

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment*, WC Docket No. 17-84, Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 16, 2022).

One year ago this week, I gave a speech at AEI where I laid out a series of steps the Commission could take to extend U.S. leadership in 5G. I identified actions on both spectrum and infrastructure that would match the pace and cadence the agency had been moving on those fronts. One idea I offered up was for the FCC to make sure that our cost sharing rules for pole replacements aren't inhibiting Internet builds, particularly in unserved areas. After all, the more clarity we can provide with regard to pole replacements, the faster access to poles can be granted and the faster families can get connected. In that speech, I said that we could do this through a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would seek comment on issues raised in a July 2020 petition. So I am very pleased that we are taking precisely that action with today's vote.

Taking action now is particularly important in light of the unique opportunity we have in front of us to end the digital divide. Whether it is the \$65 billion for broadband in the bipartisan infrastructure bill or the hundreds of billions of dollars that various agencies have allocated for infrastructure projects, we have the chance to ensure that every American has a fair shot at next-gen connectivity. One way that federal and state governments alike could squander that opportunity is by allowing these dollars to get caught up in red tape and by unnecessary fees and charges. After all, if the government is just spending broadband dollars without streamlining infrastructure rules, then it's just stepping on the gas and brakes at the same time.

Specific to pole attachments, there is even more we can do to avoid that outcome. For instance, I continue to hear concerns from broadband builders about unnecessary delays and costs when they seek to attach to poles that are owned by municipal and cooperative utilities. Unlike what we are doing in today's item, there is a strong argument that Section 224 does not give us authority to address issues specific to those types of poles. Therefore, I encourage states and Congress to take a closer look at these issues—and revisit the exemption that exists in Section 224—so that we can ensure deployment is streamlined, regardless of the type of pole you are attaching to.

As part of the FCC's continuing effort to close the digital divide, we should also look at ways we can continue to streamline the rules of the road for fiber and other high-speed wired deployments. During the prior Administration, the FCC took steps to ensure that the fees charged for placing small wireless facilities in rights of way do not violate Section 253. We should begin to explore similar action for the deployment of other, wired infrastructure to ensure that the funding being made available by Congress and the FCC goes into the ground and towards connecting families.

Finally, we should make sure that all of our policies are going to encourage private sector investment in infrastructure. We must reject calls for government-subsidized overbuilding, which jeopardizes the operations of businesses that risked their own capital to serve local communities. Instead we need to direct funding to communities that have been left behind, rather than those that already benefit from high-speed Internet services today.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau for their hard work on this item. It has my support.