

Verizon receives FCC approval to acquire telecommunications spectrum.

Verizon's acquisition of spectrum from Array/UScellular has been approved by the FCC, helping to expand coverage, increase network capacity, and strengthen its 5G strategy.

FCC approves Verizon's spectrum acquisition: A strategic move in the US 5G race.

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved Verizon Wireless's acquisition of spectrum licenses from Array Digital Infrastructure, formerly known as UScellular. According to Reuters, this deal, worth approximately **\$1 billion**, is being pursued by Verizon to expand its wireless network capacity and coverage in the U.S.



Why is the FCC's decision important?

In the telecommunications industry, spectrum is more than just a 'technical asset'. It's the foundation for carriers to provide mobile services, 4G, 5G, fixed wireless internet access, and high-speed data services. A carrier may invest in base stations, fiber optic cables, edge data centers, and core network equipment, but without suitable spectrum, they struggle to effectively expand network capacity.

The FCC stated that Verizon and Array filed under Section 310(d) of the U.S. Communications Act to request the transfer of multiple licenses under the **cellular, AWS-1, AWS-3, and PCS** bands. According to FCC filings, these licenses relate to **618 districts**, encompassing all or part of **140 Cellular Market Areas**, spanning **19 states** and covering approximately **8% of the U.S. population**.

From a business perspective, this decision helps Verizon add spectrum resources in local markets. From a policy perspective, it demonstrates the FCC's continued priority of allocating spectrum to carriers capable of deploying practical infrastructure, especially given the growing demand for mobile data, video, AI applications, IoT, and fixed wireless broadband.

What did Verizon buy in this deal?

According to FCC documents, Verizon will acquire spectrum licenses from Array, including up to **25 MHz of cellular spectrum** , **20 MHz AWS-1** , **10 MHz AWS-3** , and **20 MHz PCS** in the relevant markets. Following the transaction, Verizon may be entitled to up to **372 MHz of spectrum** , including up to **72 MHz of sub-1 GHz spectrum** .

It is noteworthy that the frequency spectrum below 1 GHz often holds significant strategic value. This spectrum offers greater range and better penetration through obstacles compared to many higher frequency bands. This is particularly useful in rural areas, suburbs, sparsely populated regions, as well as in indoor environments where signals may be attenuated by walls, glass, concrete, or metal structures.

For Verizon, additional spectrum not only helps expand coverage, but also increases network capacity in high-demand areas, reduces congestion during peak hours, and improves the user experience when watching videos, making video calls, playing mobile games, or using low-latency applications.

Who is Array and why is UScellular no longer the official name?

Array Digital Infrastructure is the new name for UScellular after the company completed the sale of its wireless operations and a portion of its spectrum assets to T-Mobile in 2025. The FCC noted that at the time of filing, UScellular was a wireless service provider with approximately **4.4 million retail connections** , operating in **21 states** , and owning about **4,400 cell towers** . The company later changed its name to Array and continued to own approximately **4,450 towers** , becoming one of the largest tower infrastructure companies in the US.

The sale of UScellular/Array's assets in stages to major carriers reflects a strong restructuring trend in the US telecommunications market. T-Mobile acquired the majority of UScellular's wireless operations and approximately 30% of its spectrum in a deal worth over \$4 billion, while AT&T had previously completed the purchase of additional spectrum assets from Array.

In this context, the Verizon–Array deal is not a standalone transaction, but rather part of a process of reallocating spectrum assets following UScellular's withdrawal from the retail mobile services market.

What criteria does the FCC use for approval?

The FCC doesn't simply 'agree' because two businesses have reached a commercial agreement. The agency must assess whether the license transfer serves the 'public interest, convenience, and essential needs'.

In its approval order, the FCC concluded that the transaction **did not trigger** the Commission's total spectrum screening threshold. However, the transaction did trigger an enhanced review process for sub-1 GHz spectrum in **98 local markets** , covering approximately **6% of the U.S. population** . After analyzing each market, the FCC concluded that the potential for harm to competition was low.

The FCC also considered factors such as the number of competitors in each market, the ability of competitors to offer competitive service packages, coverage by technology, market share, total available spectrum, and the amount of spectrum Verizon holds after the transaction.

In other words, the FCC isn't just looking at the amount of additional spectrum Verizon is buying. The agency is also assessing the local competitive landscape: how many other carriers are there, whether they have enough spectrum, whether they have sufficient network capacity, and whether Verizon can use the new spectrum to disadvantage competitors.

Concerns from opposition groups

Not all parties support the deal. The FCC noted objections from the Rural Wireless Association, along with a group including Public Knowledge, the Open Technology Institute in New America, and the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. There was also a petition requesting a temporary halt to the review of the transaction.

Opponent groups worry that the gradual transfer of UScellular spectrum assets to major carriers like T-Mobile, AT&T, and Verizon could increase market concentration. They also raise concerns about the impact on rural carriers, roaming, the competitiveness of smaller carriers, and the risk of consumers facing fewer choices.

However, the FCC rejected these arguments within the context of the Verizon–Array transaction. The agency argued that the opposing parties failed to demonstrate a specific anti-competitive effect in any particular local market caused by this particular transaction. The FCC also emphasized that UScellular's withdrawal from the mobile market had already been assessed in the previous T-Mobile–UScellular transaction, and that the Verizon deal was a separate spectrum transfer transaction.

The benefits Verizon expects

According to the FCC, Verizon and Array argue that the transaction will help Verizon improve 4G and 5G network performance, increase data output, boost speeds in hundreds of local markets, and improve service quality. The parties also claim that Verizon will use this spectrum to increase network coverage and capacity to meet growing customer demand.

The FCC has substantially credited—that is, highly valued and substantially accepted—the public benefits presented by the applicant. According to the FCC's conclusion, the transaction is likely to help Verizon improve the overall customer experience, including better serving growing data needs, improving coverage in rural and indoor environments, increasing network capacity, enhancing speeds, and supporting better product and service delivery in relevant markets.

This is the crux of the approval decision: the FCC doesn't view the deal as merely an asset accumulation move by Verizon. The agency believes that spectrum is being transferred to a carrier with the motivation and capacity to deploy the network, rather than risking suboptimal use of the asset.

Impact on mobile users

For end users, this deal may not create an immediate change like a new service plan or a new app. But over time, the additional spectrum could directly impact the quality of the experience.

In areas where Verizon gains additional available spectrum, users can benefit from better download speeds, greater stability, less network congestion, and deeper indoor coverage. For customers using 5G Home Internet or fixed wireless access services, the additional network capacity can also help Verizon serve more households without significantly degrading quality.

However, this benefit depends on how quickly Verizon integrates the new spectrum into its existing network. Spectrum doesn't automatically translate into higher speeds. The carrier needs to optimize radio equipment, configure the core network, upgrade software, adjust frequency allocation, and in many cases, invest in additional base stations or backhaul.

Impact on US telecommunications competition

The FCC's decision also demonstrates a clear policy direction: prioritizing spectrum used efficiently to expand the network, while still considering the risks of asset concentration. The FCC concluded that the transaction is unlikely to deter competitors from entering the market, increase competitor costs, or harm the public interest in the markets involved.

Nevertheless, the debate over spectrum concentration is far from over. As major carriers continue to accumulate more frequency assets, the long-term question is whether smaller carriers and those in rural areas will still have sufficient access to spectrum. Opponents have reason to be concerned about the overall trend, even if the FCC maintains that this particular transaction does not constitute grounds for blocking.

The balance lies in the fact that spectrum needs to be deployed quickly and efficiently to serve users, but the market also needs to be competitive enough to keep service prices reasonable, encourage innovation, and protect consumer choice.

Why is the frequency spectrum below 1 GHz attracting attention?

In this deal, the sub-1 GHz frequency band is of particular interest because it has good propagation characteristics. It can cover a wider area with fewer base stations compared to the higher frequency band. This makes it a crucial resource for rural areas, remote locations, highways, suburbs, and buildings with complex structures.

The FCC noted that following the transaction, Verizon would hold sub-1 GHz spectrum exceeding the enhanced rating threshold in some markets, but the agency did not consider this automatic evidence of competitive harm. Instead, the FCC conducted a market-by-market analysis and concluded that the risk of competition was low.

This reflects a more flexible approach than applying a rigid limit. The FCC acknowledges that low-frequency spectrum is a competition-sensitive asset, but also considers the fact that other competitors are still present and capable of competing in the markets being assessed.

The bigger picture: The 5G race is far from over.

The Verizon–Array deal comes amid a wave of spectrum and infrastructure transactions in the US market. T-Mobile has absorbed a large portion of UScellular's wireless assets, AT&T is acquiring additional spectrum from Array, and the FCC is also processing other deals involving EchoStar, SpaceX, and AT&T.

This shows that 5G is not just a brand advertising race. It's a race for infrastructure assets: spectrum, towers, backhaul, core network, coverage, and deployment capacity. The network operator that owns a better asset portfolio will have an advantage in providing faster, more stable service and better profit margins.

Verizon is already one of the largest carriers in the U.S. According to the FCC, by 2025, Verizon's consumer segment will have approximately **116 million retail wireless connections**, including fixed wireless access, with 83% being postpaid connections. Adding spectrum from Array could therefore help Verizon further solidify its position in certain specific markets, rather than immediately altering the entire national competitive landscape.

Conclude

The FCC's approval of Verizon's acquisition of spectrum assets from Array/UScellular is a significant step in the restructuring of the US telecommunications market. For Verizon, this is an opportunity to strengthen network capacity, improve coverage, and enhance 4G/5G quality in hundreds of local markets. For the FCC, this decision is based on an assessment that the public interest outweighs the competitive risks, while the risk of harming the market is low.

However, the deal also raises long-term questions about spectrum concentration in the hands of large carriers. Users may benefit from a stronger network, but the market still needs oversight mechanisms to ensure competition, accessibility for smaller carriers, and genuine choice for customers.

In short, the FCC's decision is more than just an approval of a \$1 billion deal. It's a signal that spectrum continues to be a 'strategic battleground' in the 5G era — where infrastructure, policy, and market competition all determine the quality of connectivity for millions of users.

You finished reading the article "**Verizon receives FCC approval to acquire telecommunications spectrum.**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.