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For Immediate Release

FCC CHAIRMAN PAI HONORS INNOVATORS IN ACCESSIBILITY COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

WASHINGTON, June 13, 2017 – Recognizing innovative communications technology designed for people with disabilities, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai today announced winners and honorable mentions of the sixth annual Chairman's Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (Chairman's AAA).

"Communications technology has awe-inspiring power to open doors that have too-long been closed to Americans with disabilities," said Chairman Pai. "I'm grateful that the FCC can play a role in promoting life-enhancing breakthroughs and encouraging collaborations to fulfill the promise of accessible technologies for millions of Americans."

The Chairman's AAA celebrates outstanding private and public sector ventures as part of the Commission's continuing effort to facilitate ongoing exchanges among the telecommunications industry, assistive technology companies, app developers, government representatives and consumers to share best practices and solutions for accessible communications technologies.

This year's winners include an app that can caption live conversations, automated image recognition for social media that tags images with descriptive text for those with limited sight, guidelines to script video content in ways that naturally describe on-screen action for those who cannot see it, and an audible video programing interface for people who are blind or visually impaired. In addition to the four winners, two honorable mentions were chosen. Awards were presented at a ceremony at today's M-Enabling Summit (http://www.m-enabling.com). The award-winning technology was displayed at a reception immediately following the ceremony.

Winners and Honorable Mentions of 2017 Chairman's AAA

Winner: Ava App for People Who Are Deaf or Hearing Impaired
Description: Ava ("audio-visual accessibility") is a mobile application that connects multiple smartphones and uses the microphone on each individual device to transcribe a conversation among several parties. For example, in a multi-party meeting, a person who is deaf or hard of hearing can launch the Ava app on a smartphone or tablet and invite hearing participants to join via their smartphones. The app generates captions from each participant that are displayed on the user's device. Using multiple devices improves the quality of the sound and reliability of the speech-to-text engine, and makes it possible to identify speakers automatically.

Winner: Facebook - Automatic Alt Text (AAT)

Description: Alt text is hidden text that screen readers speak aloud to describe an image that cannot be "read" by those devices. This technology enables people who are blind, visually impaired or print-disabled to understand the content of photos, drawings, charts and diagrams. AAT is a new, free feature on Facebook that uses artificial intelligence and object recognition to automatically generate alt text for such images.

Winner: The Integrated Described Video Best Practices Guide

Description: The Integrated Described Video Best Practices Guide is an Accessible Media Inc.-led initiative created in collaboration with the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, broadcast service providers, described video practitioners and members of the public. The guide was created to encourage producers to naturally include more descriptive text in scripts, reducing the need to add video description to program content after it is created. The free guide highlights the benefits of IDV and includes best practices and techniques that can be used to create inclusive programming that is more easily understood by blind and low-vision individuals.

Winner: Amazon – VoiceView

Description: Amazon's VoiceView speaks out loud text that is on-screen as a blind, visually impaired or print-disabled user navigates menu options and settings for video programming via Amazon's "Fire TV Stick with Alexa Voice Remote," a stand-alone streaming video programming device. Users can customize VoiceView's rate of speech, volume and key echo, which determines how text characters are echoed back to the user as they are entered with the on-screen keyboard. Other features include: "orientation text," which provides a onetime description of how to navigate with VoiceView; "review" mode, allowing a user to explore the grid layout of a Fire TV screen in detail; and additional fine control of navigation options for text blocks and descriptive content.

Honorable Mention: Aira App

Description: Aira is a smartphone app and paid subscription service that connects blind users to sighted agents who use geolocation information, streaming video, and other interconnected devices to provide guidance and information about the user's surroundings.

Honorable Mention: Teach Access

Description: Teach Access is an initiative by industry, academia and accessibility advocates to expand the quality and quantity of undergraduate programs that teach the fundamentals of accessibility in fields such as design, computer science and human computer interaction. The initiative has established a core set of Accessibility Fundamental Concepts and Skills on web accessibility, federal accessibility laws and industry best practices, along with an industry guest speakers program and online accessibility tutorials for the purpose of preparing designers, engineers and researchers to build products and services inclusively.

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