decision, hailed by cable companies, has prompted dire warnings from departments of transportation and various transportation safety groups who say road safety and the future of automotive innovation in the U.S. has been severely compromised.

The block of the 5.9 GHz band at issue was designated in 1999 for transportation safety-related use when the FCC set aside 75 megahertz of spectrum for vehicle and infrastructure communications, including Dedicated Short-Range Communications (DSRC). Wednesday's verdict significantly narrows valuable spectrum in what is recognized as the transportation "Safety Band" by reallocating 45 of the 75 megahertz in the band for other commercial purposes, such as Wi-Fi.

John Bozzella, president of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, a trade group with members including BMW AG, Ford, GM and Toyota Motor Corp, told [Bloomberg Technology](#) in an email that the FCC's move "undeniably impacts road safety and the future of automotive innovation in this country."

"Not only was most of the 5.9 GHz Safety Spectrum reallocated away from transportation safety, but it also appears that critical issues around harmful interference to Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) operations were not addressed," Bozzella continued.

But FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said minutes before the vote that the long-promised safety network hasn't materialized. "We can no longer tolerate this inefficient use" of the airwaves, Pai said.

Shailen Bhatt, President and CEO of The Intelligent Transportation Society of America, countered sharply in a [press release](#) following the decision. "Chairman Pai's statement is incorrect – it is corporate interests that are cheering the reallocation of the safety spectrum away from the public interests."

ITS America is one of dozens of transportation safety organizations that have been sounding the alarm about the implications of this action – including the U.S. Department of Transportation, all state departments of transportation, and many other organizations dedicated to keeping people safe on U.S. roads.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao has also been an outspoken critic of reallocating the spectrum. A year ago, she submitted a [letter to FCC](#) Chairman Ajit Pai asking him to keep the 5.9 GHz safety spectrum reserved for possible lifesaving transportation benefits.

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“Due to the significant potential vehicle-to-everything (V2X) technologies have to reduce these societal crises, it is imperative to the Department that the full 75 MHz of the 5.9 GHz Band is preserved for its existing purposes, including transportation safety and other intelligent transportation purposes.”

Transportation safety concerns aside, reassigning the airwaves represents a win for cable providers such as Comcast Corp. that want to use the frequencies to connect with customers’ mobile devices.

The FCC is taking “an important step” toward “improving and expanding broadband service,” NCTA, a Washington-based trade group for cable companies, told Bloomberg Technologies. “It will allow providers quickly to deliver gigabit Wi-Fi speeds to consumers and relieve Wi-Fi congestion.”

Other companies backing the FCC’s plan include Comcast, Broadcom Inc. and Facebook Inc., the FCC said. Facebook [lobbied the agency](#) to ensure that users could access the frequencies outdoors as well as indoors.

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