

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI  
AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION'S  
BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**APRIL 21, 2017**

Last September, at a startup accelerator in Cincinnati, I outlined my Digital Empowerment Agenda, a nonpartisan blueprint for communications policy. At the core of this agenda was my conviction that every American who wants high-speed Internet access should be able to get it. I suggested several concrete proposals for achieving that goal—for promoting broadband deployment across the country and closing the digital divide. One proposal was for the FCC to create a Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee—a panel of experts that could advise us on these issues. How marvelous it is to see this idea put into practice starting this morning! And it is quite fitting that this first meeting is taking place during Infrastructure Month here at the Commission.

Deploying broadband is hard, expensive, and time-consuming work, whether you're trenching fiber, attaching equipment to poles, or setting up a gateway earth station. Red tape shouldn't make those tasks even harder. To me, it's pretty simple: With rules that make it easier to deploy broadband, we will see more broadband deployed. And in turn, we can empower millions of Americans with digital opportunity.

Now, when we issued a call for nominations to serve on the BDAC back in January, I was expecting a few dozen applications. I couldn't be more thrilled at how wrong my prediction was. Over 380 individuals applied. There were nominees from organizations large and small, representing industry, government, and consumer and community organizations. From this diverse and highly impressive pool of applicants we invited 29 to serve on this new committee. Thank you for accepting this responsibility.

You are a distinguished group. You are innovators and leaders in the effort to bring broadband and next-generation networks to all parts of our nation. Your work connects rural and urban areas alike, links people across land, air, and sea, and turns today's dreams into tomorrow's realities. I am—we are—excited that you are joining us in this calling and look forward to working closely with you.

As members of the BDAC, your mission is to give the FCC recommendations on ways to spur broadband deployment and reduce barriers to investment. One important part of this work, which I previewed last fall, is to develop model codes for state and municipal governments that want to encourage deployment and competitive entry in their jurisdictions.

In fact, the BDAC is being asked to develop two model codes—one for municipalities and another for states. In developing each, the goal should be guidelines that are forward-looking and fair, and that balance legitimate interests of state and local governments with the ever-growing demands of the American public for better, faster, and cheaper broadband. I look forward to seeing how you approach this challenge.

The BDAC will also be asked to make recommendations on how to promote competitive access to broadband infrastructure, including utility poles. New concepts, such as "one-touch make-ready" and "right-touch make-ready," have great potential to streamline the pole attachment process. The BDAC could help identify solutions for easing access that preserve public safety and advance the interests of pole owners and (would-be) users.

Another key issue is speeding up broadband deployment on Federal lands. Right now, it takes about twice as long to site infrastructure on Federal lands as it does on privately held land. Shortening

that timeline could help prove the business case for deployment in areas where it might not otherwise exist. Here, BDAC recommendations could have a major impact on closing the digital divide, especially for rural and Tribal residents who live on or near Federal lands.

The thicket of issues I've identified makes one thing clear: the BDAC has a lot of work ahead of it. But I'm certain that this distinguished group is more than up to the task. And in the coming weeks, I expect to appoint more qualified nominees to round out the working groups, lending further support to the cause.

Thank you again for contributing your time, energy, and expertise to this important endeavor. I'm confident that your dedication to this Committee will make a major difference to Americans in the years to come.