

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission**

Meeting of the Country Music Association Board of Directors

**Washington, D.C.
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Thank you, Congressman Jim Cooper for that introduction. I'd also like to recognize all of the members of Tennessee's Congressional delegation who are here today: Lincoln Davis, John Tanner, and two members of the FCC's oversight subcommittee – Marsha Blackburn and Bart Gordon. A special mention is in order for Congressman Gordon, who will be retiring at the end of this year and whose leadership on the committee will be missed.

Thank you to Chairman Steve Moore and the CMA for inviting me to speak today.

I appreciate country & western music as distinctively American creations – an exported gift to the world as much as American jazz and blues music are as well.

But, as a native New Yorker, I must confess that when I told some people that *I* was going to be talking to the *Country Music* Association, they found it amusing.

And I'll admit that I was a bit concerned about my ability to – quote – “speak the language” today. (I won't threaten to “sing” the language, don't worry.)

I don't know how many of you saw this, but, yesterday, there was a front-page story in the New York Times about Google's automatic translation service, which handles 52 languages and is incredibly accurate.

Fortunately for me, one of them was “Nashville.”

Apparently, according to the translation service, the sentence: “Everyone in America should have access to affordable high-speed Internet” translated into Nashville is ... “Everyone in America should have access to affordable high-speed Internet.”

You thought I was going to say something about my wife leaving me, my dog and my truck, didn't you?

My point is that people who still think of country music as some niche industry apart from the American mainstream haven't been paying attention – for a long, long time.

You've got Taylor Swift selling more albums than any artist in America last year and selling out Madison Square Garden in only one minute.

American Idol is perhaps the ultimate arbiter of popular culture in America – Of course, Carrie Underwood won Idol by an overwhelming margin, and she has gone on to sell more records than any other winner.

When Barack Obama accepted the Democratic nomination in Denver, what song did they play? Brooks & Dunn's "Only in America." I should note not only that Kix Brooks is supposed to be here today, but that the same song was played after President Bush accepted the Republican nomination in 2004. Now, THAT's broad appeal.

This is not to say that the Country Music industry doesn't have unique issues and interests. But, at the end of the day, policies that will grow our economy will also help grow your industry. Actions that expand real opportunity are good for all Americans, no matter what music you listen to.

Few actions will do more to grow our economy and expand opportunity than building a world-class broadband infrastructure.

And there can be no question that broadband will play a key role in the future of the music industry. Let's take a quick glance at the market:

Wal-Mart, who is by far the largest seller of country music, continues to cut down on floor space for CDs.

Why? Well, people increasingly buy music online.

However, according to a CMA survey last June, only 50 percent of core country fans have Internet access at home.

This is, in part, a deployment issue that our National Broadband Plan intends to tackle through a reform of the Universal Service fund. The Plan is intended to get broadband deployed to unserved households around the nation over the next several years.

But part of the problem is also an "adoption" problem: 42 percent of core country music fans who are offline, say they are not interested in getting online.

This dovetails with recent findings by the FCC's Broadband Team regarding non-adopters. "Relevance" is a key factor cited by people who do not subscribe to high speed Internet access. They don't see what the Internet can do for them or why it is a service they should subscribe to.

Yesterday, the FCC & the Knight Foundation co-hosted a summit at the Newseum here in town on adoption and affordability issues around broadband. We announced several initiatives in our Plan – including a Digital Literacy Corps and other efforts to help people get online and realize the value that broadband can bring.

But there are certainly positive signs too.

For example, the group Lady Antebellum probably wouldn't exist if it weren't for the Internet. Its members met on MySpace. It's also worth noting that Lady Antebellum – a younger act – draws 28% of its revenue from digital sales. That number, I understand, is closer to 10% for older artists.

Country stars are harnessing the high-tech tools of today to reach their audience. For example, country's hottest star, Taylor Swift, has 2.8 million Twitter followers.

So, what will the National Broadband Plan mean for this marketplace of artists, radio station owners, Internet entrepreneurs, and music lovers?

Last year, Congress and the President tasked the Federal Communications Commission with developing a National Broadband Plan -- a strategic Plan to bring affordable, high speed broadband to all Americans. We will deliver the Plan to Congress next week.

Broadband is our generation's major infrastructure challenge. It's like roads, canals, railroads and telephones for previous generations.

In terms of transformative power, I think broadband is most akin to the advent of electricity. Our electric grid was the platform for innovation that, as much as anything, helped propel the United States to global economic leadership in the 20th century.

Our broadband grid has the potential to play the same role for the 21st century.

Electricity brought the country an unending array of new appliances -- refrigerators, ovens, TVs, computers.

Broadband brings innovation-fueled applications -- on the Internet and on mobile phones, for commerce, education, health care and more. An "app for that" could have been the motto for America in the 20th century too, if Madison Avenue had predated electricity.

Broadband is critical infrastructure for innovation, for job creation, and for American competitiveness in this rapidly changing world.

That's why Sam Palmisano, CEO of IBM, recently penned an op-ed titled, "Fix the bridges, but don't forget broadband."

Studies from the Brookings Institute, MIT, the World Bank, point us in the same direction: even modest increases in broadband adoption can yield hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

As we work to rebuild our economy, we must do it in a way that gives us a strong, 21st century foundation for opportunity and prosperity.

We need to pursue a 2020 broadband vision -- one that unleashes new waves of investment and innovation, and provides an enduring engine for job creation in the years ahead.

As we pursue broadband networks that deliver broad opportunity and prosperity, we believe in the complementary goals of preserving a free and open Internet and protecting the intellectual property rights of creative artists and other content owners.

The National Broadband Plan will be delivered to Congress in 6 days. It is not a self-executing Plan, but rather a strategic blueprint for action. It will require subsequent, public processes to implement and the delivery of the Plan is not the end, but actually the beginning of the next stage of our process.

As we proceed, I want you to know my door is open and that we welcome the input of everyone in this room as we tackle the challenges ahead.

And the staff is also open and ready to meet and is very eager to engage on any broadband discussion...or country music discussion. In fact, my staff decided to translate this whole speech into “Nashville” and here’s what they came up with:

“When I think of those “*Country Roads*” and “*Wide Open Spaces*” without broadband, I “*Fall to Pieces*” and say that’s “*Crazy*.” We need to address these “*Unanswered Prayers*.”

“As FCC Chairman, I have friends in high places and “*Friends in Low Places*,” and I’m pulled to and fro on policy issues, but “*I Walk the Line*.” That’s because telecomm politics is like a “*Ring of Fire*.” First I have Senator Rockefeller telling me about a “*Coal Miner’s Daughter*” who can’t get wireless service in some “*Foggy Mountain Breakdown*.” Next, “*I’m on the Road Again*” to where “*The Grass is Blue*” and “*A Boy Named Sue*” stops me and says we need super-duper fast broadband all the way from “*Boulder to Birmingham*” - and beyond, to “*Galveston*” and “*El Paso*.” He complains that his slow dial-up service can’t get to “*Amarillo by Morning*” and laments that America has gone round & round for years without a National Broadband Plan and plaintively asks, “*Will the Circle Be Unbroken*”?

“I explain – to the “*Boy Named Sue*” – that this issue is “*Always on my Mind*” and the lack of a Plan should not make him “*Hurt*” or a “*Man of Constant Sorrow*” with his “*Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain*.” Instead, I tell him to “*Take it Easy*” — “*Don’t Rock the Jukebox*” ...just try to “*Keep on the Sunny Side*” and dream “*Sweet Dreams*” -- because a National Broadband Plan is coming. Next week.”

Thank you all for the opportunity to join you this afternoon.

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