



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

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ANC3/4G Resolution Opposing
Small Cell Wireless and 5G Technology
Without Studies Resolving Safety and Other Concerns

1. On February 2, 2019, the District Department of Transportation issued revised draft guidelines (<http://bit.ly/2E0kgvg>) that are intended to govern the installation of small cell wireless equipment on streetlight and utility poles throughout the District. Small Cell infrastructure consists of antennas and related power equipment that transmits wireless signals to improve reliable data streaming. These installations are being planned to provide the necessary coverage for current and new technologies, and how each cellular provider will install infrastructure to serve its individual needs. Additionally, some companies will serve as infrastructure providers, or hoteliers, installing equipment that will house infrastructure for multiple cellular providers. Like other utilities, federal law allows Small Cell infrastructure equipment in the public right-of-way. Five providers have received and will be required to execute the Master License Agreement for District of Columbia Use of Public Right of Way (“MLA”). (Verizon and AT&T are among the providers. See <https://octo.dc.gov/page/small-cells> for full list and executed MLA’s.)
2. On September 24, 2018, ANC 3/4G filed comments (<http://bit.ly/2ScIPz5>) objecting to the first version of the Draft Design Guidelines because there were no scientifically reliable studies demonstrating that these installations will pose no undue health risks for residents or their pets and that they will have no damaging consequences for people or the natural environment. The revised draft does not address ANC 3/4G’s comments.
3. The revised draft guidelines do not resolve reasonable concerns about the health risks of 5G technology, which includes these small cell installations. See, e.g., “EMF Scientist Appeal Advisors Call For Moratorium On Policies For 5G “Small Cell” Antennas,” <https://ehtrust.org/key-issues/cell-phoneswireless/emf-scientist-appeal-advisors-call-moratorium-5g/>, and Doctors Letters on Cell Towers Near Schools, <https://ehtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/Doctors-Letters-on-Cell-Towers-and-Cell-Towers-at-Schools.pdf>. Additionally, many studies have linked low-level wireless radio

frequency radiation exposures to a long list of adverse biological effects, including: DNA single and double strand breaks; oxidative damage; disruption of cell metabolism; increased blood brain barrier permeability; melatonin reduction disruption to brain glucose metabolism; and, generation of stress proteins. Additionally, Physicians for Safe Technology has collected material (which can be found at <https://mdsafetech.org/new-legislation-small-cell-towers/>) that describes the adverse consequences of moving ahead without proper safeguards, including “loss of local governmental oversight, control and income; loss of transparency, consolidation of the telecommunications industry, massive unsolvable privacy and security issues, mounting E Waste dilemma, increased energy consumption, technology addiction, over-dependence on technology; and the obvious direct health and environmental impacts of this expanding blanket of wireless radiation which leaves some people homeless because of electro sensitivity symptoms.” These concerns warrant additional scientific studies before District residents are put at risk.

4. Section 2.5 of the revised guidelines indicates “these guidelines have been informed through a best practices review of international cities in North America, Europe, and Asia.” However, no citations have been provided for Section 2.5 in terms of what aspects of those standards from the U.S. cities have been incorporated and no documentation for the best practices from Europe have been shared to show that the concerns raised in paragraph 2 have been adequately addressed, including specification of the technology’s expected lifespan for which such an investment is being made.
5. The health hazards of 5G technologies have been intensely debated at the federal level, before Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). There does not appear to be any widely accepted definitive scientific study, however, that proves one way or the other whether small cell installations — emitting extremely high or “millimeter wave” frequencies above 24 GHz — may have an adverse health impact, although in 2011 the World Health Organization classified radio frequency radiation as a possible 2B carcinogen. Moreover, the only applicable FCC standards for radio-frequency radiation emissions were set in 1996, and did not consider the use of modern wireless equipment like small cells that will be located close to residences. Mere compliance with the FCC’s outdated standards does not assure safety. Recently, during the rollout in Rhode Island several new concerns have been raised (<https://www.ecori.org/public-safety/2019/2/18/new-wireless-telecom-networks-raise-health-concerns>) which has resulted in a number of scientists calling for pausing the 5G rollout until more independent research is conducted.
6. On September 26, 2018, the FCC adopted regulations that are intended to facilitate 5G technology by severely limiting the objections that states and cities can raise to small cell installations. The FCC’s press release stated that this was “another important step in its ongoing efforts to remove regulatory barriers that inhibit the deployment of infrastructure necessary for 5G and other advanced wireless services. This action, which builds upon those already taken by states and localities to streamline deployment, underscores the FCC’s commitment to ensuring that the United States wins the global race to 5G.” FCC Press Release, “FCC Facilitates Deployment of Wireless Infrastructure for 5G Connectivity,” September 26, 2018, available at

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-354283A1.pdf>. The FCC Chair described this action to “cut red tape for small-cell deployment” that will “make[e] it cheaper and easier to string fiber optic lines on utility poles.” Agit Pai, “5G is in reach. But only if we set the right policies,” *Washington Post*, September 26, 2018, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/5g-is-in-reach-but-only-if-we-set-the-right-policies/2018/09/26/9d5c322e-c1c7-11e8-8f06-009b39c3f6dd_story.html?utm_term=.cbadc613d419.

7. Rather than “winning the global race to 5G,” ANC3/4G considers the protection of residents’ health and welfare to be the District’s highest priority — not simply making installations cheaper and easier. Instead of racing pell-mell to authorize small cell installations without any reliable basis for finding that they are safe, the District should oppose this federal imposition until scientific data shows that it will have no serious adverse consequences for District residents. We should not willingly participate in this population-wide experiment that could have catastrophic consequences.
8. The FCC’s action and DDOT’s draft guidelines will give private cell providers the right to put antennas and transmission control boxes on District-owned streetlight poles and privately-owned utility wood poles subject to only minimal limitations. This means that a 5G antenna could be mounted on the streetlight or utility pole in front of a resident’s home, and there would be little the resident could do about it. Given the health concerns described above, the ANC believes this should cause great concern for all District residents.
9. Section 4.2.2 of the revised guidelines indicates that any installation applications “that are not consistent with the published guidelines requires review and approval by the Public Space Committee (PSC) at a designated hearing and will include review and comment by Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) as well as by NCPC, CFA, and HPO as appropriate.” However, there is no process specifying how any findings of inconsistency with the rules determined by ANC’s, prior to a PSC hearing, will be resolved to the ANC/neighborhood’s satisfaction. Without a specified process, the ANC should not cede these aspects of local neighborhood control.
10. Because of these concerns, ANC3/4G again urges the Mayor, the Council, and the Attorney General to oppose the imposition of small cell wireless and 5G technology on the District unless scientifically reliable studies demonstrate that they pose no undue health risks for residents or their pets and that those installations will have no damaging consequences for people or the natural environment. This opposition should include, but is not limited to, adoption of legislation or initiation of lawsuits that will protect District residents and our environment from untested and unproven 5G technology.

Approved by ANC3/4G after a discussion at its regularly scheduled and noticed February 25, 2019 meeting by a vote of 5 to 0 with one abstention (a quorum being 4).

Randy Speck, Chair

Abraham Clayman, Secretary