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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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RURAL BROADBAND EXPERIMENTS DRAW INTEREST FROM ALMOST 200 APPLICANTS

Experiments Explore Expansion of Robust Broadband in a Time of Technology Transitions

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission’s experiment exploring how to expand robust broadband in rural America in the most cost-effective way has attracted almost 600 project bids from 181 applicants, representing nearly \$885 million worth of projects.

In total, the 181 applicants proposed to serve over 76,000 census blocks in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. In the coming weeks, staff will identify the provisionally winning bidders, who then will be required to submit information demonstrating their financial and technical ability to participate in the \$100 million experiment. Finalists that are able to meet financial, technical and other regulatory requirements could launch their experiments as early as spring 2015.

The FCC’s rural broadband experiments will inform the agency’s broader effort to expand rural broadband through its Connect America Fund. They will also inform the FCC’s efforts to ensure that consumers everywhere can benefit from the sweeping technological advances occurring now in the communications industry, while preserving consumer protection, competition, universal service and access to emergency services during these transitions.

The \$100 million available for the experiments is divided into three groups as follows:

- \$75 million to test competitive interest in building networks that are capable of delivering 100 Mbps downloads and 25 Mbps uploads – far in excess of the current Connect America Fund standard of 4/1 – for the same or lower amounts of support than will be offered to incumbent carriers in Phase II of Connect America
- \$15 million to test interest in delivering service at 10/1 speeds in high cost areas
- \$10 million for 10/1 service in areas that are extremely costly to serve.

Bidders included a diverse group of entities, including competitive providers, electric utilities, wireless internet service providers, and others.