# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES
COMMISSIONER

September 22, 2011

Mr. Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

Thank you for your service and for your commitment to expanding broadband availability and use across the nation. Expanded, affordable and reliable Internet service is necessary for agricultural producers and rural businesses to remain competitive in the international marketplace.

Broadband promises to be a key to promoting economic development and job growth in rural areas. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has been designated by the Texas governor to work with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration in regard to the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDD).

As part of the department's efforts to ensure the SBDD best addresses the needs of Texas, the department surveys the participating provider community for feedback on the interactive broadband map developed by Connected Nation for the Connected Texas project, as well as other relevant issues. Earlier this year providers offered feedback on the national broadband availability map.

Several themes were reflected in the surveys, and your attention to addressing each is vitally important. The comments include:

- concerns that rural addressing and mapping is incomplete or inaccurate;
- concerns that platforms, or the type of service, is incomplete or inaccurate; and
- concerns that many map features are similar and may confuse the user.

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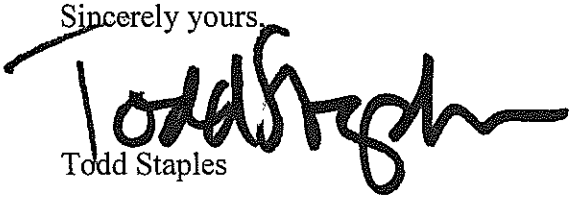
Additionally, survey participants offered suggestions to improve the map. Recommendations include:

- ensuring the map includes a functioning zip code search tool (this will help provide more complete information to rural areas where road locations and addresses are more difficult to sync); and
- providing a search option that will demonstrate the incumbent local exchange carrier as a potential broadband provider for residents in unserved areas;

An accurate national broadband map is vital to efforts to expand high speed Internet access and use. I look forward to working with you to address these comments submitted by Texas stakeholders. Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Todd Staples

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