

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 14, 2014

1096

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

One of the central tenets of the 1996 Telecommunications Act was to ensure that rural and high cost areas throughout the country were provided access to telecommunications and information services comparable to those provided in urban areas. As Members of Congress who represent rural areas we want to see that this stated goal of comparable access and rates is fully realized.

The dramatic and impressive adoption of wireless devices in both urban and rural areas over the past few years highlights the need for robust and reliable mobile telecommunications networks throughout the country. It should be noted that what we take for granted while we utilize wireless devices in Washington, D.C. is often not the case when we return to many of our rural districts. We all know where dead zones and poor quality service lurk in our districts. We also know that our constituents have embraced mobility as an essential part of their lives.

Dependable wireless coverage provides countless opportunity for rural and urban residents alike: daily communication between family members; mobile broadband access for businesses to compete and drive economic development; agricultural efficiency mechanisms; unlimited access to information for students and teachers; and quickly and appropriately responding to health and safety emergencies. These opportunities should not be jeopardized by scattered or inconsistent wireless services for those who live in rural America.

As the Commission begins to revisit how best to update the Mobility Fund within the Universal Service Fund to reflect current consumer mobility demand and need, we urge you to continue to work to fulfill the obligations required in Section 254 of the 1996 Telecommunications Act in order to deliver a 21st Century rural wireless infrastructure that allows our communities to take advantage of the endless opportunities within a mobile society. An effective mobile infrastructure provides high speed data and voice coverage in homes, in towns, and on our roads. The health of the rural economy rests, in large part, on these important decisions and we look forward to hearing from you about how the Commission intends to deliver on that mandate.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Latta  
Member of Congress



Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

November 13, 2014

The Honorable Bob Latta  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2448 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Latta:

Thank you for your letter expressing interest in how best to update our Universal Service Fund (USF) policies to reflect current consumer mobility demand and need, especially in rural and high-cost areas. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have similar opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the United States of the 21st century. In the 2011 USF/ICC Transformation Order, the Commission took significant strides to update the universal service program to reflect the realities of the 21st century. In particular, the Commission adopted specific performance goals to preserve and advance the universal availability of voice service and to ensure the universal availability of modern networks capable of providing advanced mobile voice and broadband services.

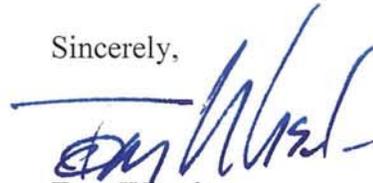
A core component of the Commission's 2011 USF reforms was the creation of the Connect America Fund to preserve and advance voice and robust broadband services, both fixed and mobile, in high-cost areas of the nation that the marketplace would otherwise not serve. The Commission's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau completed the auction for Mobility Fund Phase I on September 27, 2012, with 33 winning bidders eligible to receive a total of up to \$299,998,632 in one-time support to provide 3G or better mobile voice and broadband services, with disbursements beginning in April 2013 and anticipated to continue through 2016 as carriers complete their deployments.

Earlier this year, the Commission adopted a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) to seek comments on proposals to target funds to support mobile services in a Mobility Fund Phase II. In the FNPRM, we reaffirm our commitment to preserving and advancing mobile voice and broadband services in high-cost areas. In light of marketplace developments in the years since we originally adopted the Mobility Fund regime, we seek comment on how to target funding to areas in which service only exists today due to support from the Universal Service Fund. We also seek to extend service to areas that would not otherwise be covered by commercial 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) deployments. Our goal is consistent with yours: how best to use the limited funds available to us to ensure that rural Americans can take advantage of the opportunities presented by a "mobile society."

Page 2—The Honorable Bob Latta

I look forward to working with you as we continue reforming and modernizing the USF high-cost program to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



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November 13, 2014

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2303 Rayburn House Office Building  
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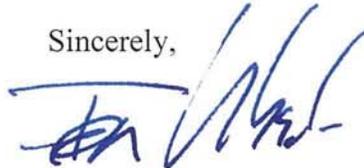
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Wheeler', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the signature.

Tom Wheeler