



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

May 16, 2014

The Honorable Jason Smith  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2230 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Smith:

Thank you for your letter regarding SEMO Electric Cooperative and its Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband deployment project. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

In its unanimously adopted *Technology Transitions Order (Order)* in January, the Commission recognized that particular challenges exist for the deployment of next generation communications services in rural areas. In order to inform our policies on building next generation networks in rural America, the Commission invited proposals 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.

As you note, a diverse set of entities have filed nearly 1,000 expressions of interest, including rural telephone companies, electric co-ops, cable and wireless Internet service providers, schools and libraries, research and education networks, and rural communities. The proposals reflect the understanding that high bandwidth services are becoming increasingly important to the future of economic development, education, health care, government services, entertainment, information, communication and creativity.

The Commission currently is reviewing the expressions of interest that have been submitted, and we have sought public comment on a number of rural broadband experiment issues, including the size of the budget and selection criteria to be used in reviewing proposals. After completing a review of the submissions and the record in response to our *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, the Commission would adopt an Order setting a budget and establishing detailed selection criteria for rural broadband experiments. At that point, we would invite parties, such as SEMO Electric Cooperative, to submit formal proposals for consideration by Commission staff.

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

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler