



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 9, 2009

FCC Chairman Warns of Wireless Crisis

New Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski addressed CTIA-The Wireless Association at the industry trade group's 2009 convention on October 7. Genachowski told CTIA that he believes "the biggest threat to the future of mobile in America is the looming spectrum crisis."

According to Genachowski, the government is tripling the amount of spectrum available for use. But AP reported on October 8 that industry experts expect demand for online video and other high-bandwidth applications to cause [a 30-fold increase in wireless traffic](#).



CTIA has urged the FCC to make more spectrum available, and public safety officials are also eager for additional spectrum that would allow police, fire, and paramedical personnel to communicate more effectively.

Promising a "full-throated, strategic look" for the best ways to bring supply and demand in line with each other, Genachowski declared that the FCC is making this a top priority. Options include reallocating existing portions of the wireless spectrum and developing new technology to use available spectrum more efficiently.

Genachowski mentioned that the [amount of data passing through mobile devices is exploding](#), CNET reported on October 7. By 2013, U.S. mobile customers are projected to be dealing with nearly 400 petabytes of information per month compared to 6 petabytes per month in 2008. A petabyte is one million gigabytes or one thousand terabytes.

"You don't have to know what a petabyte is to know that that's a game-changing trajectory," Genachowski said. "Spectrum is the oxygen of our mobile networks. While the short-term outlook for 4G spectrum availability is adequate, the longer-term picture is very different. I believe that that the biggest threat to the future of mobile in America is the looming spectrum crisis."

Genachowski also focused on his promotion of Net Neutrality rules being expanded to cover wireless communications. He praised AT&T's decision to let owners of Apple's iPhone freely use voice-over-IP services such as Skype. The FCC is expected to vote in October on regulations that would prohibit mobile carriers from discriminating against certain types of traffic, so AT&T's move may have been intended to show the FCC that harsh rules are not needed to force this kind of openness.

Speaking of the upcoming vote, Genachowski stated that "the goal of the proceeding will be to develop sensible rules of the road — rules clear enough to provide predictability and certainty and flexible enough to anticipate and welcome ongoing technological evolution."

"When we say that we haven't determined what we are going to do with handset exclusivity and we want your input, we mean it," he added. "The same applies to an open Internet. We want you to be



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engaged. We need you to be engaged. I am committed to running an expert agency that works for all Americans, that pursues high principles while recognizing the danger of dogma and the power of pragmatism.”

Ralph de la Vega, AT&T’s Mobility and Consumer Markets CEO, made it clear during his keynote address to the October 7 gathering that he is willing to cooperate with the FCC. He commended the commission for addressing the need to expand the spectrum for wireless communications, and he wisely pointed out that the free market and the American consumer should be the primary regulators, not the federal government.

“We welcome the call for a fact-based approach to these issues,” de la Vega said. “And we are pleased, [Genachowski] wants to listen to us. But in a competitive market, consumers will assess the value of our service. And they will pick the winners and losers. And that is the way it should be.”



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