



## NTIA Virtual Public Listening Session #1 – Stakeholder Discussion – As of 1/6/22

### **NTIA Question #1 - What do you see as the most significant barrier to ensuring broadband access to all unserved locations and achieving universal adoption?**

**Delays in Permitting, Streamlining-** We need new fast networks, fast. Speed to market is critical to meet needs as quickly as possible. It is necessary to have state and local review guidelines in place that enable faster processing that will allow the deployment of broadband infrastructure more quickly, including small cells and other wireless equipment and fiber that is used by both fixed and mobile providers to connect their networks.

As part of allocating these funds, NTIA should encourage local authorities to begin reviewing their permitting processes and determine whether they have the resources they need to issue permits quickly. NTIA should work with utility commissions and state governments to encourage local jurisdictions to expedite permitting, allow for batch permitting, and keep permitting and franchise fees low and require that these fees be publicly disclosed, competitively and technology neutral, and non-discriminatory based on actual and direct costs.

It is also critical for NTIA to encourage cities to evaluate their fees for reasonableness so that project dollars are used efficiently and effectively and will enable more fiber miles to be built.

**Access to Public ROWs-** Increasing broadband providers' access to public rights-of-way will help spur faster and more efficient deployments to unserved areas- benefitting consumers and businesses waiting for access to next-generation networks. NTIA must work with state and local governments to extend rights-of-way protections to entities that own and/or manage the rights-of-way that providers must access to build networks, including those entities that own or manage poles, highways, and railroads.

INCOMPAS urges NTIA to begin the process of including these issues into its discussions in the interagency process. INCOMPAS members are seeing significant delays and increase in costs prior to the public sector financing that's now available, and they are concerned that with the additional financial boost afforded by Congress, further delays are likely as those who manage/own the rights-of-way are ill-prepared for the increased demand for requests to access the rights-of-way. Agencies at the federal, state, and local level all need to prepare now and begin discussions of how to avoid costly delays. INCOMPAS recommends identifying where there are current gaps, including training employees, reviewing processes that can be expedited by investing in technological upgrades, and coordinating between agencies/managers of rights-of-way as soon as possible.

**NTIA Question #2 - For NOFO's - What assistance can NTIA provide prospective applicants and partners as they prepare for the IJIA broadband program NOFOs?**

**Resources for Contacting State Broadband Offices & State and Local Officials-** With the importance of establishing partnerships as part of NTIA's new grant programs and as more states begin to set up their offices, it will be very helpful if NTIA can continue updating contact information related to each state's broadband office or agency through its website at [States | BroadbandUSA](#). It's a great resource for potential applicants so NTIA should continue to remind the public of this resource page in future listening sessions and through its announcements as NOFOs are released in the upcoming months.

Also, NTIA should set up informational, training sessions with state and local offices to make introductions and to do follow-up meetings with each state's broadband office, state directors, and/or staff to ask for feedback and questions, develop working relationships, and to help coordinate on potential projects and rollout plans.