



October 27, 2009

Thomas A. Schatz
President

The Honorable Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary for Communication and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Strickling:

On behalf of the more than one million members and supporters of Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW), I am writing to express our objection to a National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) funding application that we believe to be wasteful. CAGW is particularly alarmed about how NTIA will spend the \$4.7 billion in funds that have been provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (stimulus), a 624.5 percent increase over the agency's entire budget of \$648.7 million in fiscal year 2009. Taxpayers deserve reassurance that every penny of this massive increase in funds for broadband grants will be spent wisely.

Application #1338 by the New York State Office for Technology seeks \$1,574,308 for its Syracuse-Broome County Connectivity Project. The project would provide dark fiber for high-speed, high-capacity connectivity between New York's Southern Tier and Syracuse, along a route approximately 125 miles long with connections in Onondaga, Tompkins and Broome counties. CAGW questions the wisdom of supporting it with public funds. Under BTOP rules, New York State will be obligated to pay at least 20 percent of the project cost, and its well-documented budget problems make this a questionable expenditure at this time.

It is unfair to ask New York taxpayers to shoulder this burden since multiple broadband providers already serve the targeted area. Using public funds to duplicate existing private sectors services is simply a waste of money.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1338 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Syracuse-Broome County Connectivity Project.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Schatz". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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Phone 202-467-5300
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Application #1338 by the New York State Office for Technology asks for \$1,514,072 to fund the Long Island County Connectivity Project. Their goal is to provide dark fiber for high-speed, high-capacity connectivity between State University of New York Research Center at Stony Brook and Brookhaven National Laboratory. But it is unnecessary to use public money in this effort as private broadband providers already offer that service in the area.

Funding this grant would also add to the financial woes of New York State, which is already cutting back on services and laying off state employees. Having to pay at least 20 percent of the total cost of the project – as they would be obligated to do under BTOP guidelines – is an unwise use of taxpayer money.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1338 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Long Island County Connectivity Project.

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Application #1286 by the New York State Office for Technology asks for \$240,000 for the SUNY Nanotechnology Connectivity Project. The funds are requested to provide high-speed, high-capacity connectivity between SUNYIT in Utica and the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering in Albany. It would support their partnership to create a new semiconductor packaging center and a new classroom laboratory. Multiple providers already offer this type of technology in the grant's specified target areas.

Even if there were a need for federal support to provide this connectivity, New York State does not have the financial capacity to fund its portion of the project. The State has severe budget problems and – if funded – this grant would require them to pay 20 percent or more of the total cost.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1286 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the SUNY Nanotechnology Connectivity Project.

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Application #195 on behalf of Wilco Electronic Systems, Inc. asks for a grant award in the amount of \$21,865,647 to overbuild parts of Philadelphia as part of a project called Access Beyond Expectations: A Broadband Adoption Network for the Philadelphia Housing Authority. This would be a completely unnecessary expenditure of public funds as multiple ISPs have already made high-speed broadband service available throughout the city. Putting millions of dollars in public funds into a project that duplicates existing private sector services would be a textbook example of wasteful government spending.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #195 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as Access Beyond Expectations: A Broadband Adoption Network for the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

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Application #1610 comes from the city of Philadelphia, which is requesting \$21,818,411 to build the Digital Philadelphia Broadband Initiative, a fiber backbone/ring that the city would own. There is no need for such a project when perfectly adequate broadband service is already widely available throughout the city, offered by several different private sector companies. There is no need for the city to become a competitor in a market that is already meeting the needs of consumers, especially when doing so would require an investment of federal money. This grant request, along with a similar project request by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, potentially represent a total of more than \$40 million in wasteful government spending.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1610 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Digital Philadelphia Broadband Initiative.

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Application #134 from OSHEAN, Inc. asks for BTOP funding to support its Beacon 2.0 project, a middle mile fiber network that plans to bring together eight rings throughout Rhode Island and parts of southern Massachusetts. This request for federal money is not justified, as Rhode Island already has excellent connectivity.

Broadband is available throughout the state; in fact, for at least the last six years the Federal Communications Commission has recognized Rhode Island as having the most competitive communications market in the country. Census data shows that 73 percent of the homes in Rhode Island have adopted broadband and the state has been ranked number one with respect to download speeds. It is implausible that in a location where private sector companies are obviously making significant investments in broadband services and vying with one another to meet the needs of government agencies, businesses and consumers a multi-million dollar federal handout is necessary to build more network capacity.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #134 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as Beacon 2.0.

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The City of Grapevine, Texas has submitted application #127, requesting \$316,099 to fund its Public Safety Network Improvements Plan. Adequate wireless service is already in place in the city, as multiple providers offer competing products. If the city government wants to provide its own service above that used by their residents and businesses (even though they don't have the experience and expertise of private sector companies already performing that task in their town) it should not be given federal funds to do so. Once again, this would duplicate existing private sector services with public money, and that is simply wasteful government spending.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #127 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as Public Safety Network Improvements in Grapevine.

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ESC Data LLC has submitted application #2062 for the Texas Hill Country Broadband project. The company seeks \$28,805,221 to provide broadband access via wireless infrastructure to citizens in six rural central Texas counties; in ESC's words to "bring the residents, businesses and community facilities into the 21st Century."

This has already been accomplished without the unnecessary expenditure of federal dollars. The Texas Department of Agriculture compiled a map of broadband providers by county in June 2008 that clearly shows counties throughout central Texas already have broadband service in place. Spending almost \$29 million in public funds to provide services that are already being offered by private sector companies would be a clear waste of the taxpayers' money.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #2062 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as Texas Hill Country Broadband.

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Application #1701 comes from the City of Houston, Texas. It asks for \$16,297,099 to finance the City of Houston Municipal Broadband Network Initiative. The city proposes to use these federal tax dollars to provide a shared municipal broadband wireless network services to support a variety of public service, public safety and community access applications.

These goals can be accomplished with existing private sector resources. The online Internet provider locator service, The ISP Guide.com, lists as many as 20 different Internet providers active in the Houston metro area, offering both DSL and wireless service options. City agencies and employees can be provided with adequate Internet access through the services already in place, making the expenditure of \$16.3 million in public funds unnecessary.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1701 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the City of Houston Municipal Broadband Network Initiative.

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The Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority has requested \$12,700,099 in application #400, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Initiative – Middle Mile Buildout. These funds would be used to provide broadband infrastructure in Accomack and Northampton counties, building on the existing fiber backbone network. There is no apparent need for the expenditure of federal money to accomplish this goal.

State broadband maps clearly show widespread availability of both fixed and mobile broadband service throughout Virginia. As a state with many high-tech businesses, Virginia has very well-developed broadband infrastructure and was ranked fourth in the nation in broadband speed by a 2008 Communication Workers of America survey. A federal handout of \$12.7 million is not needed to promote broadband in this state.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #400 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Initiative.

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Grant application #1420 in the amount of \$59,969,895 has been submitted by the Hampton Roads Educational Telecom Association. The project, called the Hampton Roads Regional Area Network, would connect a total of 18 school districts, universities and emergency services. This request is implausible.

Virginia presently has multiple broadband providers offering both fixed and wireless services throughout the state. The federal government does not need to spend \$60 million in Virginia to provide broadband service when many private sector companies are already busy doing that.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1420 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Hampton Roads Regional Area Network.

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Application #1449 from Howard County, Maryland seeks \$99 million for its One Maryland Broadband Plan. The project would build a broadband network to connect municipalities, schools, libraries and other institutions in Maryland. Twenty percent of the funding for this project must be provided by the state itself. In light of the current budget difficulties that Maryland is facing, it would be extremely irresponsible to saddle taxpayers with a bill for nearly \$20 million in additional spending.

It is similarly a waste of federal money, particularly because multiple communications providers have already built out networks in this area capable of providing the same services this grant seeks to provide. Using stimulus funds to cover projects already funded by the private sector won't create any new economic growth; it will merely shift the cost onto the backs of taxpayers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1449 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the One Maryland Broadband Plan.

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Application #1188 from 01 Data Center seeks \$15.5 million in taxpayer money to subsidize a "last mile remote area" project in Delaware, Florida and New Hampshire. Despite 01 Data Center's claims to the contrary, multiple providers already serve these areas. This proposal first attacks the use of satellite access and then proposes to use that method in delivering its "solution."

This application will not create new economic growth, but simply provide an unfair government subsidy for a private entity to enter into a market already served by other providers.

We encourage you to reject application #1188 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the proposal from 01 Data Center.

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Application #297 by AlphaStar America, LLC seeks more than \$25 million for its Middle Mile Hybrid Broadband Access Solution. The project's stated goal is to build networks to connect ISPs, schools, and municipalities in unserved areas. However, the plan is based on erroneous information. In Delaware, AlphaStar specifically designates the communities of Delaware City, New Castle and Odessa as unserved areas, even though all of these towns are currently served by multiple ISPs. There is no need for government funds to be expended in these and other so-called target areas, where private sector investment has already provided consumers with ample broadband options.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #297 along with many of the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects.

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Application #1000 from the California Broadband Cooperative seeks \$81 million in taxpayer dollars for their Digital 395 Middle Mile Project. The project would build fiber networks in three isolated counties of the Eastern Sierra. It is highly questionable whether it is a good use of public funds to support this project.

The project would only serve 400 housing units, which is equal to \$202,500 per dwelling unit. The Cooperative is unable to raise the required 20 percent of the funding for this project, and is therefore looking for a 100 percent grant. Providing \$81 million in taxpayer funds to provide service to such a small number of housing units is simply unacceptable.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1000 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Digital 395 Middle Mile Project.

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Application #1278 by the District of Columbia City Government seeks \$29 million to deploy fiber to community anchor institutions and supply WiFi access points at the institutional sites. It is highly questionable whether it is a good use of public funds to support this project. Multiple communications providers are already offering these same services. Using stimulus funds to cover projects already funded by the private sector won't create any new economic growth; it will merely shift the cost onto the backs of taxpayers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1278 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects.

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www.cagw.org



October 27, 2009

Thomas A. Schatz
President

The Honorable Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary for Communication and Information
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Strickling:

On behalf of the more than one million members and supporters of Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW), I am writing to express our objection to a National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program funding application that we believe to be wasteful. CAGW is particularly alarmed about how NTIA will spend the \$4.7 billion in funds that have been provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (stimulus), a 624.5 percent increase over the agency's entire budget of \$648.7 million in fiscal year 2009. Taxpayers deserve reassurance that every penny of this massive increase in funds for broadband grants will be spent wisely.

Application #1121 by E-Mac Corporation seeks \$35.5 million for its Multimedia Digital Network Project. The project's stated goal would be the deployment of fast Internet and digital television services (described as including voice and data transmissions, Internet access, video and radio broadcasts) to unserved and underserved areas of Delaware. The application clearly contains faulty information, as it specifically designates 397,104 households as underserved and 395,323 as unserved. There are only approximately 300,000 households in Delaware. In addition, the state is already being served by multiple providers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1121 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

Sincerely,

Thomas Schatz

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Application #1435 by MegaPath Inc. seeks more than \$42 million for its North Country Connectivity Project. The project seeks to provide broadband service, together with a bundled router/access device, to underserved markets surrounding various MegaPath offices along the I-95 highway corridor. It is highly questionable whether it is a good use of public funds to support this project. More than one broadband provider already serves the entire area in question.

MegaPath specifically designates the city of Wilmington, Delaware; the surrounding metro area of Newark; and areas north of Wilmington as underserved. These are urban areas that have multiple privately funded consumer broadband options currently in place.

Spending taxpayer money to duplicate existent private sector services in this manner would be a wasteful unnecessary government handout that would not significantly extend broadband to areas that are truly "unserved."

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #1435 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

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Application #720, the Middlemile Broadband Infrastructure Grant, for the County of Middlesex, N.J. seeks \$14.7 million to construct wireless towers to carry broadband service to areas of Middlesex County and connect anchor institutions, such as educational institutions and county offices. There is no good reason why taxpayer dollars should be spent to bankroll the County of Middlesex for its own private wireless broadband network. Residents, businesses and government offices already have a wide choice of broadband carriers; choosing among them would help protect existing jobs and perhaps result in new job creation among those companies – without costing taxpayers a dime.

It is similarly a waste of federal money, particularly because multiple communications providers are already offering these same services. Using stimulus funds to cover projects already funded by the private sector won't create any new economic growth; it will merely shift the cost onto the backs of taxpayers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #720 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as Broadband Infrastructure Grant.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

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Application #334 by the New York State Office of Technology seeks \$1.4 million for its North Country Connectivity Project. The project would build out fiber networks in several areas of upstate New York. It is highly questionable whether it is a good use of public funds to support this project. Twenty percent of the funding for this project must be provided by the state, which is already in the red. It would not be prudent to take on any new discretionary spending at this time.

It is similarly a waste of federal money, particularly because multiple communications providers are already offering these same services. Using stimulus funds to cover projects already funded by the private sector won't create any new economic growth; it will merely shift the cost onto the backs of taxpayers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #334 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the North Country Connectivity Project.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

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Application #313 seeks \$7.2 million for its New York State Thruway Fiber Project. This grant would provide for the creation of dark fiber. This is fiber that will not be used; it will be installed and then will lay there waiting to see if someone needs it. Twenty percent of the funding for this project must be provided by the state. Given the current budget crisis in New York, it is irresponsible to undertake this kind of spending, especially when there is no assurance that this dark fiber will even be used to provide any new services or benefit to taxpayers.

Multiple communications providers have already invested in fiber infrastructure in this area. Using stimulus funds to cover projects already funded by the private sector won't create any new economic growth; it will merely shift the cost onto the backs of taxpayers.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #313 along with other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the North Country Connectivity Project.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

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Application #678 from the OpenCape Corporation seeks more than \$32 million in taxpayer funding to build not just one, but two networks in the Cape Cod area. According to the United States Department of Agriculture website, the unserved and underserved population is 2/10ths of 1 percent of Cape Cod households. Furthermore, OpenCape's proposal acknowledges that it has not developed a comprehensive solution along the South Coast, but apparently the company would like the taxpayers to give it money for that purpose anyway.

This proposal represents an obvious a waste of federal money, particularly because multiple communications providers currently offer service in the Cape Cod area.

Therefore, we encourage you to reject application #678 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Schatz". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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Application #1242 requests \$58 million for the Township of Irvington, New Jersey's Comprehensive Community Broadband Initiative. Twenty percent of the funding must be provided by Irvington, and with municipal and state budgets in such dire straits, such spending is not a responsible use of taxpayer money.

This project also represents a misappropriation of federal funds. Irvington Township's proposed initiative seeks to provide the same wired and wireless broadband services that are already being provided by multiple private-sector sources. Using federal funds to create a redundant network on top of existing infrastructure is irresponsible and will not create any new economic growth.

We encourage you to reject application #1242 along with the other wasteful requests for federal stimulus money your agency has received. Regardless of one's opinion of the stimulus plan, it is essential that these funds not be devoted to wasteful projects such as the Irvington Comprehensive Community Broadband Initiative.

We expect NTIA to exercise due diligence in scrutinizing all broadband infrastructure funding applications to ensure that the taxpayers' money is not being wasted.

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