

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Prepared Remarks on National Broadband Plan Process
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Congress has entrusted the FCC with a matter of profound importance to the country.

It is our job to develop a National Broadband Plan for America.

The statute is clear about what our goals must be. We must find ways to ensure that all people of the United States have access to broadband. We must devise a detailed strategy to ensure affordability of broadband. We must evaluate the nation's deployment of broadband, including via federal grants. And we must ensure that our broadband infrastructure and services advance national purposes, including job creation and economic growth -- whose importance was emphasized by today's new unemployment numbers -- education, health care, energy, public safety, civic participation and many others.

I cannot imagine a more important set of tasks for this agency at this moment in history.

We as a nation have faced challenges like this before -- with the railroad, telephone, electricity, and other networks that connect Americans, serve as platforms for commerce, and improve the quality of American lives.

We are at a crossroads similar to one we have faced in the past. Can we as a country build a 21st century infrastructure to which all Americans have access.

Congress has given this agency responsibility for developing a plan to connect Americans to each other and to the rest of the world.

If we do our jobs right, just imagine:

- a small business in Boston, the Bronx or Blacksburg, Virginia connecting and selling its products to consumers across the country and the globe;
- parents in Brownsville, Texas video-conferencing every morning with a son or daughter serving in Baghdad or Kabul;
- a diabetic in rural West Virginia whose blood-sugar level is continuously monitored in a hospital a hundred miles away;
- a student in a remote Alaskan fishing village, Iowa farming town or Indian reservation in New Mexico learning math and science over broadband from a teacher at Loyola or Duke or Columbia.

Just yesterday, I heard a farmer in Pennsylvania who grew up thinking computers and connectivity had no relevance to him. He now thinks farmers can't live without broadband -- and real-time access to weather, commodity pricing, and agricultural information -- to do their jobs successfully.

I also visited a downtown computer clinic in Cleveland, Ohio where seniors were learning how to use computers to look for jobs, research health care, and send pictures to their grandchildren in other states.

If we do our jobs right and enable universal broadband that's fast, affordable, and open, we can unleash new waves of innovation that we can scarcely imagine today -- in the network and at the edge of the network.

If we do our job right, we can accelerate economic growth, create jobs, and ensure that we have a sustainable economic engine in the U.S. We can unlock the power of spectrum to make America a world leader in mobile services and technologies. We can connect small businesses so that they can compete everywhere, improve educational opportunities, help deliver better health care and cleaner energy at lower cost, and extend the benefits of the broadband revolution to our police and firefighters who depend upon communications for protecting their own safety and ours.

But just because we can imagine a bright future for America, built on universal broadband, does not mean we can just sit back and wait for it to happen. The sad reality is that we are slipping behind as a nation when it comes to broadband. Homes and businesses in many other countries have faster connections for lower prices. It will take real effort and dedication and a long-term commitment to renew American leadership and competitiveness for the 21st century.

Just yesterday, the Commerce and Agriculture Departments announced grants for near-term investment in broadband networks. I am pleased that here at the FCC we will complement these efforts by developing a long-term plan for national broadband.

We heard today how the FCC is going to undertake this incredibly important work.

I am pleased to hear the roadmap Blair Levin has laid out today. It is a roadmap for a process that will be open, transparent and will allow public participation in ways that are unparalleled for this agency.

The FCC will reach out to nontraditional stakeholders, because all Americans have a stake in this proceeding.

I am pleased that we have a plan that will be data-driven. That means not starting with conclusions, but using data to develop analysis. It also means not just accepting data, but digging into data, to find concrete solutions that supersede ideology -- and that can make a difference in the lives of real Americans.

The work ahead of us will not be easy. Our time is short. The schedule that we have set for ourselves is ambitious. The task we are undertaking is ambitious. But the challenges we are addressing are profound, the opportunities are tremendous, the consequences for failure are enormous, and now is not the time for half-measures.

I thank Blair Levin and the staff of the agency for their hard work, and I look forward to many meetings on this topic in the days ahead.

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