



Dorchester County
Economic Development
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October 23, 2006

Chairman Kevin Martin
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 06-74, Support for AT&T BellSouth Merger

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to urge expeditious approval of the BellSouth / AT&T merger. As Director of Economic Development for Dorchester County in South Carolina, I know first hand the issues impeding economic growth in rural areas of our county and state. This merger will address one of the most critical needs required of any community seeking to grow its economy and new jobs – affordable and universal broadband Internet access.

The proposed AT&T / BellSouth merger could be a catalyst for dynamic economic change – in our rural communities, especially. It's my understanding that AT&T and BellSouth have committed to deliver *affordable* and *universal* access to broadband Internet service as a proposed condition of the merger. The companies' commitment includes:

- ☑ A new residential broadband offering at \$10 per month, affording many rural communities a viable and economical alternative to dial-up access;
- ☑ A pledge to provide broadband Internet access to *all* residential living units in the AT&T / BellSouth service area, providing rural economic developers an important tool to recruit new economic development prospects to our communities.

The merger of these great American companies will significantly enhance the economic viability of the communities we serve. I ask you to approve the AT&T / BellSouth merger without further delay.

Sincerely,

Jim Friar, CEcD, Director

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Economic Development

JF:whs

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