

From: [Jodi Mulligan](#)
To: [BOCrfc2015](#)
Subject: Re: Written comments on "Ways to Further Expand and Promote Broadband Deployment, Adoption and Competition"
Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2015 4:59:29 PM
Attachments: [Letter to Broadband Opportunity Council 6 10 15 Valley Vision.doc](#)

To whom it may concern-

Please see attached letter to the Broadband Opportunity Council regarding ways to further expand and promote broadband deployment, adoption, and competition on behalf of Valley Vision and the Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium.

Thank you for your consideration and request for public comment,

Jodi Mulligan
Project Manager
Valley Vision

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No prizes for predicting rain. Prizes for building arks only. -Adelaide Snyder



June 10, 2015

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National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW., Room 4626
Washington, DC 20230
ATTN: Broadband Opportunity Council

Dear Ms. Mensah and Mr. Strickling,

We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to help identify regulations and other barriers that are hampering deployment of broadband. We commend your efforts to collect input and recommendations from the community to promote public and private investment in broadband infrastructure and deployment.

Valley Vision, a regional impact nonprofit, manages the Connected Capital Area Broadband Consortium, which is one of 16 rural and urban broadband consortia throughout the state of California. The Rural and Urban Broadband Consortia is funded by the California Advanced Services Fund and is managed by the California Public Utilities Commission. We have been working to bridge the Digital Divide as not only a member of this consortia but as an organization, for the past six years. It is our mission to identify opportunities to increase access and use of high-speed Internet in the Sacramento region, and assess the interest of leaders and communities to participate in a collaborative effort. Our vantage point is unique to this region, which includes the 2.3 million residents of Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties. We also work closely with Amador, El Dorado, Placer, and San Joaquin counties as well, on a multitude of projects spanning from community health, to food systems, to business resiliency, to broadband deployment and adoption.

We would like to address a few of the questions posed, in particular those specifically identified in the Request for Comment (RFC). They are as follows:

- (2) How can the federal government best promote coordination and use of federally-funded broadband assets?

- (9) Are there specific regulations within the agencies of the Executive Branch that impede or restrict competition for broadband service?
- (20) What can the federal government do to make it easier for state, local, and tribal governments or organizations to access funding for broadband?

With regards to question (2) and how the federal government can best promote coordination and use of federally-funded broadband assets, it is our strong recommendation to expand access to broadband by creating financial and policy incentives for integrating conduit deployment with road and bridge construction, high-speed rail, and redevelopment projects. Many communities in our region still lack adequate access to broadband services, which in turn limit opportunities for new innovations and economic vitality. For many of our communities, new infrastructure is required to expand access, which cannot be achieved absent an integrated and collaborative approach that enhances city, state and federal cooperation. Approaches to consider that would greatly lower the cost of fiber deployment through a coordinated effort include:

- Integrating broadband into planning specifications to be eligible for federal dollars;
- Federal funding of highway and bridge projects to be contingent upon allowing joint deployment of conduits; and
- Consideration of a “dig once” policy for all future federal rights-of-way projects as well as calling upon the Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement joint trenching policies.

With regards to question (9) about specific regulations within the agencies of the Executive Branch that impede or restrict competition for broadband service, it is our direct experience that providers are not reporting average speeds, but instead reporting highest speeds. In order to promote meaningful competition and spur innovation, Congress should make more useful data available to consumers. Consumers should have information on the actual speed and overall performance of services they receive and competitive offers in their area. Currently, it is close to impossible for consumers and local governments to compare providers and service offerings. There should be technical standards that measure the actual speed and performance of broadband service providers' networks at peak

use hours, the probability those speeds and performance will be reached over a set time period, and the testing of those speeds against a given set of standards and protocols.

With regards to question (20) and what the federal government can do to make it easier for state, local, and tribal governments or organizations to access funding for broadband, it is our strong recommendation that Congress consider changing the definition of “rural.” The critical terms that will guide the distribution of funding and the collaboration across local, state, and federal agencies, such as “broadband,” “unserved,” “underserved,” “rural,” and others, must be defined consistently across programs. The current definition of “rural” prohibits many of the rural areas most in need in our region from applying for federal grant opportunities. It is important to define a rural area not only by metrics, but by careful consideration of other defining factors, like population demographics, geography, current access to common human services like education, health, and potential for economic development.

Currently, many rural areas in California are not adequately serviced to adopt newly developed innovative technologies. Access to important services such as tele-medicine, remote learning, e-commerce, and precision agricultural technologies help rural communities improve the quality of life and diversify their economies.

Again, we thank you for your consideration and for allowing us to provide input into developing a framework of recommendations to explore ways to remove unnecessary regulatory and policy barriers and to better align funding polices and decisions to support broadband access and adoption.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Mueller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Mueller".

Bill Mueller
Chief Executive

