FCC to Move on Better Wi-Fi

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The FCC is pursuing a plan to open a nationwide swath of unlicensed spectrum specifically for the deployment of "Gigabit" Wi-Fi technology in major hubs, such as airports and convention centers. The plan increase the capacity and speed of Wi-Fi networks in public spaces.

"We predict a WiFi traffic jam and we need to fix it," Genachowski said during remarks at CES, provided courtesy of a live blog from Engadget. "We're working with various federal agencies to move forward with it. WiFi is such an integral part of our broadband ecosystem, that we need to make sure we pay it sufficient attention"

In a press release, the FCC said it will take the first steps next month to unleash up to 195 MHz of spectrum in the 5 GHz band. This would be the largest block of unlicensed spectrum to be made available for expansion of Wi-Fi since 2003.

Because the 5 GHz band is already used for other purposes by both federal and non-federal users, the effort will require significant collaboration with other federal agencies. Genachowski committed the commission to move expeditiously to complete the proceeding but gave no definite timeline for the project.

It's probably no coincidence that the commission annoucned the plan around CES, where Wi-Fi networks are ironically always overburdened. Many attendees to one of the world's largest technology conferences are unable to get a connection to the Internet over Wi-Fi or cellular due to network congestion.

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