



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

March 22, 2021

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to make the broadband deployment data it collects more accurate. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark relief that for millions of Americans, broadband is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. Broadband is the infrastructure of the 21st century and yet we know that in some parts of America, finding a reliable internet connection is next to impossible. We need to find ways to get 100 percent of Americans connected in this country, no matter who they are or where they live.

The first step to connecting all Americans is ensuring we have reliable and detailed data on which areas of the country are currently served with broadband and, more importantly, which areas lack service. Better data will allow us to target our efforts, including universal service, to those areas of the country where government support is most needed. It will also help state and local governments, and Tribal entities target similar efforts.

We have talked about this problem for years but lacked both the necessary focus and determination to get it done. The good news is that with your leadership Congress passed the Broadband DATA Act in March 2020 and in late December 2020 provided the FCC with critical funding to implement it. After I became Acting Chairwoman, one of the very first actions I took was to assess the status of this effort. That review showed me that we had a huge amount of work to do.

To fully implement the Broadband DATA Act, the Commission must revamp its data collection methods and platform. We must create a framework for massive amounts of data from many different sources to interrelate with one another and to feed into a comprehensive, user-friendly dataset on broadband availability. We also need to develop, test, and launch IT systems to collect and verify these various data. We must create—for the first time—a publicly accessible, data-driven map of serviceable locations where broadband is or should be available throughout the United States. We must then collect accurate and complete data from each and every broadband service provider on precisely where it offers broadband services, no longer

relying on census blocks but drilling down to the location of each home and small business—and then overlay that information onto our map of serviceable locations. And finally, we must build a way to collect data from a myriad of independent sources, including state and local governments, Tribal nations, consumers, and other private and public third parties, that will help us supplement and verify the information we collect from service providers.

I'm pleased to report that in a matter of weeks we have already made progress as I detail below.

First, at my first FCC meeting as Acting Chairwoman, I announced the formation of a Broadband Data Task Force to coordinate and expedite the design and construction of these new systems for collecting and verifying data. The Task Force will lead a cross-agency effort to implement the requirements of the Broadband DATA Act and kick-start our work to more accurately measure and reflect our nation's broadband needs.

Second, having organized the agency experts, we have finally started to move forward with the contracting, development, and other efforts necessary to implement our statutory obligations. We immediately initiated and rapidly concluded a competitive procurement process to retain an expert data architect and design firm to work with the Commission's own data and IT systems specialists to assess our existing broadband availability data and mapping systems. The data architect has extensive experience providing data management and integration, geospatial processing and analysis, algorithm development, and other tools, including having assisted the Commission with implementing our first-in-the-world 600 MHz Broadcast Incentive Auction. Consistent with the Statement of Work for this contracting award, the Commission will receive an initial data flow proposal on or before April 12, 2021, and a draft of the data architecture design on or before May 3, 2021.

Third, we moved quickly to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to jump-start the contracting process for the creation of the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, a common dataset of all locations in the United States where fixed broadband internet access service can be installed. This dataset will be a key building block of our data collection and will help give us an accurate and comprehensive picture of the availability of fixed broadband service throughout the country. Responses to the RFI are due today, and we will use the information we collect to move forward promptly with a solicitation setting forth specific requirements for prospective vendors seeking to quickly develop the dataset for the Fabric.

Fourth, we are finalizing a spend plan and coordinating our efforts with the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). As directed by the Explanatory Statement to the recent Consolidated Appropriations Act, the Commission will submit a report by March 27, 2021 that details our spending plan for the implementation of the Broadband DATA Act with subsequent updates to follow. At the same time, also in response to the Explanatory Statement to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, we will outline the roles and responsibilities of the Commission and NTIA related to the National

Broadband Map and implementation of the Broadband DATA Act. We look forward to continuing our work with NTIA and our other federal partners as part of this process.

Finally, the Commission is stepping-up its outreach efforts to inform stakeholders of the progress made to date and to provide status updates on future work. We have created a new public-facing website (<https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData>) which provides a go-to source for Commission orders, public notices, and other educational materials, as well as links to resources for consumers to share their experiences related to broadband availability.

I look forward to working with you and others in Congress as we continue to improve the Commission's broadband deployment data.

Sincerely,

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Jessica Rosenworcel



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March 22, 2021

The Honorable Bob Latta
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Latta:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to make the broadband deployment data it collects more accurate. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark relief that for millions of Americans, broadband is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. Broadband is the infrastructure of the 21st century and yet we know that in some parts of America, finding a reliable internet connection is next to impossible. We need to find ways to get 100 percent of Americans connected in this country, no matter who they are or where they live.

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March 22, 2021

The Honorable John Thune
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Thune:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to make the broadband deployment data it collects more accurate. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark relief that for millions of Americans, broadband is no longer a luxury—it's a necessity. Broadband is the infrastructure of the 21st century and yet we know that in some parts of America, finding a reliable internet connection is next to impossible. We need to find ways to get 100 percent of Americans connected in this country, no matter who they are or where they live.

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The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
512 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Wicker:

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