

November 28, 2017

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Ms. Dortch:

We, rural telecommunications carriers that elected the revised offer of Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) support in the State of Georgia, hereby urge the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) to take action before the end of this year to authorize additional A-CAM funding up to \$200/month per eligible customer location.

The time to act is now. The mechanism to distribute additional funds to advance broadband deployment is already in place. The additional funding will be targeted to high-cost census blocks not served by unsubsidized competitors where, absent support, it is not economically feasible to extend broadband service. We are already upgrading network infrastructure in our communities and are eager to further extend the reach of those networks to additional customers. If we receive additional funding now, we will be able to design our network upgrades in the most efficient manner to better serve our communities.

This additional funding will result in defined and measurable progress in closing the digital divide in our State. The companies in Georgia that elected the revised offer of A-CAM support in January 2017 committed at that time to deploy broadband to a specific number of additional locations if further funding were made available by December 31, 2017. We are ready, willing and able to meet those additional broadband deployment obligations. Collectively, additional funding of \$200/month per location would result in an additional 666 locations in Georgia having access to a minimum of 25/3 Mbps broadband service, while 224 additional locations would have access to service of at least 10/1 Mbps. The number of A-CAM funded locations that would remain on “reasonable request” in Georgia would decrease from 658 locations to 215 locations (67 percent), if funding is increased to this level – meaning that the carriers serving these customers will have a concrete obligation to deploy broadband to them.

Allocating this additional funding to further extend broadband in our communities will have far-reaching economic and social benefits. Access to broadband is critical to economic growth and productivity in rural areas, which will benefit the entire nation. The Georgia A-CAM companies want to emphasize how important it is for rural businesses to have access to high speed broadband service. These businesses use it to identify and serve new customers in new markets, communicate with partners and suppliers, and increase overall productivity. Frankly, it is an absolute necessity to have broadband access to be competitive in today's global economy.

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We urge the Commission to act by the end of this year to allocate additional funding to carry out its original decision to provide A-CAM funding for up to \$200/month per eligible location.

Sincerely,

Kevin Brooks
President
Alma Telecom, Inc.

The Georgia A-CAM Companies:

Alma Telecom, Inc.
ComSouth Corporation
Nelson-Ball Ground Telephone Company
Citizens Telephone Company, Inc.

Plant Telephone Company
Blue Ridge Telephone Company
Camden Telephone Company

cc: Chairman Ajit Pai
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Brendan Carr