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Interagency "Rights of Way" Report Outlines Reforms To Facilitate Wider Broadband Deployment

The report issued today by an interagency working group led by the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) recommended reforms to streamline government procedures for granting access, or "rights-of-way," to federal lands; to promote efficiency within federal land management agencies; and to reduce burdens on industry to facilitate delivery of broadband to American consumers and businesses.

In remarks today, President Bush signaled that he plans to direct federal government agencies to implement the report's recommendations to ease the access of broadband providers to federally controlled land. Implementation of the changes will help enable more Americans to reap the potential benefits of high speed Internet access.

Broadband technology opens up new opportunities for telemedicine, long distance education and countless other services that will foster investment, improve productivity and promote job producing economic growth, the report said.

"These recommendations are the result of government agencies throughout the Administration working together to make the President's stated national goal of affordable access to broadband technology a reality by 2007," said Michael D. Gallagher, Acting NTIA Administrator.

The recommendations include the creation of a central Web portal that will provide information on the federal rights-of-way permit process. In addition, the proposed changes cover timely processing of applications for access to federal land, standardizing and simplifying cost recovery and rental payments, and more effective monitoring of compliance with rights-of-way permits.

The working group recommended that federal land management agencies be required to file individual reports listing the specific actions each agency has taken to implement the recommendations. The reports are to be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget one year after the release of the report.

In addition to NTIA, the working group included the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Defense and Transportation as well as the General Services Administration. The report is available on the NTIA Web site at www.ntia.doc.gov.

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