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Ex Parte

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WT Docket No. 17-79; Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WC Docket No. 17-84

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On September 7, 2017, Verizon Senior Vice President Sowmyanarayan Sampath, William H. Johnson, and I met with Nicholas Degani, Senior Counsel and Jay Schwarz, Wireline Advisor, both of the Chairman's office, and with Commissioner Brendan Carr and Nirali Patel, Acting Legal Advisor for Media, Consumer Protection, and Enforcement, Kevin Holmes, Acting Legal Advisor for Wireless and Public Safety, and Nathan Eagan, Acting Wireline Legal Advisor. We discussed issues raised in the Commission's *Wireline Notice*¹ on the need for increased fiber deployment and on current barriers we see that undermine or delay fiber deployment. We also discussed issues raised in the Commission's *Wireless Notice*² on speeding review of small cell applications. Our remarks were consistent with our filed comments and prior ex partes³ in these proceedings.

¹ See *Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Notice of Inquiry, and Request for Comment, 32 FCC Rcd 3266 (2017) ("*Wireline Notice*").

² See *Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry, 32 FCC Rcd 3330 (2017) ("*Wireless Notice*").

³ See June 15, 2017 Comments & July 17, 2017 Reply Comments of Verizon, WC Docket No. 17-84; June 15, 2017 Comments & July 17, 2017 Reply Comments of Verizon, WT Docket No. 17-79 & WC Docket No. 17-84; Ex Parte Letter from Katharine Saunders, Verizon, to Marlene Dortch, FCC, WC Docket No. 17-84 (Aug. 24, 2017); and Ex Parte Letter from Andre Lachance, Verizon, to Marlene Dortch, FCC, WT Docket No. 17-79 & WC Docket No. 17-84 (Aug. 25, 2017).

Sampath explained that rapid growth in wireless usage demands continued investment in fiber facilities and small cells to support users' needs. Today, as users seek ever more coverage and data, providers are working to densify their networks to support 4G LTE coverage. As we move toward 5G, the need for densification and for more ubiquitous fiber to support it will only increase. We explained the importance of being able to deploy quickly, given the scope of the increase in small cells and fiber that will be needed in coming years. To support densification, Sampath discussed how Verizon has secured a supply of fiber through its multi-year deals with fiber manufacturers like Corning. But to make it a reality – and thus to support the investment and jobs that come with fiber expansion – Sampath explained that we need the ability to access poles quickly and efficiently, both to hang small cells and to string fiber that will provide the necessary backhaul.

Today, rapid fiber and small cell deployment can face obstacles, with often significant delays in getting access to poles for new fiber and small cell attachments. In some locations, local electric companies take nine months or more to complete the pole-attachment process, and we have often seen delays of twelve months or longer to get new fiber on a pole. We've found that the sequential nature of make-ready work means that one party's delay in completing its make-ready work often delays other parties' ability to begin their make-ready work. As a result, we have found that make-ready is often not completed until well beyond the deadlines specified in the Commission's rules.

To address these delays, Sampath reiterated our strong support for one-touch make-ready (OTMR), a proposal that would allow attachers, as well as pole owners, the option to use pole-owner-approved contractors to coordinate and do all work to add a new attachment. Instead of multiple parties performing sequential make-ready work on the pole, a new attacher could use a single pole-owner-approved contractor to complete all of the work at one time. OTMR benefits attachers and pole owners by replacing multiple truck rolls with one and thereby speeding the attachment timeline and reducing aggregate make-ready costs. OTMR also benefits pole owners because in an OTMR structure, the attaching party has the responsibility for obtaining a survey and make-ready estimate and of notifying existing attachers that make-ready work will be performed rather than shifting that responsibility to the pole owner. Municipalities and residents benefit because there will be reduced closures of streets and sidewalks for make-ready work. We noted that contractors would be approved by the pole owner to perform work (either in the communications space, or the electrical space or both), and encouraged the Commission to allow a party choosing OTMR to use the contractor to perform work in either of those spaces. Under our proposal, the new attacher would be required to correct any deficiencies that the pole owner or existing attachers identify regarding the contractor's make-ready work and the new attacher and approved contractor would indemnify for any harm caused by such work. Attachers (and pole owners, if applicable) who do not elect to use OTMR would be able to continue to use the existing pole attachment timeframes and processes.

Sampath also explained that we have found instances of local or state rules that cause delay, such as procedures and costs designed for macro-cells being improperly used to review small cell applications. We noted that there are many instances where municipalities or other entities require unnecessary reviews, or impose unreasonable (and not cost-based) rates and fees

for access to rights-of-way or municipally owned poles. We encouraged the Commission to adopt proposals that would create a shorter shot clock and a deemed granted remedy for small cell applications. We also talked about the importance of the Commission acting to prohibit actions and decisions that erect a substantial barrier to wireless or wireline facility deployment.

We also discussed the Commission's proposals regarding copper retirement and discontinuance. Sampath explained that Verizon has been leading the way in retiring copper and providing users with reliable, efficient, fiber facilities. He noted that Verizon continues to offer customers over fiber the same TDM voice service that they received over copper, and explained that additional flexibility in how and when we provide notice of copper retirement to customers would be helpful. He also encouraged the Commission to repeal its existing prohibition⁴ against disclosing a contemplated copper retirement prior to filing notice, because it keeps us from efficiently working with customers and landlords to help coordinate deployment of fiber and migration to newer technologies.

We urge the Commission to adopt these reforms as quickly as possible.

Very truly yours,



Katharine R. Saunders

cc: Commissioner Brendan Carr
Nicholas Degani
Nathan Eagan
Kevin Holmes
Nirali Patel
Jay Schwarz

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 51.325(c).