

## FACT SHEET

### **CHAIRMAN WHEELER'S PROPOSALS TO ADVANCE SEAMLESS NATIONWIDE ACCESS TO 4G LTE MOBILE VOICE AND BROADBAND SERVICE**

*Today, FCC Chairman Wheeler shared with his colleagues two items to further the goal of seamless consumer access to robust mobile broadband and voice services across the country. First, the Chairman asks the Commission to help expand and preserve LTE mobile coverage in rural America and on Tribal lands by providing nearly \$500 million in annual support through the FCC's Mobility Fund. Second, the Chairman asks the Commission to seek comment on a proposal to protect and enhance the ability of consumers to "roam" on other networks, no matter where they travel, or whether their device provides mobile voice service using the rapidly emerging Internet protocol voice technology known as VoLTE. Together, these initiatives will help build and support networks while modernizing the FCC's rules so that rural and Tribal communities -- and travelers on the nation's highways and byways -- can access emergency services, communicate with friends and family, and get the information they need. The Chairman has scheduled a vote on his proposals, as modified by a consensus of the commissioners, at the FCC's November 17 Open Meeting.*

#### **Mobility Fund II Report & Order: Targeting Support for Mobile Networks Where It's Needed Most**

The FCC created the Mobility Fund in 2011 to preserve and extend mobile broadband and voice services in high-cost areas that would not be served absent subsidies. Using a competitive "reverse auction" bidding process, Mobility Fund I offered providers nearly \$300 million in one-time funding to expand 3G or better mobile service. Despite that support, and, more importantly, extensive LTE deployment by industry, approximately 3 million people and 750,000 road miles still lack access to advanced mobile wireless service, or rely on subsidized service. The Chairman proposes bringing home a Mobility Fund II Order to help close this gap. The proposal would:

- **Close Coverage Gaps Through a Mobility Fund II Auction**
  - \$470 million in annual support for winning bidders to preserve and extend 4G LTE in areas where the market can't sustain or extend service absent government support
  - A total of five years of support, disbursed monthly
  
- **Target Areas Needing Support**
  - Eligible areas include any portion of a census block not fully covered by unsubsidized 4G LTE coverage
  - Eligible areas to be identified starting from the certified coverage data submitted to the FCC by providers (Form 477), but subject to a process that will consider stakeholders' challenges to ensure accurate decisions on the eligibility of particular areas
  - Phase out legacy wireless support from the FCC's Universal Service Fund, with the phase out ending July 1, 2021.
  
- **Set Service Requirements**
  - Baseline data speeds of 10/1 Megabits per second (Mbps)
  - Latency of less than 100 milliseconds (ms)
  - Rates that are reasonably comparable to urban rates

- **Establish an Auction Framework**
  - Bidding and performance assessed by road miles covered
  - Oversight and accountability provisions to provide financial security and protect against default.
  
- **Dedicate Support for Mobile Broadband on Tribal Lands**
  - Reserves up to \$50 million of the total \$470 million of annual support for 4G LTE on eligible Tribal lands
  - Provides a reverse bidding credit for certain Tribal entities seeking support on their Tribal lands

**Data Roaming and VoLTE Classification NPRM: seamless service, no matter how a call is delivered**

Before the 2015 *Open Internet Order*, the Commission applied different roaming regimes for voice and data: for voice, a Title II “just and reasonable” standard and for data, a Title I/III “commercially reasonable” standard. In the *Open Internet Order*, the Commission temporarily refrained from applying voice roaming rules to data roaming, but committed to revisiting the data roaming rules. Today, Chairman Wheeler fulfills that commitment by circulating a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The NPRM would also address the classification of mobile voice service when carriers provide that service using VoLTE (Voice over LTE) technology. In summary, the proposal seeks comment on the tentative conclusions that the Commission should:

- **Adopt a unified Title II roaming standard for both voice and data:**
  - For wireless carriers, it means competitive access to voice and data roaming on “just and reasonable” terms.
  - For consumers, this means the ability to receive seamless service in all areas of the country.
  
- **Adopt the same regulatory classification for mobile voice service provided via VoLTE as conventional mobile voice service, so that VoLTE is covered by the unified roaming standard:**
  - For consumers, VoLTE is just mobile voice service. In fact, one national wireless carrier uses VoLTE for around 60% of its voice calls.
  - VoLTE is anticipated to be the primary way in which the industry will offer mobile voice service as mobile networks transition to 4G LTE and future technologies.
  - VoLTE has not been classified and is not currently subject to any roaming standard.
  - By classifying VoLTE as a commercial mobile service and a telecommunications service, VoLTE would be subject to the proposed unified roaming standard.