

To: Federal Communications Commission
Subject: Opposition to FCC Public Notice August 2024 – Proposal by NextNav
From: Meshtastic
Date: Aug 11, 2024
Proceeding: 24-240

Introduction

The Meshtastic project, representing a diverse and global community of developers, users, and enthusiasts committed to open-source, low-power, and decentralized communication networks, submits this opposition to the proposal put forth by NextNav in response to the FCC Public Notice issued in August 2024. Our concerns center around the potential implications of this proposal on public access to radio frequencies crucial for decentralized and community-driven communication networks.

Background on Meshtastic

Meshtastic is an open-source project that utilizes low-power radio frequency (RF) technologies, such as LoRa (Long Range), to enable long-distance, decentralized communication. Our mission is to empower individuals and communities by providing tools that foster resilient communication networks, especially in areas where traditional infrastructure is unavailable, unreliable, or unaffordable. Meshtastic devices operate within unlicensed frequency bands, allowing users to communicate over long distances without relying on centralized infrastructure.

Concerns Regarding the NextNav Proposal

We have identified several key areas of concern related to NextNav's proposal, which could have significant adverse effects on the operation and accessibility of decentralized communication networks like Meshtastic:

1. Potential Interference with Unlicensed Bands:

The proposal by NextNav appears to seek priority access or exclusive use of certain frequency bands that overlap with those currently used by unlicensed, low-power devices like those utilized by the Meshtastic community. This could result in significant interference, potentially degrading the performance of decentralized networks and limiting their availability, particularly in rural and underserved regions where these networks are often the only viable means of communication.

2. Impact on Innovation and Open-Source Projects:

The Meshtastic project, along with countless other open-source initiatives, thrives on the ability to experiment and innovate within the unlicensed spectrum. Granting exclusive or prioritized access to these frequencies could stifle innovation, reducing the diversity of applications and limiting the development of alternative communication solutions. The open-source community plays a critical role in advancing wireless technology and ensuring that it remains accessible to all, not just large corporations with proprietary interests.

3. Public Safety and Community Resilience:

Decentralized communication networks like Meshtastic are vital in emergency situations, where they provide a lifeline for communities cut off from traditional communication infrastructure. By limiting access to the spectrum required for these networks, NextNav's proposal could inadvertently undermine community resilience and public safety, particularly in disaster-prone or remote areas.

4. Equity and Accessibility:

The unlicensed spectrum serves as a democratizing resource, enabling individuals and communities to build and maintain their own communication networks without the need for expensive licenses or subscriptions. NextNav's proposal risks creating a barrier to entry for small-scale operators, hobbyists, and underserved communities who rely on this spectrum to bridge the digital divide.

Conclusion

In light of the above concerns, the Meshtastic community urges the FCC to carefully consider the potential negative impacts of NextNav's proposal on decentralized and community-driven communication networks. We advocate for the preservation of unlicensed access to the frequency bands in question, ensuring that these vital public resources remain available for innovation, community resilience, and public safety.

We respectfully request that the FCC reject NextNav's proposal in its current form and encourage a more balanced approach that protects the interests of open-source projects, community-driven networks, and the broader public.

Respectfully submitted,

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On behalf of the Meshtastic Community

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