



November 12, 2014

PO BOX 257

Stoneville, Mississippi

38776-0257

Phone (662) 686-3350

Fax (662) 686-3378

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: USF Support for Rural Wireless
WC Dockets No. 10-90, 14-58, and 07-135;
CC Docket No. 01-92; WT Docket No. 10-208**

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Delta Council has served as the regional economic development organization representing the eighteen counties in Northwest Mississippi since 1935. We recently adopted the enclosed resolution which expresses Delta Council's view that wireless operators must continue to receive strong support for the construction, upgrading and operation of competitive wireless networks in rural America.

In establishing the Universal Service Fund (USF), Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to support comparable services in rural areas as those provided in urban areas. We ask that you adhere closely to that critical mandate as you lead the FCC in its ongoing effort to reform the USF.

A failure by the FCC to adequately fund wireless broadband through USF poses the risk of disenfranchising our region's underserved population, in terms of future capacity-building to address issues such as health disparities, educational attainment and other fundamental necessities to accomplish economic parity with more advanced areas of the country. It is our view that reduced wireless coverage will harm the communities like those in the Mississippi Delta. The people of the Delta, like their urban counterparts, need access to more competitively priced, reliable mobile broadband services. Delta Council's members depend on access to wireless services as they travel the region engaging in and growing the commerce that supports a critical portion of our nation's cropland. Indeed, it is in rural areas like the Delta that robust wireless services are most critical.

Also, reductions to USF support for wireless broadband will severely limit American farmers' access to critical, cost-saving advancements in precision agriculture technologies. Many of today's precision agriculture tools require wireless connectivity made possible through USF support. Such tools enable America's farmers to improve yields and productivity, while more efficiently conserving natural resources and the environment.

Delta Council urges the FCC to maintain substantial USF support for the wireless networks which rural Americans depend upon to conduct business, educate their children and workforce, and to provide access to critical healthcare services.

Sincerely,

Walton Gresham
President

Enclosure

Walton Gresham, Indianola
President

cc: Mississippi Congressional Delegation

Vice Presidents

John Bush, Schlater
Glenn Donald, Moorhead
Stephanie Patton, Leland

John Pittman, Greenwood, Treasurer
Chip Morgan, Executive Vice President

Darrington Seward, Louise
Charles Walker, Marks
David Wansley, Valley Park

Resolution

Mobile Broadband: Federal Communications Commission Proposed Rule

In 2014, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposed reductions in support of Universal Service Funding for mobile broadband. The Universal Service Fund is disproportionately critical to the rural population of agrarian-based economies such as that which exists in the Mississippi Delta. According to the Pew Research Center, the majority of cell phone owners go online using mobile phones and those numbers increase among non-whites, young adults, and societies that are less affluent. All of these reported demographics reflect similarities to the profile of the population in the Mississippi Delta.

Mobile broadband coverage in the Mississippi Delta impacts public safety, education, health care, and the opportunity for new broadband platforms to emerge in our region. The Universal Service Fund receives 43% of its revenues from wireless consumers and therefore, a concerted effort should be made by the Federal Communications Commission to provide assurance that mobile providers operate and invest in areas that are rural, sparsely-populated and in some cases, marginally profitable areas.

Delta Council views that the Universal Service Fund should insure a level of support for mobile broadband in rural areas which is comparable to the services provided in more developed areas. Delta Council, therefore, opposes any further reductions which might be advanced by the Federal Communications Commission that would result in less mobile broadband coverage for the Mississippi Delta region.

Adopted by: Delta Council Board of Directors
Wednesday, October 29, 2014