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FCC Grants 2.5 GHz Band STA for Native American Reservation

The FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau has granted emergency special temporary authority (STA) to A:shiwi College & Career Readiness Center to use unassigned frequencies in the 2.5 gigahertz band to provide wireless broadband service over the reservation of the Pueblo of Zuni in New Mexico to accommodate increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Providing temporary access to this spectrum in the 2.5 GHz band is important because it will help ensure connectivity to Tribal consumers during this time of increased demand," said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. "Additional spectrum capacity is needed to address the temporary surge in broadband usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. I've seen the digital divide on Tribal lands, including Pueblos in New Mexico. That's why I'm committed to finding creative solutions, like today's grant of emergency relief, to keep Tribal lands connected."

"The grant of emergency temporary access to 2.5 GHz spectrum will not affect the availability of such spectrum to eligible Tribal applicants in the Rural Tribal Window," the FCC said in a news release. "Further, in processing requests for temporary authority to use unassigned spectrum in the 2.5 GHz band, the Commission is ensuring that applicants obtain the consent of relevant Tribes if the geographic scope of a request includes rural Tribal Lands."

The FCC also announced the grant last week of an STA to Sprint Corp. "to operate in the 2.5 GHz band in Watertown, New York."

The STAs are the latest granted by the Wireless Bureau to provide additional capacity to entities to handle increased traffic as a result of the pandemic.

In other coronavirus pandemic news, AT&T, Inc., which said that its network continues to perform well, stated today that its core network traffic was 19% higher yesterday compared to the same day in February. "Wireless voice minutes of use were up 33% compared to an average Sunday. Consumer home voice calling minutes of use were up 65% from an average Sunday. Wi-Fi calling minutes of use were up 76% from an average Sunday," the carrier added. "We've seen a 46% increase in text messaging in the last two and a half weeks. We currently have 12 portable cell sites operating and have deployed more than 22 during the response to COVID-19 to bolster coverage for our FirstNet customers."- Paul Kirby, paul.kirby@wolterskluwer.com