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TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

March 7, 2014

VIA Electronic Filing

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

**RE: Expression of Interest
Next Generation Network Experiments in Rural America
Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Pursuant to the *Technology Transitions Order*,¹ Sandhill Telephone Cooperative (“Sandhill”) hereby submits this expression of interest to deploy robust, scalable broadband to unserved, high-cost rural areas as part of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) Next Generation Network Experiments in Rural America Program (the “Program”).

I. Project Overview and Background

Sandhill is a rural local exchange carrier that either directly or through an affiliate provides local and long distance telephone service, wireless service, broadband Internet service, and video service in portions of Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Kershaw, and Marlboro counties in South Carolina. As explained in greater detail below, Sandhill proposes to deliver broadband to high-cost rural areas with Program support by leveraging existing infrastructure and expanding its fixed wireless network.

II. Proposed Service Area

Subject to receipt of funding pursuant to the Program, Sandhill proposes to provide broadband to locations outside of its current service area, but still in Chesterfield, Darlington, Kershaw and Marlboro counties, that are unserved because they currently lack broadband Internet access at speeds of 3 Mbps downstream/768 kbps upstream. Specifically, Sandhill proposes to serve the unserved locations in all census blocks located in the census tracts listed on Attachment A. By deploying services to unserved

¹ *Technology Transitions et al.*, GN Docket No. 13-5 *et al.*, Order, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Report and Order, Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Proposal for Ongoing Data Initiative, FCC 14-5 (rel. Jan. 31, 2014) (“*Technology Transitions Order*”).





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locations in all census blocks in these census tracts, Sandhill would make high-speed broadband service available to approximately 3,500 previously unserved locations.

Sandhill proposes to expand its fixed wireless network to provide broadband services in areas currently served by incumbent local exchange carriers AT&T and Windstream.

Sandhill currently is designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier (“ETC”) in portions of Chesterfield and Kershaw counties in a service area adjacent to the proposed project service area. Sandhill intends to submit an application for ETC designation in the proposed service area.

III. Proposed Technology and Network

Sandhill plans to deploy a fixed and mobile wireless network utilizing 700 MHz spectrum and the Long Term Evolution (“LTE”) air interface. This technology is ideally suited for providing broadband service to rural areas because of its ability to provide last-mile broadband service over significant distances. The LTE standard will continue to evolve and to provide increasingly higher speeds over time.

IV. Proposed Services

Sandhill proposes to provide voice and broadband services in the proposed service area. Sandhill expects to offer speeds of at least 5 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream throughout the service area and higher speeds in certain areas depending on the location. Where higher speeds are available, customers can choose to upgrade based on need.

V. Estimated Cost and Deployment Schedule

Sandhill anticipates that it would request one-time funding of approximately \$1 million for the project proposed above. Sandhill estimates that the project could be completed within two (2) years from the date funding is received, with approximately 50 percent of the build-out completed in the first six (6) months of the two-year timeframe.

VI. Conclusion

The proposed project would provide for the cost-efficient deployment of broadband in unserved areas by leveraging existing network infrastructure and utilizing cost-effective wireless infrastructure. The proposed project would provide the FCC with valuable data about the ability to provide broadband in a rural area using a fixed wireless LTE network.





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If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project described in this expression of interest, please contact the undersigned or our FCC counsel, Greg Whiteaker, at greg@hermanwhiteaker.com, 202-600-7274.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Chambers

Lee Chambers
General Manager

Attachment





Attachment A

State	County	County Name	TractID
SC	45025	Chesterfield	45025950501
SC	45025	Chesterfield	45025950600
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010100
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010200
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010400
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010600
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010800
SC	45031	Darlington	45031010900
SC	45031	Darlington	45031011300
SC	45031	Darlington	45031011500
SC	45031	Darlington	45031011600
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970100
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970200
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970300
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970401
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970500
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970601
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970602
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970700
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970800
SC	45055	Kershaw	45055970902
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960100
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960200
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960302
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960400
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960500
SC	45069	Marlboro	45069960600

