

ISSUE: ADVANCING WIRELESS BROADBAND

ABOUT CEA: The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) is the preeminent trade association promoting growth in the consumer technology industry through technology policy, events, research, promotion and the fostering of business and strategic relationships. CEA represents more than 1,500 corporate members involved in the design, development, manufacturing, distribution and integration of audio, video, mobile electronics, wireless and landline communications, information technology, home networking, multimedia and accessory products, as well as related services that are sold through consumer channels.

BACKGROUND: Market-driven facilities-based competition is a key element in stimulating consumer adoption of broadband. Wireless Internet or broadband advances this goal by providing an alternative service provider to consumers. In addition to providing consumers more choice in broadband service providers, it would also work to bridge the digital divide by supplying service to rural communities currently not serviced by other providers.

Two factors have played a key role in the successful deployment of wireless Internet. First, the ability to utilize unlicensed spectrum and the low cost of deployment has allowed numerous small entrepreneurs to enter the marketplace. For example, we are witnessing a number of small wireless Internet service providers (WISPs) entering the marketplace and providing service in rural areas. Second, the portability of wireless Internet provides new and exciting benefits to consumers. Whether it is a wireless home network or a hotspot in an airport, consumers are no longer limited by wireline connections. As Americans continue to become dependent on ubiquitous Internet access for email and information, wireless Internet provides unprecedented convenience and mobility to access such information.

CEA POSITION: The success of a wide variety of innovative consumer electronics products and services is dependent on the deployment and consumer adoption of broadband. Due to the enormous public and economic benefits derived by wireless broadband, we are urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allocate more enhanced unlicensed spectrum. Allocation of more unlicensed spectrum will allow innovators to develop flexible and inexpensive networks to provide wireless broadband services, creating an alternative infrastructure for the deployment of broadband. We are already witnessing the benefits of the recent allocation of unlicensed spectrum in the 5 gigahertz band for wireless broadband technologies. As policymakers move to make more unlicensed spectrum available, they must ensure that policies or mandates do not inadvertently hamper innovation. Instead, we encourage the development of stakeholder working groups to examine interference concerns and develop voluntary industry standards and interference protocols where appropriate.

To advance the development of wireless technologies, CEA's Wireless Entertainment Networks Standards Subcommittee (CEA R7.7) has been investigating wireless technologies through a project in its Work Group 1 (WG1) Wireless Technologies Assessment. As a part of this effort, R7.7 Work Group 1 has created a survey report that investigates a diversity of solutions for wireless connectivity. An earlier draft of this report was shared with the FCC in 2003. The next draft is in process and CEA plans to present it to the FCC, CEA member companies, and other interested parties.

For more information, please contact Veronica O'Connell at (703) 907-7577, email: voconnell@ce.org.