

"To Do List" for the National Broadband Plan

December 18, 2009

Although [advertised as a "policy framework" for the National Broadband Plan](#), Wednesday's presentation to the FCC looks more like a "to do" list for Chairman Genachowski's 2010 agenda. A number of suggestions will be very controversial, including ensuring "productive" use of spectrum (especially TV broadcast spectrum), spurring competition for TV set-top boxes, and measuring "advertised vs. actual" broadband speeds. Most relevant to this blog's focus are the reforms of USF and the FCC Formal Complaint Process.

USF Reform. Staff emphasized that USF should be refocused to support broadband, and suggested a 5-10 year transition. Increases in broadband support would come with "trade-offs", primarily in the form of cuts in high cost support, but with all funding programs being reformed. The long-discussed Lifeline support for broadband services may be growing legs. Finally, "sustainability" would be the driving force for reforming the USF contribution base (no doubt, spurred by concerns over the new [14% USF factor](#) next quarter).

FCC Formal Complaints. A number of enforcement reforms were discussed to promote infrastructure deployment. In particular, the Staff urged "timely and predictable" dispute resolution by the FCC's Enforcement Bureau of pole attachment requests and development of a uniform rental rate to replace a rate that varies by the type of provider attaching to the pole. FCC mandates to decrease the "make-ready" work a pole owner performs and to impose deadlines for current attachers to perform "make-ready" work may be on the horizon too.

The FCC press release and Staff's presentation are available [here](#) and [here](#). The FCC will adopt the National Broadband Plan by February 17, 2010.