

**TO: FCC Broadband Policy Task Force**  
**RE: GN Docket Nos. 09-47, 09-51, and 09-137**  
**DATE: November 30, 2009**  
**FROM: Professor Sharon Strover, University of Texas at Austin and Professor Robert LaRose, Michigan State University**

**We hereby submit our recent research examining outcomes associated with newly acquired access to broadband services. Our research, funded by the US Department of Agriculture, examines four rural counties that at an initial data gathering time period had scant (or no) broadband services; at a second point in time, we re-surveyed these communities after a broadband provider established services in their regions. One article (under submission to a journal) based on this recently-completed study is attached to these comments.**

**As our results demonstrate, the individual and community level outcomes attributable to broadband connectivity can vary a great deal depending on the broader social and even political environment in which deployment occurs. The technological “fact” of new access does not necessary mean an expansion of competencies and economic opportunities. Curiously, one finding is that once RUS-sponsored wireless broadband operators arrived in these communities, private operators met the challenge by mounting their own broadband services. The federally-financed competitive challenge appeared to stimulate a response. We also find there was limited growth in broadband “awareness” – that broadband could allow one to listen to the radio, make phone calls, start a home business, etc. – suggesting that more attention be paid to helping people understand how this technologies might be helpful.**