To:        David J. Villano, Rural Utilities Service  
           Anthony Wilhelm, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

From:     George Lucier, Chair, Chatham County Board of Commissioners

CC:       Vivek Kundra, Federal Chief Information Officer  
           Senator Bob Atwater, Representative Joe Hackney, Congressman Bob Etheridge, 
           Congressman David Price, Senator Kay Hagan, Senator Richard Burr 
           Jane Smith Patterson, NC Rural Internet Access Authority

Date:     August 3, 2009

Re:       Broadband Notice of Funding Availability

As a rural county in critical need of expanded broadband services, I am writing to express our 
disappointment that we could not possibly meet the requirements for recently announced funding 
offered through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It will be almost impossible for any 
rural areas or small towns to have sufficient staffing or access to outside expertise to meet the 
requirements, even though we are the areas intended to be served by the ARRA funding.

We understand that the requirements of the RUS Broadband Initiative Program and the NTIA 
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program Notices of Funding Availability are based on 
important public comments and feedback pertaining to broadband technology. The NOFAs reflect 
the fact that quality research and planning is imperative to the success of broadband projects. They 
also demand extensive preparatory work required to ensure a successful project and the wise use of 
ARRA funding.

However, the resources required to meet the requirements of the grant are beyond the capacity of 
most rural communities, especially if the grant funding cannot be used to hire the outside expertise 
necessary to help us conduct quality research and planning. It appears that the public feedback 
sessions did not address the very limited capacity of rural communities and local governments to 
prepare for successful 'shovel ready' broadband projects that are highly technical and complex.

For example, many small local governments with large areas of unserved or underserved residents 
and businesses lack the in-house expertise to define the potential range and application of 
technologies, design a system and project timeline, and ensure sound network management practices. 
Without funding assistance to fill this gap, they cannot hope to successfully compete for grant 
funding.

We would appreciate your consideration, in the next round of funding, of the lack of staffing and 
local funding necessary to prepare a workable application for broadband funding to expand 
broadband access in our communities.