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For Immediate Release**FCC PROPOSES BIDDING PROCEDURES FOR THIS YEAR'S
\$16 BILLION RURAL BROADBAND AUCTION*****FCC Targets October for Start of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction to
Connect Millions of Rural Americans***

WASHINGTON, February 28, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today proposed procedures for the first phase of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, which will make up to \$16 billion available for the deployment of fixed broadband networks across rural America. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund is targeting funding towards some of the least-served parts of the country and October's Phase I auction could bring high-speed broadband to as many six million unserved homes and businesses this year, representing the FCC's biggest step ever toward bridging the digital divide.

The Public Notice adopted today seeks comment on proposed competitive bidding procedures that build on the successes and lessons learned from the 2018 Connect America Fund Phase II auction. Bidding in Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund reverse auction is expected to start in October.

Today's Public Notice proposes procedures for potential bidders to apply to become qualified to participate in the auction and for the submission and processing of bids to determine winners and assign support amounts. The Public Notice also seeks comment on the appropriate minimum size of an area to be eligible for funding and proposes pre- and post-auction operational, technical, and financial information applicants and winning bidders would be required to submit.

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction will be a reverse auction in which service providers will compete with each other by committing to provide services to unserved communities in exchange for specific levels of support. The auction will prioritize bids for faster, lower latency services in order to ensure that federal support connects unserved Americans with the best service possible and at the lowest cost to the Universal Service Fund.

Phase II of the program will make available at least \$4.4 billion, plus unallocated funds from Phase I, to target partially served areas, census blocks where some locations lack access to 25/3 Mbps broadband, along with census blocks unawarded in the Phase I auction. The second phase will use granular, precise broadband mapping data being developed in the FCC's Digital Opportunity Data Collection to identify unserved locations in partially served areas.

Communities and individuals with questions about the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund can contact the FCC's Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force at ruralbroadband@fcc.gov. Service

providers seeking information about applying to participate in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction can contact Auction904@fcc.gov.

Action by the Commission February 28, 2020 by Public Notice (FCC 20-21). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly and Carr. Commissioners Rosenworcel and Starks approving in part and dissenting in part. Chairman Pai, Commissioners O’Rielly, Rosenworcel, and Starks issuing separate statements.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).