Broadband Data Task Force
Opening Remarks and Presentation
Open Meeting, February 17, 2021

Jean Kiddoo - Opening Remarks

Good morning Madam Chairwoman and Commissioners. I am deeply honored by the appointment to head the new Broadband Data Task Force. The need for accurate data pinpointing where broadband service is available – and perhaps more importantly for our FCC purposes, where it is <u>not</u> available – has never been greater. Families and businesses across the country are struggling to adapt to the reality of remote schooling, telework, and the shift to online operations and services. But for many, those realities are made more challenging, if not impossible, by the lack of fast and reliable broadband service. Commission efforts to remedy that digital divide have long been hampered by the lack of precise, granular data on the availability and quality of fixed and mobile broadband services -- data that would enable us to target resources to the areas most in need. I am excited to be part of the effort to develop and implement – finally – the data collections, systems, and processes to give us – as well as industry, our state, local and Tribal partners, and consumers – the tools to accurately and precisely determine broadband availability so that we may focus our efforts to close the digital divide.

I want to assure the Chairwoman and Commissioners that a large team of experts from Offices and Bureaus across the Commission are already hard at work, and that the many difficult and interdisciplinary tasks we will need to complete are already well underway. Kirk Burgee, the Chief of Staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau and one of the leaders of the joint effort, is here to give you a brief overview of the ongoing work being done by the dedicated staff in the Office of Economics and Analytics, Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, Wireline Competition Bureau, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, International Bureau, Office of Engineering and Technology, and Office of the Managing Director, and he will also outline for you what we intend to accomplish and our next steps.

Thank you. Kirk…

Kirk Burgee - Presentation

FIRST SLIDE

Thank you Jean.

Good morning Madam Chairwoman and Commissioners.

The Commission has long recognized that precise, granular data on the availability and quality of fixed and mobile broadband are vital to bringing digital opportunity to all Americans, no matter where they live. To meet the need for such data, in August 2019 the Commission adopted a new data collection distinct from the FCC Form 477 that would collect geographically precise and detailed data on broadband availability and include essential features, such as technology and

download and upload speeds, which would be subject to challenge by input from the public and other stakeholders.

In March of last year, Congress passed the Broadband DATA Act, which established specific requirements for the Commission's collection of broadband availability data, including a location-level collection for fixed broadband and the use of standardized propagation model parameters for mobile and fixed wireless broadband. In addition, the Broadband DATA Act codified the role of stakeholder input, calling for the use of challenges, crowdsourcing, and verified data from State, local and Tribal governmental entities, third parties and other federal agencies in assessing the accuracy of provider data. The Broadband DATA Act also required the creation of the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, a comprehensive database of all locations in the country to which fixed broadband could be made available.

The Commission's *Second Report and Order and Third Further Notice*, adopted in July 2020, implemented Broadband DATA Act requirements, and further developed the framework and elements of the new data collection. In the *Second Report and Order*, the Commission adopted specific technical reporting requirements, including the use of geographically specific polygons and address/location lists for fixed services, and propagation maps and models for mobile and terrestrial fixed services. The *Second Report and Order* also adopted the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, along with processes for verifying provider data, such as the use of the High Cost Universal Broadband (or HUBB) database, regular audits, and the acceptance of crowdsourced information about the accuracy of provider data.

The Commission's *Third Report and Order*, adopted last month, implemented further refinements along with challenge processes that will help to ensure that the data collection will yield a robust and reliable data resource for the Commission, Congress, federal and state policymakers, and consumers. The Commission delegated certain technical and other determinations to the Bureaus and Offices in the *Third Report and Order*, and with the appropriation of $98 million in funding by Congress at the end of last year, we are also moving quickly to implement the new data collection and mapping platforms.

SECOND SLIDE

The new data collection will collect provider deployment data as well as verification and challenge data, which will allow the Commission to gather data of an unprecedented scope and volume from a broad range of stakeholders, including Internet service providers, the public, State, local, and Tribal governments, other federal agencies, and third parties, such as companies specializing in broadband mapping and data collection. But the Commission will not only collect more data; it will collect better data. The new technical standards and data specifications established by Congress and implemented by the Commission, such as minimum service speeds and standardized input parameters for mobile service and maximum buffer sizes for fixed service, together with new categories of data collected, including the Fabric and infrastructure and drive-test data collected from service providers, will promote a high level of accuracy in the broadband data ultimately produced by the Commission. The Commission will also use an array of data-quality processes to refine and improve the data over time. These processes will include data validation at intake, technical assistance to stakeholders, user-friendly challenge and crowdsourcing, audits and, where necessary, rigorous verification and enforcement actions.

With these new data and tools, the Commission will produce vastly more granular and accurate broadband deployment maps, which in turn will allow the Commission to target Universal Service Funding more precisely and produce better data for Commission reports and analyses.

THIRD SLIDE

Implementing the data collection will give the Commission a number of resources to use in its broadband mapping efforts.   The new, geographically specific reporting standards will enable the Commission to produce comprehensive, publicly available broadband maps that depict fixed broadband availability data down to the individual-location level and show mobile broadband propagation maps standardized across all mobile providers. The challenge and crowdsourcing processes will enable consumers, Tribal and governmental entities, and other interested stakeholders to submit real-world information based on actual experiences in the field that sharpens provider data and informs Commission analyses and investigations. Commission audits and, if appropriate, enforcement proceedings will be additional tools that will enhance the accuracy of the maps and data the Commission produces.

FOURTH SLIDE

In our next steps to implement the Broadband DATA Act, we will seek comment and adopt an order on various technical requirements that will fine-tune the collection- and challenge processes. We will carry out procurements necessary for the data collection and verification systems, the public-facing maps, and the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, followed by development and implementation of these platforms.   We will also explore other avenues for working with stakeholders to verify data. As our work proceeds, we will release a public notice to provide at least six months advance notice of the first filing deadline for the collection. We will also begin the process of conducting outreach to Tribes, filers, and other stakeholders to facilitate compliance with and participation in broadband deployment reporting and the challenge processes.

There is obviously a lot of work ahead, but we look forward to realizing the extraordinary impact that having precise and accurate broadband deployment data will have on the Commission's efforts to close the digital divide.