

US coalition calls for expansion of Wi-Fi airwaves

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The ZTE Projector Hotspot, a Wi-Fi hotspot with a built-in projector, is displayed at the International Consumer Electronics Show on January 9, 2014 in Las Vegas, Nevada

A newly formed coalition of US technology firms and advocacy groups called Thursday for the expansion of Wi-Fi, saying airwaves are getting congested for a key pathway to the Internet.

The new coalition calling for expansion of unlicensed, or free spectrum

for Wi-Fi includes Google, Microsoft, Comcast, the Consumer Electronics Association and other companies and organizations.

"In the United States, more Internet traffic is carried over Wi-Fi than any other path," the coalition said in a statement.

"Recent analyses indicate that Wi-Fi in our homes, businesses, schools and libraries is becoming congested by a deluge of data from more devices, applications and services connecting to the Internet without wires."

The coalition said the Federal Communications Commission should open up more spectrum for Wi-Fi to avoid a crunch that could slow down or make connections more difficult in the coming years, with Wi-Fi use growing at 68 percent a year.

The group released a study that concludes unlicensed spectrum generated \$222 billion in value to the US economy in 2013 and contributed \$6.7 billion to US economic output.

"Consumers deserve access to their information and entertainment where and when they want it," said Julie Kearney of the Consumer Electronics Association.

"Unlicensed spectrum not only underlies the delivery of that data on demand, but also fuels our innovation economy."

Paul Mitchell, head of technology police at Microsoft, said, "The miracle of Wi Fi has enabled millions of people to connect, learn, explore, and grow —and brought billions in economic return to our economy."

He added, "We need to ensure that our access to spectrum for Wi Fi—supporting our growing innovation economy—keeps pace with our

evolving needs."

Other coalition members include retailer Best Buy, the American Library Association and the tech industry association CompTIA.

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