



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE  
ACTING CHAIRWOMAN

July 8, 2021

The Honorable Bob Good  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1213 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Good:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Commission's efforts to collect more precise and reliable broadband deployment data. The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that broadband service is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity for school, jobs, healthcare, and more. However, high-speed internet connections are not available in many areas throughout the United States. I believe this needs to be addressed and I share your commitment to finding ways to get 100 percent of Americans connected, no matter who they are or where they live.

As Congress recognized with passage of the Broadband DATA Act in March 2020, the first step toward connecting all Americans is to ensure that we have accurate information about where broadband service is and is not across the country. With better data we can target our policymaking efforts and financial resources, including the FCC's universal service funding, to those unserved and underserved areas of the country where support is needed most. Better data will also help other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Tribal entities target similar efforts.

We have talked about this problem for years but lacked the necessary focus and determination to get it done. The good news is that Congress in late December 2020 provided the FCC with the necessary funding to support the Broadband DATA Act. This made it possible for the agency to develop the complex databases, systems, and processes required to collect, validate, and make the data available. After I became Acting Chairwoman, one of the very first actions I took was to assess the status of this effort. While this review made clear we had an enormous amount of work to do, I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress in just a few months.

In my first meeting as Acting Chairwoman, I announced the formation of the Broadband Data Task Force to coordinate and expedite the design and construction of new systems for collecting and verifying broadband deployment data. The Task Force is leading 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.

Following the creation of the Task Force, we have taken several important steps. For example, we have retained an expert data architect and design firm to work with the Commission's own data and IT systems specialists to assess our existing data and mapping systems. The vendor and Commission staff have already developed an initial data flow structure for the new Broadband Data Collection (BDC) systems and processes, which include processes to collect challenge and crowdsourced data. In addition, we have conducted a Request for Information (RFI) process to jump-start our contracting 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. We received responses to the RFI, held industry feedback sessions with multiple entities, and quickly moved forward with a June 1 Request for Proposal, consistent with recommended government solicitation practices, based on those feedback sessions. We received proposals in response to the RFP on July 1 and are reviewing expeditiously. We are also working with a number of broadband providers to obtain real-world data based on the new BDC coverage parameters to help expedite our development of the BDC IT systems and data structures that will support the new collection and to inform our effort to develop training and other outreach to providers in advance of their BDC filings.

At the same time, we have increased consumer outreach efforts regarding broadband data gathering. To this end, we have developed and publicized a new web-based portal (<https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData>) for consumers to share their broadband experiences and information about their efforts to secure service. We also have encouraged use of the FCC's speed test app, which in addition to providing consumers with information about their mobile broadband service, increases the amount of crowdsourced data that the Commission receives to assess the state of deployment nationwide.

I completely agree with you that we must ensure that rural communities have access to the jobs, schooling, healthcare, and other resources that Americans increasingly connect to online. The FCC is committed to partnering with other agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (USDA), to achieve this objective. The FCC has worked closely with USDA and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) in connection with our respective broadband funding programs for many years, sharing information and coordinating our efforts to limit duplication and increase efficiencies to extend limited federal funding as far as possible. Our agencies also collaborate on an ongoing basis through the Precision Ag Connectivity Task Force to promote deployment of broadband Internet access service on unserved agriculture land to facilitate precision agriculture. More recently, we just executed an Interagency Agreement with USDA/RUS and the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration to share information about and coordinate the distribution of broadband deployment funding to harmonize the agencies' efforts supporting the rural broadband initiatives.

Once the FCC initiates the Broadband Data Collection, rural residents and stakeholders will have access to more accurate and granular data to determine whether broadband service is available locally and to challenge local providers if their maps do not match the reality on the ground. USDA will also have access to the data, enabling USDA to better understand and determine locations where broadband may not be deployed to rural communities. Consistent

with the Broadband DATA Act, we will make available to USDA (and any other federal agency) the maps we create as a part of the Broadband Data Collection. When combined with USDA data on where broadband deployment dollars have been allocated through RUS and other programs, the USDA can better assess where additional resources are needed to connect unserved (or underserved) communities and help to ensure that appropriate funds are made available for such deployment.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Rosenworcel", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Rosenworcel