

Carr Concerned That Biden Administration’s New Broadband Infrastructure Rules Are Poised to Leave Rural Communities and Unconnected Americans Behind

Calls on States to Correct Course When Distributing the \$350 Billion in Treasury Funds

WASHINGTON, DC, January 14, 2022—Last week, the Treasury Department released [final rules](#) that govern the expenditure of \$350 billion in ARPA funds. The Biden Administration’s new rules identify the types of broadband infrastructure and other projects that state, local, and Tribal governments can spend those dollars on. With respect to funding for broadband projects, the Administration’s rules green-light spending to overbuild existing, high-speed networks in communities that already have fast Internet service, rather than directing those dollars to the rural and other communities that lack access to any broadband service today. This decision deviates from the Treasury Department’s initial proposal, and it risks deepening the digital divide in this country. It will be up to states to correct this error.

Commissioner Carr released the following statement on the Treasury Department’s Final Rule:

“The Treasury Department’s rules governing the expenditure of \$350 billion in ARPA funds highlights the Administration’s misplaced priorities and misguided approach to infrastructure.

“Rather than directing those dollars to the rural and other communities without any Internet infrastructure today, the Administration gives the green light for recipients to spend those funds on overbuilding existing, high-speed networks in communities that already have multiple broadband providers. This would only deepen the digital divide in this country.

“Indeed, it makes no sense for the Biden Administration to treat parts of this country that already have access to broadband services at speeds nearing 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up the exact same as communities that are stuck with nothing today.

“It gets worse. The Treasury rules allow these billions of dollars to be spent based on bad data. It does this by authorizing recipients to determine whether an area lacks access to high-speed Internet service by relying on informal interviews and reports—however inaccurate those may be—rather than the broadband maps that the federal government has been funding and standing up. The problems with Treasury’s broadband rules compound from there.

“Thankfully, it is not too late to correct course. The state, local, and Tribal governments that receive ARPA funding will have the power to direct these dollars to those communities that have been left behind, rather than those that already benefit from high-speed Internet services today. I hope they do so or these billions of dollars in infrastructure funds will only deepen the digital divide.”

###

Office of Commissioner Brendan Carr
www.fcc.gov/about/leadership/brendan-carr

Media Contact: Danielle Thumann
(202) 418-0376 or danielle.thumann@fcc.gov