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LightReading
The billion dollar
fight to cross the

Cable company Charter Communications appears to be in the early stages of charting out the contours of a mobile network in cities across the country, including Dallas, New York and Orlando.

[**digital divide gets dirty**](#)

[Washington Post Clarence Thomas is right. Big Tech will have its day in court, eventually.](#)

[The Markup Google Has a Secret Blocklist that Hides YouTube Hate Videos from Advertisers—But It's Full of Holes](#)

[The Hill Advocacy group accuses Facebook of fueling anti-Muslim hate](#)

[Next TV Networks, Distributors Blast Nielsen For COVID Response That Caused Plunge In TV Usage Numbers](#)

[Bloomberg Facebook Turns Part of Headquarters Campus Into a Vaccine Site](#)

[USA Today This 'tech support' scam is stealing million from seniors, including my mom](#)

[Spotlight PA Pa. lawmaker wants to compel Wolf administration to release details of wasted COVID-19 vaccine doses](#)

Charter spent roughly \$500 million [on 3.5GHz CBRS spectrum licenses](#) in an FCC auction last year, and last month the company asked for FCC approval to test transmissions in the band in roughly a dozen different cities where it won licenses. "As a recent CBRS Auction 105 winning bidder, in approaching its RF network design Charter requires propagation data detailing the characteristics of CBRS signal propagation in varied topology and clutter environments," the company [wrote in its FCC application](#). "As is standard industry practice, Charter intends to collect such data through Continuous Wave (CW) drive testing in varied locations characteristic of potential future deployment areas. In doing so, a calibrated non-modulated transmitter emits a precise signal, both in frequency and transmit power, while a measurement team 'drive tests,' collecting received power level data at dispersed geographic points throughout the covered area of the transmitter using a similarly specialized calibrated recording receiver."

Charter said it would conduct the tests by installing a CBRS transmitter from Berkeley Varitronics atop one of its bucket trucks. Technicians will then drive the bucket truck around to see where they can find signals. Charter explained that such testing is standard in designing a mobile network, as it allows technicians to figure out where transmitters need to be installed to provide suitable coverage of a geographic area. After all, things like trees and buildings can affect how wireless signals cover a given topography.

However, Charter explained that transmissions in the CBRS band pose unique challenges to network planners because the band is shared among licensed, unlicensed and government users. That sharing is managed through a Spectrum Access System (SAS); Charter uses one provided by Federated Wireless. "Charter is conducting this testing in cooperation with Federated Wireless, and will manually employ Federated's SAS database for frequency and power coordination," the company wrote.

Charter's mobile network ambitions have been slowly crystallizing. Light Reading [reported in 2019](#) that the company is planning to use eSIM technology to push customers' mobile traffic from Verizon's LTE network and onto Charter-owned cell towers, where they're available, in order to reduce the amount of money Charter pays to Verizon for wholesale access to Verizon's LTE network.

Charter's CEO, Tom Rutledge, [said in January](#) that the company could use its CBRS spectrum to eventually offload up to one third of its MVNO traffic onto its own network over the course of the next four or five years. Rutledge added though that Charter's deployment of CBRS would be "opportunistic," focused on dense, high-traffic areas where the cable operator can get the most bang for the buck. Charter already estimates that 80% of all its Spectrum Mobile MVNO mobile traffic is delivered across its Wi-Fi network. Rutledge's comments come just a few months after Verizon inked [an "expanded and extended" MVNO agreement](#) with Comcast and Charter. Verizon announced that new deal in the wake of AT&T's overt courting of its cable MVNO deals. Terms of that new deal have not been disclosed. – *LightReading*

A request for T-Mobile to add two antennas on a Service Electric tower in Salisbury Township (Lehigh Co.) has been approved. Antennas on the tower are used for cellphone communication. The Salisbury Township Zoning Hearing Board voted unanimously 5-0 to approve the appeal by T-Mobile Northeast, LLC, for a variance "to increase an existing nonconforming use beyond 25 percent over the life of its nonconformity" by placing two additional antennas on a commercial communication tower located at 1809 Savercool Ave., in a conservation-residential zoning district.

Zoning hearing board member Ron Evans made the motion, seconded by zoning hearing board alternate member Tom Spinner, to bring the matter to a vote. Nine participants were listed on Zoom for the T-Mobile portion of the March 2 zoning hearing. Zoners met in the municipal building meeting

room. Four antennas would be replaced and two antennas would be added on the approximate 300 foot tall tower located on a portion of Lehigh Mountain, north of East Susquehanna Street and Broadway.

Attorney Michael S. Grab, partner, Nikolaus & Hohenadel, LLP, law firm, Columbia, Lancaster County, represented T-Mobile and opened the testimony by referring to the Wireless Broadband Collocation Act passed in 2012 by the Pennsylvania Assembly, which he said determines the variance appeal is "simply an administrative process." Attorney Victor F. Cavacini, of Gross McGinley, LLP, law firm, Allentown, and the township zoning hearing board solicitor, cited a Feb. 4, 2021, memo from Attorney John W. Ashley, of Davison & McCarthy law firm, Allentown, who is the township solicitor, and "still believed there needed to be zoning relief," Cavacini said. "I don't read the collocation act as meaning all zoning be disregarded," Cavacini said.

Grab continued by noting the lattice tower "has multiple antennas. "There's going to be some new radio equipment put in the cabinet, but nothing to expand the cabinet," Grab said. The tower is owned by Service Electric Cable TV and Communications. "The antennas are a bit outdated. We're looking to update the technology to continue to provide coverage to the area," testified Conor Sheerin, a consultant.

T-Mobile leases space on the antenna tower from Service Electric. Other communication firms rent space for antennas on the tower from Service Electric. There are approximately 30 antennas on the tower. Zoning hearing board member Joseph Kovach asked who is responsible for maintenance. Service Electric is responsible for the tower. T-Mobile is responsible for its equipment.

The existing antennas are 56 inches tall and 8 inches wide. The new antennas would be 59 inches tall and 9 inches wide. Attorney Kent Herman, zoning hearing board chairman, asked if there would be appreciable differences in lighting, noise or interference with other technology, such as TVs. He was told there would not be. Spinner asked how the antennas would be installed. He was told a mechanical crane would be used. The installation was said to take approximately one week. "Does it emit any environmental risk to neighbors?," Cavacini asked. "It's all radio-frequency. Generally, emissions are hundreds of levels below," Sheerin said.

Cavacini asked if a wind-loading analysis was completed, if an inter-modulation analysis was done and if an electromagnetic emissions study was done. He was told all were done. "Does it emit electromagnetic radiation?," Cavacini asked. "Yes, it does," Grab said. "Do they even need a variance?" Herman asked.

"This is a nonconforming tower," Cavacini replied. "Electromagnetic emissions are an issue," Cavacini added. "We reached out to Attorney Ashley because it was a nonconforming use," Kerry Rabold, Salisbury Township zoning officer said. "We are unable to use 5G. The antennas with the facility are now obsolete," Kevin Risner, senior engineer, Radio-Frequency Development, T-Mobile, said, noting the merger of Sprint with T-Mobile, which concluded in 2018. "T-Mobile is prohibited from interfering. T-Mobile operates within strict bandwidths," Risner said. Kovach asked about the definition of 5G, the fifth version of technology for broadband cellular networks, which began to be used in 2019. "5G uses a much more sophisticated modulation, 100 to 200 megabytes per second. It requires an additional antenna," Risner said.

Jeff Kelly, director of engineering, Service Electric Cable and Communications, testified T-Mobile has had a contract since 1997 with Service Electric to lease space on the tower. Kathleen Nesfeder, whose property is adjacent to the tower property, asked, "What is the difference in radio frequencies? How much additional radio frequency will be in the area?" "We comply with all FCC regulations," Grab said. "Who monitors radio frequency?" Nesfeder asked. "The FCC," Risner said. "Did you know that California banned 5G towers because of causing cancer?" Nesfeder asked. "No. That's not true,"

Risner said. "We only transmit a fraction of what we're authorized to transmit," Risner said.

"I don't think there's a lot of data about these things. I would say I'm neutral. It's a concern," Nesfeder said. "We've been inspected by the FCC for radiation. They were up there twice. We make sure we're always in compliance. We're well within the exposure limits for any type of radiation," Kelly said. "If you decide to grant approval, it's subject to proving all these matters," Cavacini said. "It won't alter the essential character of the neighborhood," Herman said. "It would be appropriate to make conditions that the applicant provide the zoning officer with a report," Herman said, noting approval be conditioned upon a report about technical requirements. — **Lehigh Valley Press**

It seems like a strange match. But there it is in black and white.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, a sentient glob of hair gel from Florida known for ferociously defending Donald Trump on Fox News, gave \$2,000 in September to Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, the low-key former FBI agent from Bucks County whose [moderate image](#) has left him as [the last Republican standing in the Philly suburbs](#). Gaetz made the donation in the heat of an election year, while Fitzpatrick's district [was among the most competitive](#) in the country. Gaetz also gave \$2,000 to South Jersey's Democrat-turned-Republican Jeff Van Drew and Rep. Scott Perry, of York County, two leading members of the Trump fan club. Now Fitzpatrick says he didn't ask for the money. And he's giving it away.

The move comes amid reports that [Gaetz is under federal investigation](#) over whether he had a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl, and that he had a habit of [showing fellow lawmakers nude photos](#) and videos of women he said he slept with. [Gaetz has denied](#) having sex with a 17-year-old or paying for sex. And he used the scandal this week [to raise more money](#) and boost his stature, claiming to be so important that he's worthy of a takedown.

Many Republicans — [and Fox News](#) — are now keeping their distance. That includes Fitzpatrick, who will still face a competitive race if he seeks another term next year, and this week was elected cochair of the centrist Problem Solvers Caucus. The Gaetz money was an "unsolicited contribution" received as part of [the GOP's Patriot Program](#), which sought to boost the most vulnerable Republican House members, a Fitzpatrick spokesperson said, adding, "It is being donated to the Bucks County Police Memorial Project."

Federal records show Fitzpatrick, Van Drew, and Perry weren't the only ones to benefit from Gaetz's support. The Floridian found time between TV hits ([179 on Fox News alone](#), according to Forbes) to write \$2,000 checks to 35 GOP colleagues in mid-September. Clout asked the Van Drew and Perry camps about their Gaetz donations. They didn't respond. Perry and Fitzpatrick each remain top Democratic targets in 2022.

Republican culture warriors [were making a scene](#) in Harrisburg this week, and State Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, a likely suspect to show up in that type of scenario, was ... not getting any attention. At all. That may explain why Metcalfe, an ultraconservative Republican from Butler County, felt a compulsion [to issue a nearly 500-word news release](#) Tuesday about his prowess for owning the libs.

What motivated this? Metcalfe blamed a "suspicious gift bag" left outside his Capitol office that "contained a used-looking mug" emblazoned with the phrase "enjoy every snowflake." He didn't identify the lawmaker caught on camera leaving the gift, but by his description, it could only be State Rep. Nancy Guenst, a freshman Democrat who represents parts of Montgomery County and Philadelphia.

Guenst copped to it for Clout, saying she thought Metcalfe had a sense of humor. That's how new she is to Harrisburg. She laughed off Metcalfe's tirade,

noting she left the cup by his door on a Saturday a month ago. She said the mug was used, not new: "I wasn't going to spend money on him."

Metcalfe's treatise on the incident [cited a 2018 Clout item](#) that said "he's been known to live rent-free in the antagonized minds of progressives across the state." Is that pining for days gone by? It's a curious reference, too, since that item was about him angling then to become chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. His fellow Republicans didn't give him the job. – **Chris Brennan's "Clout" column in *Philadelphia Daily News***



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