

Remarks by FHWA Deputy Administrator Mala Parker
5.9 GHz Safety Band Stakeholder Forum:
Leveraging Existing V2X Investments in a Changing Spectrum Environment
Wednesday, December 16, 2020
3 – 4:15 PM ET
Online Forum

It's great to join you all and my USDOT colleagues to discuss this important topic.

Clearly, we're all in agreement that access to the 5.9 GHz spectrum, without interference, is crucial to deploying life-saving applications for V2V and V2I communications.

Our highest priority under Secretary Chao's leadership, as others have emphasized, is safety – and reducing the number of injuries and fatalities resulting from crashes.

Dedicated spectrum, such as that currently provided by the Safety Band, is vital to enabling important safety advances through connected vehicle technology.

So, we're all concerned about the transfer of any existing spectrum from the 5.9 GHz Safety Band because it is a public benefit, dedicated to transportation safety.

Any public or private entity may use it for the defined purposes of supporting transportation safety and mobility.

This means the traveling public is able to benefit from safety and mobility applications that use the spectrum.

From the Federal Highway Administration's perspective, any changes to the spectrum allocation would greatly affect the work of our State and local transportation partners and the progress they have made, including their planning and operations efforts to deploy V2X technologies.

Ultimately, we want to continue working toward a transportation system of the future – and this requires infrastructure that can support automated vehicles.

We certainly want to continue the progress we've made toward improving safety with these life-saving technologies and expand their use and deployment.

And State and local agencies have already invested in V2X communications. Let me mention just a few examples –

As the result of a signal phase and timing challenge issued by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, today more than half our States have installed V2I equipment at thousands of intersections.

Georgia, for example, is deploying V2I capable roadside equipment at intersections in Atlanta to warn vehicles that are in danger of running a red light.

Wyoming is installing V2I roadside units along I-80 across the State to identify hazardous roadway conditions and broadcast the information to help prevent catastrophic, condition-related crashes – such as multi-car pile-ups – that often involve trucks and other fleet vehicles.

Utah has equipped transit buses, snow plows, and intersections in Salt Lake City with V2I communication equipment to enable traffic signal pre-emption, which will result in the removal of snow and ice from roadways more quickly. Utah predicts that faster removal of snow and ice will reduce winter weather crashes.

Across the country, States and localities are operating – or planning – projects that rely on the Safety Band.

Reduced spectrum and uncertainty would impact projects nationwide, including delaying the deployment of life-saving technologies.

Likewise, any transition that involves new procurements and changing out hardware, along with reengineering and retesting, will require time and money.

We need to keep the momentum going to improve the safety of our Nation's transportation system.

Our goal is to work together – with you – to determine how we best derive as much value as possible from current deployments.

Thank you for your continued efforts. We look forward to an ongoing conversation on the best path forward.