Rural Wireless and Consumers: New Proposals and Issues

A State Broadband Grant Program

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High-Quality Mobile Broadband Networks are Critical

- Public safety – the rise of location-based services, text and video 911, and FirstNet.

- Health care – monitoring devices, video conferencing for first responders.

- Internet of Things – 21 billion devices by 2020 and $15 Trillion of GDP by 2030.

- Agriculture – machinery, livestock management, irrigation, commodity tracking.

- Nothing works without coverage, upgrades, and backhaul.
Problems With FCC Mobility Fund Data:

Wide Variances in How Carriers Submitted Data Have Resulted in Widely Divergent Coverage Maps
Problems With FCC Mobility Fund Data:

Drive Tests Conducted in October Show Substantial Unserved and Underserved Roads in Areas Where Form 477 Data Shows Coverage
Summary of Results

The FCC’s Form 477 data on mobile network availability, while helpful when trying to understand general presence of mobile providers, does not accurately represent customer experience with respect to access and use of networks.

Many areas that are shown as served by mobile providers in the 477 data are either completely unserved or served at speeds below what would be reasonably considered as broadband (4Mbps down).
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How Big is the Task?

• 3 million people and 700K rural road miles lack sufficient 4G coverage or are served by a subsidized carrier. No 5G anywhere in US.

• At $40,000+ per mile – a $20-28 Billion task nationwide.

• According to Deere, substantial cropland areas underserved – unknown cost.

• GSM/CDMA incompatible – so areas served by one carrier available to only half the users.
FCC Mobility Fund Phase II is Insufficient

- Proposed $470M per year vastly underfunds mobile broadband’s $20-28 Billion need.

- Proposed challenge process undefined and would require small rural carriers conduct drive tests to prove no coverage.

- Form 477 data overstates coverage, eliminating support to areas deemed covered forever.
States Need to Go it Alone

• Even if Adopted, It is Unlikely the Mobility Fund Phase II Will Provide Your State With Sufficient Support to Make Your Rural Mobile Broadband Networks Reasonably Comparable in Coverage and Throughput Speed to Those Available in Urban/Suburban Areas.
State Mobile Broadband Program

• Simple grant program.

• Skin in the game to leverage investment.

• Accountability/demonstration of service.

• Allows commissions to accelerate infrastructure deployment.
Questions