

Remarks of Commissioner Olivia Trusty
FBA 2026 Public Policy Summit
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Good morning, everyone. Thank you to the Fiber Broadband Association for inviting me to speak today about the continued importance of broadband deployment in bridging the digital divide, and promoting economic growth and U.S. leadership in emerging technologies. A big thank you also goes to FBA member companies for the work you do to help make that deployment a reality.

Since joining the Commission last June, universal connectivity has been one of my top priorities. It has also been the Commission's core responsibility since its creation. The first provision of the Communications Act makes clear that the FCC was established "to make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States, . . . a rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service with adequate facilities at reasonable charges."

In today's communications marketplace, this means that all Americans should have access to reliable, affordable broadband. As many have acknowledged in recent years, connectivity is not a luxury, it's the foundation for access to education, quality health care, economic development, civic engagement, and more in this digital era.

Importantly, fiber deployment is key to achieving the goal of universal connectivity. In many cases, fiber all-the-way-to the customer is the gold standard, offering a resilient and reliable connectivity solution. And, while other technologies like fixed and mobile wireless have a critical role to play, fiber remains essential for transporting traffic within networks deployed across the country.

As we look to the future, fiber also is necessary for U.S. leadership in AI and other emerging technologies. According to a recent FBA report, meeting the needs of AI will require doubling the current level of fiber to enable high-capacity, low-latency connectivity and to provide critical redundancy and resiliency. To accomplish that, we need continued investment in fiber networks throughout the communications ecosystem.

This leads me to the Commission's Build America Agenda and why it is so important. The Build America Agenda is focused on streamlining licensing and permitting processes, simplifying rules, and reducing burdens on businesses, to promote providers' broadband deployment efforts across the country.

With that in mind, the Commission's work to address pole attachment regulation and streamline permitting are not abstract policy issues; they directly affect how quickly and efficiently networks can be built and serve as a catalyst for economic activity. The FBA recently highlighted these issues, as well, in its annual report on fiber deployment costs. The report cited the permitting process and work to access utility poles as significant factors in the cost and timing of fiber deployment. Through rulemaking proceedings, pole access enforcement, and potential case-by-case preemption decisions, the FCC is actively engaged in helping to address these deployment challenges.

The Commission also has been working to identify rules that deter advanced network deployment or hold back innovation. The centerpiece of the FCC's efforts to simplify its rules is the *Delete, Delete, Delete* proceeding, along with our own internal review of agency regulations to identify rules that are outdated, obsolete, or unduly burdensome. Creating a regulatory environment that reflects today's marketplace realities is key to sustaining innovation, investment, and competition nationwide.

In addition to the Commission's deregulatory efforts is the Universal Service Fund, which continues to help the FCC achieve our connectivity goals. The Supreme Court's affirmation of the constitutionality of the USF gives the FCC a strong foundation to keep working with Congress and industry to expand access to high-speed internet services to all Americans, including those in the most rural, hard-to-serve areas in the nation. Our immediate work includes being a good steward of our existing programs, from guarding against waste, fraud, and abuse, to making sure broadband providers keep their promises, building where they said they'd build, and delivering the speeds families need.

The Commission's efforts to foster universal connectivity also dovetail with the goal of restoring U.S. leadership in next-generation technologies. The Commission's focus on embracing new technologies ensures that all can play a role in closing the digital divide. We're at a point where transformative technologies: 5G and 6G, AI, satellite broadband, next-

generation fiber, and Wi-Fi are converging in ways that can dramatically improve productivity, opportunity, and quality of life. To fully realize that potential, our policies must be forward-looking, grounded in evidence, and driven by the needs of the people we serve.

That perspective also shapes my view on spectrum policy, which is critical to connecting every American, as well. I believe in an “all of the above” approach. Licensed, unlicensed, shared, satellite spectrum – each plays an important role. Mid-band spectrum, in particular, is essential for delivering high-capacity broadband services. Even when spectrum – rather than fiber – is used for the connection to the end-user, fiber plays an important role in carrying ever-increasing volumes of traffic within the network. And as the Commission considers the details of its upcoming auction of Upper C-Band spectrum, the availability of fiber as an alternative distribution technology for current uses of that band, like media content services, will be an important consideration.

As we look ahead, promoting innovative technologies like AI also raises the stakes for network resiliency, security, and redundancy. As more economic and social activity depends on AI-enabled services, network outages become more costly. Redundancy, multiple paths, diverse providers, and resilient and secure architectures, are essential to protecting our economic and national security, and promoting U.S. leadership across technologies and domains. This further underscores the importance of fostering network deployment, consistent with the Build America Agenda.

It also reinforces the Commission’s continued efforts to advance the IP transition. Legacy copper networks are increasingly vulnerable to theft, weather-driven failures, and sabotage. Fiber networks, by contrast, are far more resilient, harder to steal, easier to secure, and more reliable. Moving away from legacy technologies can improve resiliency and reliability, enable new services, and support efforts like robocall prevention. Modernization is not simply a broadband goal, it is a security goal. At the same time, businesses need sufficient certainty and predictability to make long-term investment decisions. Getting that balance right is essential to expanding connectivity, and our continued prosperity and technology leadership.

Ultimately, ensuring network resiliency and security is a shared responsibility. Interagency and industry coordination is paramount. The FCC has an important role to play working with its federal partners, industry, and Congress, on a range of issues, including:

reevaluating outage reporting to reflect modern networks; strengthening transparency around supply-chain risks; and supporting responsible space and satellite growth. Likewise, advancing spectrum policies that incorporate security considerations; encouraging modernization of vulnerable legacy networks; and integrating AI into networks and FCC decision-making remain critical components to establishing enduring network resilience and security. Continued coordination with law enforcement on infrastructure vandalism and deepening collaboration with allies on international communications security are key parts of our efforts, too.

While the FCC remains busy in all of these areas, I know FBA members are hard at work, as well. As the Commission presses forward on the Build America agenda, I look forward to our continued collaboration to promote universal access to the robust and resilient networks Americans need.

Thank you.