IEEE P802.11  
Wireless LANs

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| A CSD Proposal for Enhanced Light Communications (LC) | | | | |
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Abstract

This submission is the CSD proposal from the IEEE 802.11 Enhanced Light Communications (ELC) Study Group.

# 1. IEEE 802 criteria for standards development (CSD)

The CSD documents an agreement between the Working Group and the IEEE 802 LMSC that provides a description of the project and the IEEE 802 LMSC's requirements more detailed than required in the PAR. The CSD consists of the project process requirements, 14.1, and the 5C requirements, 14.2.

## 1.1 Project process requirements

### 1.1.1 Managed objects

Describe the plan for developing a definition of managed objects. The plan shall specify one of the following:

1. The definitions will be part of this project. **YES**
2. The definitions will be part of a different project and provide the plan for that project or anticipated future project.
3. The definitions will not be developed and explain why such definitions are not needed.

### 1.1.2 Coexistence

A WG proposing a wireless project shall demonstrate coexistence through the preparation of a Coexistence Assurance (CA) document unless it is not applicable.

1. Will the WG create a CA document as part of the WG balloting process as described in Clause 13? **YES**
2. If not, explain why the CA document is not applicable.

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## 1.2 5C requirements

## 1.2.1 Broad Market Potential

Each proposed IEEE 802 LMSC standard shall have broad market potential. At a minimum, address the following areas:

a) Broad sets of applicability.

The IEEE 802.11bb standard was released in 2023 to address the need for additional license exempt spectrum. The standard is increasingly being used in the commercial sector, in particular in areas where traditional radio-frequency (RF) communications cannot be deployed such as military, industrial, healthcare, underwater and other environments. The use of the light spectrum in RF sensitive environments has grown over the past few years and the need for standards that have long term support and backwards compatibility is increasing.

The deployment of high-power solid state light sources together with high-sensitivity photodiodes and advanced electronics are key for the success of light communications (LC). In addition, physical (PHY) layer and medium access control (MAC) technologies have evolved significantly and are able to address existing use-cases for LC with enhanced performance as well as enable additional use-cases. Among those use-case is the complimentary deployment of LC in traditional markets for IEEE 802.11, such as industrial wireless, enterprise networks, backhauling scenarios, underwater communication and wireless access in medical environments. [[1]](#footnote-1)

LC is a powerful complement to RF in environments where communications should be more secure (banks, R&D centers, defense, etc.) and where radio waves may be restricted (hospitals, electro-magnetic interference (EMI) sensitive industrial facilities such as natural gas compression stations, nuclear power plants, etc.. The selection of use cases is driven by the facts that communications using the light spectrum do not interfere with radio communications, the light spectrum is unlicensed and the communications occur inside the cone of the light.

With people in industrialized nations spending more than 85% of their time indoors (<https://www.nature.com/articles/7500165.pdf>), lighting infrastructure has the opportunity to become an important communications infrastructure in the future.

b) Multiple vendors and numerous users.

A number of manufacturers produce both IEEE 802.11bb and ITU-T G.9991 compliant systems. The introduction of IEEE 802.11bb standard has provided customers with a range of options to quickly and easily integrate sub-7 GHz IEEE 802.11 systems with LC. This has enabled customers that understand how to deploy sub-7 GHz IEEE 802.11 in traditional environments to deploy wireless networks in RF-limited or RF-restricted environments.

The wider context for the economic considerations for LC is presented in doc. 11-17/0803r1 [2].

The availability of chipsets in the relevant semiconductor technologies (process size and light efficacy for solid state light sources) is seen as key to reduce power consumption, form factor and costs for LC devices.

Stakeholders include chipset manufacturers to deliver PHY & MAC sub-systems, system integrators and lighting companies, telecom operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), emerging IoT companies, large industrial manufacturers, aviation and transportation industries.

## 1.2.2 Compatibility

Each proposed IEEE 802 LMSC standard should be in conformance with IEEE Std 802, IEEE 802.1AC, and IEEE 802.1Q. If any variances in conformance emerge, they shall be thoroughly disclosed and reviewed with IEEE 802.1 Working Group prior to submitting a PAR to the IEEE 802 LMSC.

1. Will the proposed standard comply with IEEE Std 802, IEEE Std 802.1AC and IEEE Std 802.1Q? **YES**
2. If the answer to a) is no, supply the response from the IEEE 802.1 WG.

The review and response is not required if the proposed standard is an amendment or revision to an existing standard for which it has been previously determined that compliance with the above IEEE 802 standards is not possible. In this case, the CSD statement shall state that this is the case.

## 1.2.3 Distinct Identity

Each proposed IEEE 802 LMSC standard shall provide evidence of a distinct identity. Identify standards and standards projects with similar scopes and for each one describe why the proposed project is substantially different.

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The project will have a narrow focus on the definition of the PHY and minimal changes to the MAC layers necessary to enhance the use of the light spectrum for wireless communication.

IEEE 802.11bb created a baseline for the use IEEE 802.11 sub-7 GHz systems (specifically IEEE 802.11n, IEEE 802.11ac and IEEE 802.11ax) in the light spectrum. The difference between Enhanced Light Communications (ELC) and the existing 802 light communications standards are the inclusion of additional wavelengths, support for wider bandwidth, new channelization to enable greater data rates and denser deployments, support for multi-link operations, support for existing IEEE 802.11 ranging technologies and inclusion of techniques that reduce peak-to-average-power ratio (PAPR) to improve the power efficiency and communications range for ELC systems.

This new approach will allow ELC to address a wider range of use-cases that are served by local wireless area networks relative to the existing (IEEE 802.11bb, IEEE 802.15.7 and IEEE 802.15.13) efforts.

The added benefit of the IEEE 802.11 ELC amendment over ITU-T G.9991 is the use of the IEEE 802.11 MAC and PHY, which enable enhanced mobility, interoperability with other wireless local area networks and lower power consumption. Specifically, the proposed IEEE 802.11 ELC amendment uses the IEEE 802.11 sub-7 GHz MAC and PHY. Tighter integration with IEEE 802.11, coexistence and hand-over with other IEEE 802.11 systems will help to increase the ELC market by addressing additional applications.

## 1.2.4 Technical Feasibility

Each proposed IEEE 802 LMSC standard shall provide evidence that the project is technically feasible within the time frame of the project. At a minimum, address the following items to demonstrate technical feasibility:

a) Demonstrated system feasibility.

IEEE 802.11bb-compliant systems are already available for purchase and numerous academic research has shown the feasibility of implementing the additional features proposed for ELC. The proposed standard would build on IEEE 802.11bb and expand the scope of capabilities.

b) Proven similar technology via testing, modelling, simulation, etc.

IEEE 802.11 is a mature technology which has a variety of legacy devices and a proven track record, with several billions of devices shipping each year. IEEE 802.11bb enables IEEE 802.11 devices to use the optical spectrum with products shipping since 2024. The increased capabilities envisioned with ELC in IEEE 802.11 are in line with the current progress in technology and not expected to impact product development or testing.

The amendment will use modeling and simulation as tools for evaluating performance metrics.

**1.2.5 Economic Feasibility**

Each proposed IEEE 802 LMSC standard shall provide evidence of economic feasibility. Demonstrate, as far as can reasonably be estimated, the economic feasibility of the proposed project for its intended applications. Among the areas that may be addressed in the cost for performance analysis are the following:

a) Balanced costs (infrastructure versus attached stations).

The infrastructure costs are expected to be similar to the installation of traditional lighting or Ethernet based networks, as discussed in Slide 3 in doc. 11-17/0803r1 [2].

The cost of stations embodying this technology is not expected to be dramatically different from existing devices incorporating the latest IEEE 802.11 technology.

1. b) Known cost factors.

ELC technology is well characterized in terms of cost and is intended for devices, such as fixed assets and mobile devices, which are also well known and characterized in terms of cost. The addition of an ELC module that is based substantially on existing 802.11 technology in solid state lights creates a realistic estimate for the wireless infrastructure costs.

Similarly, the presence of optical modules (*e.g*., cameras, LiDAR, time-of-flight sensors, etc.) and communications modules in mobile devices allows for a realistic estimate of the expected/potential impact on device costs.

c) Consideration of installation costs.

These are substantially similar to current installations for lighting and the market forces are driving demand independent of ELC, in particular for Power over Ethernet (PoE) installations suitable for smart buildings, as discussed in Slide 3 in doc. 11-17/0803r1 [2].

d) Consideration of operational costs (e.g., energy consumption).

Using the light spectrum in ELC for downlink and uplink can be more power consuming relative to sub-7 GHz IEEE 802.11 systems. However, the use of ELC offers added security and safety benefits because light does not pass through walls, cannot be jammed and does not interfere with existing RF systems. These features can outweigh the additional energy consumption and offer tangible advantages by enabling wireless communications where typical RF systems could not be deployed.

1. Other areas, as appropriate.

Since seminal work in 1979 [6], light communications have been a subject of intense research & development with steady improvements in performance, cost, reliability and compactness [6-13]. While many applications have been imagined, it is intuitive that the exponential growth of solid state lighting is shaping a huge market for LC and ELC in the next decade. The cadence cycle for enterprise IT systems and other areas is between 5 to 10 years, which is substantially similar to the cadence cycle for IEEE 802.11 technologies.

The light spectrum considered for communications in this project (400 nm – 1600 nm) is already considered license-exempt by some government regulators and falls outside of the remit of most other government regulators including those in Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Europe, South Korea and the USA.

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1. Please see the Consolidated KPI for PAR CSD for LC (doc. 11-17/1778r1) for links/reference to multiple use-case presentations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)