

US regulators give Wi-Fi more breathing space

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Dutch tourist Bas Derksen surfs the internet at a free Wi-Fi hotspot in Manhattan.

US telecom regulators have moved to expand the capacities for Wi-Fi Internet access with more room on the broadcast spectrum and "more flexible" rules.

The [Federal Communications Commission](#) said actions announced

Wednesday would "unleash significant additional spectrum to accelerate the growth and expansion of new Wi-Fi technology" with faster speeds, more capacity and reduced congestion at Wi-Fi hot spots.

The agency said it was proposing a 35 percent increase in the range of spectrum in the 5 GHz band for "unlicensed wireless devices," which use Wi-Fi.

The proposed rules, which may be finalized after public comment, also calls for "a more flexible regulatory environment" which would "streamline existing rules and equipment authorization procedures for devices throughout this band."

The move comes with the United States seeking ways to use more Wi-Fi signals for mobile devices, as a way to ease the so-called "spectrum crunch" stemming from a surge in the use of smartphones and tablets.

Gary Shapiro, head of the [Consumer Electronics Association](#), welcomed the action, saying it would "expedite ultra high-speed, high-capacity Wi-Fi in support of the US innovation economy."

The Internet Innovation Alliance said that consumers "stand to benefit from this unlicensed spectrum through increased speeds and decreased congestion at a variety of locations including airports, [Internet cafes](#) and community anchor institutions across the nation."

But the Association of Global [Automakers](#) said it was "concerned about the potential risk associated with introducing a substantial number of unlicensed devices," saying it "may compromise the integrity of vehicle-to [vehicle accident](#)-prevention technology systems.

"While we do not oppose efforts to expand Wi-Fi, we are concerned about the potential for interference if these other devices are also using

the same spectrum," added the group's Michael Cammisa.

"Global Automakers and our members are committed to working with the FCC and other stakeholders to evaluate the effect of spectrum sharing proposals," he said.

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