



OPASTCO

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October 5, 2009

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

Ex Parte Notice

**Re: A National Broadband Plan for Our Future
GN Docket No. 09-51**

**High-Cost Universal Service Support
WC Docket No. 05-337**

**Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service
CC Docket No. 96-45**

**Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime
CC Docket No. 01-92**

Dear Ms. Dortch,

On October 5, 2009, John Rose and Stuart Polikoff of the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) and Sarah Tyree of CoBank met with Carol Matthey, Tom Koutsky, and Mukul Chawla from the Office of Strategic Planning & Policy Analysis and Rebekah Goodheart from the Wireline Competition Bureau. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss universal service and intercarrier compensation reform in the context of the FCC's National Broadband Plan. OPASTCO presented a broad outline for a plan for rural incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) service areas that would enable the ongoing achievement of affordable, ubiquitous high-speed broadband services in these territories. The major components of the plan are as follows:

- Create a new Universal High Speed Broadband Fund, which would support the major components of providing high-speed broadband service – last-mile loops costs, middle-mile transport costs, and access to the Internet backbone.
- The plan would support one fixed technology high-speed network provider in each rural service area. It also allows for one mobile wireless provider in each area to be supported. Support amounts are based on a demonstration of actual costs that exceed a qualifying threshold.
- Rural ILECs can “opt-in” to the new Fund at any time during a seven-year transition period. Once a rural ILEC opts in, all high-cost support is received via the new Fund. Those ILECs choosing not to opt in immediately continue to receive support through the existing mechanisms.
- All intercarrier compensation (ICC) rates transition down to zero over seven years, and the ICC revenues that rural ILECs are receiving at the time they opt in would gradually transition into the support received from the new Fund, as the ICC rates are reduced.
- At the end of the seven year transition period, the existing rural high-cost support mechanisms and ICC regime are eliminated, and carriers are recovering their broadband network costs through a combination of affordable end-user rates and support from the new Fund. At that time, the public switched telephone network is fully converted to a broadband network.
- All fixed technology providers receiving support through the new Fund must commit to offering broadband throughout the service area at speeds that are at least equal to the national average broadband speed, and end-user rates that are reasonably comparable to the national average rate. Support recipients must also make their network available to other retail providers on a common carrier basis.
- The Low Income program is expanded to support broadband Internet access service for qualifying consumers.
- Contributions to all Universal Service Fund programs, including the new High Speed Broadband Fund, is to be based on a combination of working telephone numbers and public network connections, including all broadband connections in service, regardless of technology.

In accordance with FCC rules, this letter is being filed electronically in the above-captioned dockets.

Sincerely,

Stuart Polikoff
Director of Government Relations
OPASTCO