

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2021

Chair Maria Cantwell
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell:

Broadband mapping is a critical tool for bridging the digital divide. Without accurate maps, we will not know where broadband is available and where it is not. This information is especially important in light of the billions of dollars Congress recently appropriated for broadband deployment – with potentially more on the way – and the billions in Universal Service funding that is being held up until these maps are completed.

Last year, Congress passed my bipartisan Broadband DATA Act, which requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to develop accurate, granular broadband maps. We also provided the FCC \$98 million to implement the law. Our expectation was that the FCC would act expeditiously to develop new maps, as FCC officials from both parties promised they would move as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, the FCC recently suggested they would not have new maps ready until 2022, despite previous statements from Acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel that the agency could complete new maps in “just a few months.” However, at our March 17, 2021 hearing, you stated that Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel had intimated to you that we could have an answer for mapping in four months. We need to resolve these conflicting timelines.

Congressional oversight of the FCC’s development of new maps is critical, given that several broadband support programs, such as the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase II auction and the 5G Fund auction, depend on these maps. Earlier this month, I, along with Senator John Thune and Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Robert E. Latta, sent a letter to Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel requesting detailed information about her plans and timelines for developing new maps. Despite our request for specifics, we received a three-page response that simply gave a broad overview of the process of developing new maps, without any target completion date.

Fixing the FCC’s broadband maps is a bipartisan issue. Indeed, at our March 17 hearing, Committee members from both parties noted the need for better maps. I hope you and I can work together to compel the FCC to address this issue quickly. I am therefore requesting that the Committee hold an FCC oversight hearing during this upcoming work period so we can discuss

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the FCC's plans and timelines for developing new maps with Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel and the other Commissioners.

Millions of Americans still lack access to high-speed broadband. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, access to connectivity is critical to participating in everyday life. Ensuring that all Americans enjoy the benefits of connectivity requires accurate maps from the FCC. Congress cannot afford to wait or to permit the FCC to get this wrong. I look forward to working together to address this problem.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation