

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN THOMAS E. WHEELER**

Re: *Technology Transitions*, GN Docket No. 13-5; *AT&T Petition to Launch a Proceeding Concerning the TDM-to-IP Transition*, GN Docket No. 12-353; *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90; *Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program*, CG Docket No. 10-51; *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, CG Docket No. 03-123; *Numbering Policies for Modern Communications*, WC Docket No. 13-97.

Our communications are rapidly transitioning to IP-networks – and that’s a good thing. The move from the circuit-switched networks of Alexander Graham Bell to the new networks of the Internet Revolution is all around us – with expanded deployment of fiber, with new forms of wireless, with bonded copper and coaxial cable. These transitions – plural – are a good thing because IP networks are more efficient, which can enable better products, lower prices, and massive benefits for consumers.

But today’s transitions are all about the voluntary adoption of new supplemental services. Now, America’s largest telecommunications networks have said that they want to engage in a very different kind of transition – a moment when they will seek our permission to turn off their legacy networks and when their customers would lose a choice that they have had for generations.

It is the prospect of that mandatory moment that we confront today.

At this critical juncture, let me be clear about a few things. One, we favor technological innovation. And, two, we affirm the enduring values of the Network Compact: universal service, public safety, competition and consumer protection.

Our challenge is to preserve the values that consumers and businesses have come to expect from their networks, while unleashing new waves of investment and innovation, which will deliver untold benefits for the American people.

Today’s order kickstarts this national dialogue.

First, we invite service providers to propose voluntary experiments in the deployment of IP-connected networks. I believe that such voluntary experiments, through the use of carefully-constructed control groups, can tell us how IP networks impact users – and this is the only purpose of these experiments. How will households reach 911, which they must? How will small businesses continue to reach their customers, which they must? Will competition be maintained? How will people with medical monitoring devices or home alarms know that they will always be connected to a reliable network, which they also must be able to do?

Here Commissioner Rosenworcel deserves special thanks. It is her formulation of the enduring values of universal service, public safety, competition and consumer protection that anchor the networks of our future in the bedrock expectations of today.

Second, we authorize the solicitation of targeted experiments that focus on universal access. These proof-of-concept initiatives will help us understand where new technology can be developed, for example for individuals with disabilities.

And they will help us understand what kinds of networks can best serve rural America – a place that is not only more sparsely populated but also older and poorer than the rest of our nation.

We cannot be a nation of opportunity without networks of opportunity. This pilot program will help us learn how fiber might be deployed where it is not now deployed; how anchor institutions – including schools and libraries – can harness demand for the greater good of an entire community; and how new forms of wireless can reach deep into the interior of rural America.

I'm particularly proud of the role that Commissioner Clyburn has assumed. She has been a passionate advocate for greater access to healthcare technologies, and she will undertake an effort to ensure that our rural pilot programs include exploration of the best ways to improve the healthcare services available to rural communities.

Although we do not now today authorize specific levels of funding for these rural pilot programs, we have already heard from many who wish to participate. In this order we ask them to come forward in the coming weeks, so that we can decide the appropriate level of funding and focus national attention on how to best bring robust broadband to all of America.

Finally, let me note the work that needs to be done. We must answer the very big legal and policy questions that are raised by the IP transitions. "Enduring values" tend to be thought of in consumer-facing terms. But inherent in the transitions and trials is the maintenance of competition and the relationship between networks that allows that to happen, including critical questions of competition. That's why I've asked for a managerial framework this spring that will provide guidance on how and when these questions will be resolved.

I congratulate the Technology Transitions Policy Taskforce for its extraordinary work over the past year. Since its creation in December 2012, the Task Force has mustered the resources and knowledge necessary to prepare us for today's action. Congratulations to all of the staff who worked so hard in these efforts, and especially those who set the stage for action before my arrival.

With the adoption of today's Order, it is now time for the next step. As I have said before, it is the Bureaus and Offices that should be the first stop for operational outcomes and policy creation.

That's why I have decided to replace the Task Force with a "mesh network" of Bureau and Office activities, including joint activities. Through this approach the Commission will enjoy the advantages of coordination and leadership that the Task Force provided, while moving the work of the Bureaus and Offices to the front and center, where they belong.

Specifically, I have asked my key staff to proceed as follows:

- The Wireline Competition Bureau, led by Julie Veach, will own the administration of both service and the rural broadband experiments. The Bureau has suggested, and I agree, that it should form a steering committee to include representatives from the Public Safety Bureau, the Wireless Bureau, the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, the Office of Strategic Planning, the Office of Engineering and Technology, and the Office of General Counsel to guide its oversight of the experiments. That will include specific responsibilities for Public Safety and Wireless, as noted below. Legal approvals necessary to the implementation, duration or operation of experiments will be processed in the ordinary course of business.
- Jon Sallet and OGC will lead the strategic path forward, including the creation of a managerial framework that will chart the process by which the Commission will decide the large-scale legal, regulatory and policy issues arising from the IP transitions.
- Jonathan Chambers, with the support of OSP, including Henning Schulzrinne, will be responsible for the R&D efforts identified in today's Order, as well as the continuing creation of innovation policy. OSP will also assist WCB in recruiting participants in the experiments, and will work with WCB and OGC to develop procedures for the selection of participants in the rural broadband experiment. OSP will be jointly responsible with CGB for the implementation of data-collection efforts associated with the Order.

- David Simpson and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau will provide subject-matter expertise for all public-safety issues associated with the implementation of the Order.
- Roger Sherman and the Wireless Bureau will provide subject-matter expertise for all wireless issues, including the deployment of fixed wireless systems, associated with the implementation of the Order.
- Kris Monteith and the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau will work with OSP on implementation of data-collection efforts associated with the Order.
- I will be looking to Julie Knapp and OET to be involved in engineering issues that will inevitably arise during the experiments, even though their focus is on the impact on consumers and customers, rather than technology by itself.
- Because of the importance to our economy of the IP transitions, I have asked Mindel DeLaTorre of the International Bureau to provide an international benchmark of how U.S. efforts compare to progress towards IP transitions globally.

I am confident that these efforts, which must be integrated with each in order to be the most impactful and strategic, will provide the Commission with the leadership required to effectuate our IP policies.