



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION 4.9 USAGE CASE STUDY

The 4.9 GHz band is a band of spectrum licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to state and local government entities and nongovernmental organizations that support communications essential to protecting the safety of life, health, and property. The 4.9 GHz is used by multiple public-safety entities across the country in a wide range of communities, including major metropolitan areas and more rural locations.

There are two hundred sixty-eight (268) 4.9 GHz licenses in the State of Washington. This includes four statewide licenses and two hundred sixty-four (264) licenses that cover all, or portions of, thirty-two (32) counties. The largest license holders in the state are the State of Washington Department of Transportation (145 license) and the City of Seattle (59 licenses). Other license holders include the City of Tacoma, City of Port Angeles, Columbia Basin Hospital, Clark County, Port of Seattle, Port of Vancouver, Riverside Fire Authority, Snohomish County 911, Thurston 911 Communications, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and Whatcom County. Of these, at least 17 are using their licenses to support 911 service.

Additionally, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has 236 licensed locations of 4.9 GHz spectrum use. These licenses protect the safety and security of Washington state citizens and businesses. The 4.9 GHz band helps WSDOT power and monitor all cameras, variable message signs, variable speed signs and roadway equipment on Stevens, Snoqualmie, and White passes, power and monitor all cameras and signs on Wauconda Pass, power voice and data to the Keller Ferry, and power hundreds of Intelligent Transportation Systems devices in rural parts of the state.

The 4.9 band is a critical resource to the Washington State Department of Transportation as it works to create safe and reliable ways to move people and goods around Washington. The state is one of the bands' heaviest users and relies on local control of the public-safety spectrum to support connectivity for rural sites as well as safety in cities.

A January 2023 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) order ensured that state and local public-safety agencies remain the primary license holders of the 4.9 band. However, a group known as the Public Safety Spectrum Alliance (PSSA) is asking the FCC to migrate the 4.9 band to FirstNet, which is operated by a single network provider, AT&T. Moving the 4.9 band to FirstNet as the PSSA suggests would effectively end local control of the band and undermine local uses like those in Washington.

The Washington State Department of Transportation's uses of the 4.9 spectrum for public safety services are prime examples of why local public-safety entities should retain primary use of the spectrum and are best positioned to determine what works for their public-safety communications needs.