



## Broadband spectrum expansion is mHealth's modern 'highway'

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By Dan Bowman

The mobile health industry is on the verge of a historic transformation, with the national broadband spectrum serving as the bridge to the future, according to industry leaders who spoke today at a mobile health panel discussion on Capitol Hill.

Presented by the Institute for Policy Innovation, the briefing focused on the Federal Communications Commission's proposal to expand the national broadband spectrum. Not surprisingly, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's [draft guidance on mobile medical applications](#) also was a big topic of discussion. Regarding the former, panelist John Walls, VP of public affairs for CTIA, compared the expansion to the development of highways that began with the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1956. "[The spectrum] is our highway...our lanes," he said.

As you've no doubt heard, the FCC wants to transfer 120MHz of television spectrum from broadcasters to mobile broadband carriers. To do so, TV stations would have to relinquish some spectrum, to be auctioned off. Participating stations would receive a portion of the auction proceeds. The plan is not without its [controversy](#), though, as some feel that it ultimately could lead to TV stations being shut down.

In response to a question posed about the dilemma, Walls insisted that stations were under no obligation to participate. "Broadcasters have a vast amount of unused spectrum that we could put to better use," he added.

Discussion also turned to more practical matters. Anand Iyer, president of WellDoc, praised the FDA's efforts to provide guidance for mobile healthcare innovators. He also talked broadly about the need for mHealth technologies to be accessible and practical on a variety of levels. For example, he shared several questions that WellDoc sought to answer before rolling out its diabetes management tools:

- Would patients use it?
- Would doctors feel their toes were getting stepped on?
- Would patients have to be "tech junkies" to use the technology?
- Would it be affordable?

Other panelists at the Washington, D.C., event included Richard Katz, director of cardiology at George Washington University and Eleanor Chye, executive director of AT&T's mobility products. Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas), an obstetrician, gave the keynote.