

Consultation Paper No. 14/2016 dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016

**Consultation Paper on Proliferation of Broadband through Public Wi-Fi Networks**

**1. Are there any regulatory issues, licensing restrictions or other factors that are hampering the growth of public Wi-Fi services in the country?**

**Response:**

Wi-Fi is one of the technology used to provide Internet Access services to the end consumers in India. As on date, the provision of Internet Access services by any entity can be done only after it obtains ISP license or becomes a VNO or a Franchisee of an ISP. The provision of Internet Access, through Wi-Fi by any entity who is not an ISP, is a case of resale of services which would necessarily require VNO ISP license. Apart from the licensing issue as aforesaid, there is very important issue of the concerns in respect of national security which come in the way of provision of licensed Internet Access services by the unlicensed entities which need to be taken in to account and tackled with.

Apart from the challenges above some of the other issues which are being faced in provision of public Wi-Fi services are as follows:

- a. ROW / Installation of Pole
- b. Open Area for Coverage/ Right Area for coverage
- c. Internal wiring/ cable routing
- d. Power for Equipment
- e. Floor plan for better planning and deployment
- f. Permissions from various agencies
- g. Availability of Backhaul
- h. Physical Security of the infrastructure (in idle time)
- i. Coverage/ speed issues

**2. What regulatory/licensing or policy measures are required to encourage the deployment of commercial models for ubiquitous city-wide Wi-Fi networks as well as expansion of Wi-Fi networks in remote or rural areas?**

**Response:**

The Government has already introduced the UL-VNO license regime under which the commercial models for deployment of ubiquitous city-wide Wi-Fi networks as well as expansion of Wi-Fi networks in remote or rural areas can be done by the entities who are aspiring to enter in to this line of business. In order to encourage deployment of Wi-Fi networks across the country, the license fee on internet access services should be waived off at least for a period of five years for the ISP licensees as well as for the Wi-Fi providers. This would result in affordable services by Wi-Fi service providers and would also reduce the input cost for the Wi-Fi service providers. Second policy measure could be to reduce the import duty on the Wi-Fi equipment or make a duty free for a period of five years.

**3. What measures are required to encourage interoperability between the Wi-Fi networks of different service providers, both within the country and internationally?**

**Response:**

Interoperability between the Wi-Fi networks of different service providers, both within the country and outside, is a technical and commercial issue. Over a period, organizations like WBA and Wi-Fi Alliance have developed Wi-Fi roaming framework across various Wi-Fi networks globally. With the increase in the proliferation of the Wi-Fi networks and services in the country, the Wi-Fi roaming providers will be able to find a viable business case for offering their services to the Indian Wi-Fi providers. Thus the growth in the Wi-Fi networks is one of the essential pre-requisite for encouraging inter-operability between the Wi-Fi networks of different service providers. One of the major access providers in India has based its BWA services strategy on proliferation of Wi-Fi services while surrendering its BWA spectrum. Whether such access provider or even others would agree for roaming arrangement with other service providers is an issue which is left to the commercial considerations of those service providers.

