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Received & inspected

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FCC Mail Room

**Congress of the United States**

**House of Representatives**

**Washington, DC 20515**

June 20, 2014

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**HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE**

Subcommittee on General Farm  
Commodities and Risk Management

Subcommittee on Livestock,  
Rural Development, and Credit

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Subcommittee on Tactical Air and  
Land Forces

Subcommittee on Intelligence,  
Emerging Threats, and Capabilities

Subcommittee on Military Personnel

Hon. Tom Wheeler, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St., SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing to express my support for the expression of interest that was filed by the Otsego Electric Cooperative, Inc to provide rural broadband through the Connect America Fund.

As you may know, many of my constituents are at risk of being left on the wrong side of the Digital Divide. Without robust broadband, small towns are losing business, healthcare facilities are having their abilities restricted, and rural school children are often unable to complete homework at home without access to high-speed broadband.

The sparse density of households in rural Otsego County, New York make expanding broadband in this area more difficult from both a business case standpoint and a service standpoint, the Otsego Electric Cooperative is prepared to take on those challenges.

The proposal extends fiber optics to 4,700 rural homes in central New York served by Otsego Electric Cooperative, and also allows for the use of fiber optics at all of the substations which would, in turn, create a fiber optic loop around all of Otsego County. This loop becomes a fiber backbone which will be accessible to provides to utilize when providing last-mile services to residents. This structure is critical to expanding access in rural New York.

I ask that you give this expression of interest full and fair consideration and that you please keep me apprised of its progress. You may direct all correspondence to my District office at PO Box 775, Kinderhook, NY 12106 or by fax to 518-610-8135. If you have any questions, please call my office at 518-610-8133.

Sincerely,

Chris Gibson  
Member of Congress

CPG/rh



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

July 29, 2014

The Honorable Chris Gibson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1708 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gibson:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband deployment proposal that was submitted by Otsego Electric Cooperative, Inc. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter is included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

The Commission took an important step forward last January when, in our unanimously adopted *Technology Transitions Order*, we authorized experiments to advance the deployment of voice and broadband-capable networks in rural areas with support from the Connect America Fund (CAF). In order to inform our policies on building next-generation networks in rural America, the Commission invited parties to submit expressions of interest to determine whether there is interest into constructing high-bandwidth networks in rural, high-cost areas, including Tribal lands. Our initial announcement of rural broadband experiments received an enthusiastic response in the form of over 1,000 expressions of interest from a wide range of entities proposing service over diverse technologies, including Otsego Electric Cooperative.

The *Order* adopted by the Commission at our July Open Meeting builds on what we authorized in January by establishing a budget of \$100 million for funding rural broadband experiments in price cap areas. The *Order* sets an objective, clear-cut methodology for selecting winning applications and outlines the conditions that participating entities must meet in order to receive support, including specific eligibility, build-out, and accountability requirements.

Now that we have clearly established the criteria for the experiments, interested entities must submit a formal application to the Commission no later than 90 days from the release of the *Order*. Applicants will compete nationwide for the funds, which will be awarded to projects that are most cost effective. We hope to have the process completed by the end of 2014, as these experiments will allow us to explore how to structure the CAF Phase II competitive bidding process in price-cap areas, anticipated to occur later in 2015, and to gather valuable information about deploying next generation networks in high-cost areas.

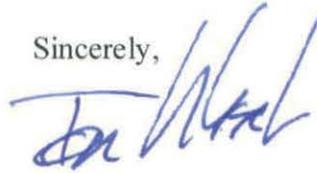
Importantly, this is first time the Commission will attempt to use the tool of competition to bring broadband to rural America. Competition holds the promise of better services for rural America at lower costs. Better service at lower cost is the result of broadband competition in

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other areas of the country, and it is time to use that same dynamic for the benefit of rural America.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a prominent horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tom Wheeler