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FCC Adopts Framework to Facilitate Satellite-to-Smartphone Supplemental Coverage

We reported last March on the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC"), the U.S. satellite and terrestrial wireless communications regulator, release of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking ("NPRM") proposing a new regulatory framework to facilitate collaboration between satellite operators and terrestrial wireless service providers to provide supplemental coverage for smartphone service subscribers. A year later, on March 15, 2024, the FCC adopted the new rules modified from the NPRM in a Report and Order ("R&O") and further NPRM on "Single Network Future: Supplemental Coverage from Space" ("SCS"). A copy of the Order and FNPRM (FCC 24-28) can be found [Here](#).

In the R&O, the FCC establishes a new regulatory framework for SCS, allowing satellite and terrestrial wireless operators to apply to the FCC for Part 25 space station and earth station authority to use satellites to provide supplemental coverage to terrestrial subscribers using mixed-use, already-licensed spectrum allocated for terrestrial use, providing supplemental coverage for underserved, especially rural, terrestrial zones, and fostering cooperation and partnerships between satellite and terrestrial wireless operators.

The R&O notes already existing satellite telecommunications providers like Iridium and Globalstar, as well as emerging satellite-terrestrial partnerships like SpaceX/Starlink with T-Mobile, AST and Lynk. The R&O modifies the allocation of spectrum bands in the 600, 700, 800, Broadband PCS and AWS-H Block to allow mixed use SCS service on a supplemental basis to their licensed terrestrial wireless

use (not the "co-primary" basis proposed in the NPRM), bands that the FCC deems suitable for the SCS initiative because of existing licensees and uses. The WCS band spectrum proposed in the NPRM was excluded from SCS on interference concerns.

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