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**For Immediate Release****STATEMENT OF FCC COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**  
*On the Need to Extend Broadband Throughout Rural America*

BALDWIN CITY, KANSAS, July 1, 2015.—This week, I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand the opportunities that high-speed broadband can bring to rural America. For small towns, just as much as big cities, Internet access can help create jobs, promote entrepreneurship, and bind communities together.

Yesterday, I visited Diller, Nebraska, a village of 287 people in southeastern Nebraska. Since 1899, the Diller Telephone Company has connected people in Diller and surrounding areas to the outside world. Most recently, it's done this by deploying fiber to the home or farm. The company's fiber network has been a boon to economic development in the area. A great example is C&C Processing, a local meat processor. Thanks to the Internet, C&C has completely transformed itself over the past 20 years into a nationally known player. From a small, husband-and-wife grocery store and slaughtering operation in the mid-1990s, C&C has become a company that employs dozens of people. It sells meat at retail over the Internet and ships nationwide, and its wholesale products can be found everywhere from the PGA Tour to Whole Foods. Chad Lottman (a co-owner of C&C) can use an app to monitor his facilities remotely, and his team can now create electronic inspection records immediately available to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, instead of filling out reams of regulatory paperwork by hand. As Chad and his wife Courtney told me, Internet access, delivered by Diller Telephone, has truly made all the difference. It's a major point of pride in Diller. And C&C's jerky is pretty darn good.

Today, I visited Baldwin City, Kansas, where I learned how RG Fiber is preparing to bring gigabit service later this year to this small town of just over 4,000 residents. RG Fiber started as a software company that couldn't get enough bandwidth at a competitive price. Frustrated by the lack of broadband options, Mike Bosch and his business partners decided to build a network themselves. From a few guys drawing up a business plan in a small kitchen, they are now creating dozens of jobs, building a fiber network that will extend from Baldwin City to Eudora, ultimately extending to Lawrence. RG Fiber is creating a stir: I met an employee who moved from Kansas City to Baldwin City just for this opportunity, and Mike has fielded calls from out-of-state businesses looking to relocate, including a day trader in California. RG Fiber is scheduled to light up in Baldwin City in a month. Everyone from the town's mayor to the president of Baker University to local residents had the same enthusiastic message: We can't wait!

These are just two examples of the great progress that is being made across the Great Plains when it comes to broadband deployment. But along with this good news, I also heard recurring concerns. Time and time again, I was told that the rising level of regulatory uncertainty coming from our nation's capital was a major barrier to infrastructure investment. (One company said it recently stopped laying fiber entirely because it couldn't predict the rules of the digital road—leaving at least one important business customer and many residential customers with degraded copper lines and less bandwidth.)

And I repeatedly heard that the FCC needed to promote rural broadband deployment, including by changing Universal Service Fund rules that are holding back investment. In that regard, I was grateful to hear that numerous companies from each state were supportive of the detailed proposal I outlined on Monday for extending federal USF support to rate-of-return companies that offer stand-alone broadband service.

As I travel back to Washington, DC, I'll carry with me a renewed appreciation for those who do the hard work every day connecting rural America with next-generation services. Building and expanding high-speed broadband networks in sparsely populated areas isn't easy. But it's the key to future economic and social development in states like Nebraska and Kansas. Fortunately, there are thousands of small telephone companies, cable companies, wireless Internet service providers, and others who are rising to the challenge. My goal is to change the FCC's rules in order to help them to meet that challenge, to extend the broadband revolution—in short, to give rural Americans digital opportunities comparable to those enjoyed by their urban counterparts.

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