CCA Calls FCC’s Rural Broadband Experiments Unfair to Mobile

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The Competitive Carriers Association (CCA) today expressed concerns over a new FCC Report and Order [1] detailing rural broadband experiments and competition for available funding.

Of the $100 million the FCC pledged toward driving broadband coverage in rural areas, $75 million is being offered up to test networks capable of reaching 25 Mbps download and 5 Mbps upload. The FCC said the speed targets far exceed the current 4/1 standards under the Connect America Fund.

The CCA agreed with the concerns of Commissioner Michael O’Rielly, that the speed requirements effectively shut mobile operators out of the competition.

“Making the vast majority of funding contingent on achieving speeds that are several multiples higher than those required of price-cap carriers in receiving CAF Phase I funding makes little sense,” CCA CEO Steven K. Berry said in a statement. “The primary directive of these experiments should be to determine which providers can deliver adequate broadband to these currently unserved areas in the most cost-effective, consumer-friendly way.”

Berry added that wireless carriers contribute more to the CAF than wireline carriers, and yet the FCC’s rules are “technology biased away from consumer-desired mobile services.”

The remaining $25 million of FCC CAF money will go to chosen applicants working to provide 10/1 access in areas where broadband is costly to deploy. The FCC said it will award funds to the most cost-effective projects and that the experiments are meant to test out the CAF competitive bidding process before it’s used on a wider scale next year.

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[1] http://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-launches-rural-broadband-expansion-experiments