



Battle And Pushback Over 5G Rollout Is Heating Up

Citizens and cities are pushing back against FCC bullying and health concerns, even as 5G providers are calling it all ‘conspiracy theories.’ The providers are increasingly embattled by city councils. □ TN Editor Jack Tibbetts, a member of the Santa Rosa, Calif., city council, knew he had a problem. It was early 2018, and he’d started getting calls from constituents at opposite ends of the political spectrum. The common thread: cellular antennas going up next to their homes, causing concerns over property values and health.

The weight of evidence suggests that if radio-frequency emissions have any effect on humans at all, it is, [according to the World Health Organization](#), about on par with other “[possibly carcinogenic](#)” [substances](#), including coffee and pickles. The Federal Communications Commission, citing input from the Food and Drug Administration, [recently declared](#) that existing limits on the amount of radio-frequency energy these antennas put out make them safe. A senior FCC official said there is nothing unique to 5G networks that poses

additional health risks.

None of this has stopped the social-media-fueled conspiracy whirligig that allows health scares to thrive on the internet.

Cities and towns throughout Northern California are issuing ordinances that would exclude new 5G cell sites from residential areas, [citing supposed health concerns](#). Residents of Portland, Ore., and Whitefish, Mont., have also cited these beliefs while lobbying for restrictions. Legislators in four states [including New Hampshire](#) have proposed bills that would mandate further study of health effects or else urge Congress to do so, and Congressman Thomas Suozzi (D., N.Y.) wrote to the FCC [echoing these concerns](#).

For Mr. Tibbetts, it didn't matter whether or not these new "small cell" antennas—which are used for 4G networks but can be upgraded for 5G—going up in Santa Rosa were actually dangerous. Some were attached to utility poles a mere 20 feet from people's bedroom windows, and residents complained Verizon had put them up without notifying them. What mattered was that his constituents didn't want these ungainly chunks of public infrastructure anywhere near them.

"I don't like the idea of someone being in their home and it's supposed to be a place of security, and they are having that feeling of insecurity," Mr. Tibbetts says. "I won't be surprised if in 10 years there's no evidence of cancer from these towers, but my job is not to protect Verizon, it's to protect people in their houses."

Whatever the basis for residents' objections to new cell towers, Mr. Tibbetts—as well as countless mayors, governors and council members across the country—have little or no power under current rules to act on their constituents' wishes. Nor do they have the leeway they once did to set pricing for cell sites, a lucrative source of funding for civic initiatives. Those who do take action are creating ordinances that put their cities at risk of being sued by the telecoms, as happened this month [in Rochester, N.Y.](#)

Billed as the key to the future—of telecommunications, of global competition, of innovation and even of municipal infrastructure—5G has

instead become a bone of contention. In addition to upgrading existing towers, it will require an estimated half-million new towers and small-cell sites on utility poles, lampposts and buildings. Experts also anticipate a long rollout period, potentially of a decade or more.

Most cities want 5G, but they don't want to be told how, when and at what cost. Rules the FCC has already passed, meant to expedite 5G's rollout, might well be creating acrimony that serves to do the exact opposite.

[Read full story here...](#)