

NASA PICKS AMAZON, SPACEX TO DEVELOP SPACE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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An artist rendering of a NASA Tracking and Data Relay Satellite in orbit. | Photo Credit: NASA

NASA has picked six satellite communications providers, including Amazon and SpaceX to develop and demonstrate space communication services as it intends to decommission its near-Earth satellite fleet in the future.

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The space agency said it is following its proven approach developed through commercial cargo and crew services by employing commercial satellite communications networks. The combined value of NASA's Communications Services Project (CSP) funded agreements is \$278.5 million.

[Amazon's Project Kuiper, which plans to have a constellation of over 3,000 satellites in the low-Earth orbit](#), was awarded \$67 million. [Elon Musk-owned SpaceX, which continues to launch more Starlink satellites](#), having launched about 2300 satellites already, received \$70 million.

The list of funded companies also includes Inmarsat, SES, Telesat and Viasat. Each firm is expected to complete technology development and in-space demonstrations by 2025, the space agency said.

NASA currently uses a network of Tracking and Data Relay Satellites for communications between ground facilities and the International Space Station, the Hubble Space Telescope and a host of Earth science satellites.

"The goal here is really to get industry to kick in with us and develop these capabilities for customers that are not just NASA, but other space-based customers as well, hopefully bringing down our costs," Eli Naffah, CSP project manager at NASA, told *Reuters*.

The space agency said it plans to seek multiple long-term contracts to acquire services for near-Earth operations by 2030, while phasing out NASA owned and operated systems.

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