Reviewing the FCC’s stance, request for comments, and various citations, it has become apparent the FCC is focused on one thing: The past.

The FCC proposal asserts that internet service providers are an “information service” which is far from true. ISPs function more as a utility than “information service” ISPs themselves do not provide any information – they provide the ability to access information provided by other parties. If anything, these other parties are information services. The ISPs do not collect the information for users to browse or search, they route users to the information they want.

Continuously the FCC refers to a “Free and open internet.” By the references throughout the documents, it becomes obvious that the term applies to one category: Businesses. They make some token statements towards protecting the people and consumers, along with prices, but the major aim of this document is to make it easier for business.

Granted, there are times that businesses need regulatory assistance. But when you have 30%**1** of areas served by just one provider at 10Mbs, who need to be your priority -the thousands of ISPs, or millions of people who use them? You are allowing these companies a free hand to do what they want in the pursuit of what businesses strive for: Money. They will do whatever they can to make it. Sell information, and only allow ‘fast’ access to those sites that pay them more. It is extortion; it allows the ISP to determine where the customer goes, rather than the customer. Would you visit a site that takes 50% longer to load than another similar site? Probably not, so the decision has been taken from your hands and made by the company. Where is the freedom in that?

Cost Benefit Analysis

The FCC proposes a CBA be done. It would be a good idea to do one, but not specifically focus on ISP providers and their costs or benefits. A wider view should be taken to include consumers, potential effects of actions, and consumer ability to afford services, along with how they could be impacted by “new” revenue streams companies would pursue in classification change. The FCC should keep in mind this guideline from the OMB circular A-4:

“When important benefits and costs cannot be expressed in monetary units, BCA is less useful, and it can even be misleading, because the calculation of net benefits in such cases does not provide a full evaluation of all relevant benefits and costs.”**2**

Such a CBA done without including intangible items such as freedom of information exchange, privacy and monetary resources of investors or start-ups fails to take important basics of freedom and free enterprise into account.

I would propose that the FCC do a lot more study before implementing any rules or charging ahead. Investigate, review comments, weigh public opinion, factor in intangible items and proceed from there. A middle ground may be to keep bans on throttling, paid prioritization, and blocking, but reclassify ISPs. However, as pointed out in the FCC document, previously the FCC was unable to enforce no blocking and unreasonable discrimination.

As that stands, to protect consumers from companies that they are - in many cases- required to do business with if they want internet due to limited competition, things such as no blocking, no paid prioritization, and no throttling rules should be kept in place, and other adjustments to regulations made to encourage investment in infrastructure, speed, and coverage.

I support continued implementation and enforcement of Net neutrality. I’m sure there are ways to assist and encourage ISP providers build and expand infrastructure and improve speed besides remove these vital protections for consumers. Rather than a sweeping change, smaller changes to help them would seem to be a better course.