



July 23, 2018

*Via Electronic Filing*

Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

*Re: Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WT Docket No. 17-79; Streamlining Deployment of Small Cell Infrastructure by Improving Wireless Siting Policies, WT Docket No. 16-421*

Dear Commissioner Carr:

The introduction of broadband in rural America is strengthening the nation’s farming, ranching, fishing, and forestry industries, and helping them to compete in global markets. Broadband promotes the sustainability of resources, lowers production costs, enhances product quality, provides jobs, and benefits rural area economies.

This is why we are writing to urge the FCC to continue to act to lower regulatory costs and burdens that can slow and deter construction of the network infrastructure needed to support broadband. By taking additional steps to speed new infrastructure, the FCC will help convert broadband’s promise into real benefits for rural America and U.S. international competitiveness.

Each month brings new technologies that rely on broadband connectivity. “Internet of things” wireless devices and sensors will give farmers and ranchers new tools that will allow them to be more efficient and more connected with customers and marketplaces. For example, precision agriculture will help improve the accuracy of seeding, irrigation, and the application of chemicals. It will help farmers monitor soil quality or water, sunlight, and wind levels, boosting crop yields. As you saw when you visited Moline, Michigan last month, farmers are gaining increased productivity and crop yield, and reducing use of fertilizer, pesticides, and water, thanks to broadband-enabled applications that allow the pace, depth, and type of seeding and amount of fertilizer needed to be assessed and monitored on an inch-by-inch basis. Other technologies have enabled the detection of issues with individual plants before they affect the entire crop.

The major benefits that broadband can deliver to agriculture are occurring in many rural areas. In St. Onge, South Dakota a local livestock auction has been transformed by its high-speed broadband connection. While the auction draws only 40-50 people to the sale barn, nearly 2,000 people live stream and bid on livestock every week. Not only has this improved business, it has allowed for increased access to real time market information and resources for potential customers and young producers, without having to drive hours to reach the auction site.

On other farms across the country, autonomous vehicles will soon perform tasks in the field, such as harvesting. Virtual reality and augmented reality will be used for electronic learning and seeking expert advice

in remote areas. And drones may one day be able to survey livestock, forests, and crops from above, offering data on the health and safety of those properties.

These exciting technologies will help farmers and ranchers save resources and energy, reinvigorate rural economies, and enable the U.S. to compete more effectively in global agriculture markets. But they are data-intensive, requiring fast, reliable broadband connections. They are in short only as good as the broadband networks they rely on. Building these networks is critical to the ability of broadband technologies to benefit rural America and the U.S. economy.

Regulatory red tape on the local, state, and federal levels directly increases deployment costs in rural areas. At the same time, high fees in urban areas consume providers' limited capital, leaving less for deployment in rural areas. The FCC has taken important actions to lower federal regulatory burdens inhibiting broadband deployment. We urge you to take similar actions to reduce local regulatory barriers as well, including by prohibiting high siting fees, lengthy permitting processes, and unnecessary restrictions on networks. We look forward to working with you to ensure that America's agriculture industries reap the benefits of broadband and next-generation services.

Sincerely,

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