

March 21, 2017



Congressman Marsha Blackburn
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Chairman Blackburn,

Thank you for the Subcommittee's continuing interest in federal policies that promote expanded investment in broadband infrastructure and elimination of regulatory barriers to deployment. As you know, broadband access can be a valuable tool for creating jobs and economic opportunity, and any unnecessary costs and delays associated with the federal permitting and rights of way process can pose a drag on the digital economy, especially in rural communities where the cost to provide service is already greater.

The discussion draft bills circulated by the Subcommittee on communications infrastructure and conduit deployment both address challenges that CenturyLink has encountered as we have expanded and maintained our communications network. For example, the provisions to streamline Department of Interior and Forest Service processes for communications infrastructure, especially for modifications of networks in existing rights of way, would help speed deployment in western states where both agencies are responsible for extensive land holdings that must be crossed to reach some communities. The streamlining of Historical Preservation and NEPA review requirements track bipartisan recommendations from past reform efforts and will help make it faster and less expensive to access federal lands without sacrificing worthwhile public interests. Finally, the conduit deployment provisions could be especially helpful where fiber upgrades must cross bottleneck facilities, such as bridges or tunnels, where only one practical route is available.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to broadband infrastructure issues. We are encouraged by the Subcommittee's discussion drafts and stand ready to serve as a resource as you advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Bartlett", is written over the typed name.

David Bartlett
Vice President
Federal Government Affairs

Cc:
Congressman Mike Doyle
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology