

Internet customers of WT Services may contact the WT Services offices in Hereford or Friona for assistance with problems or computer issues.

Technicians with the WT Services Computer Division, located in the West Texas Rural Telephone business office, can handle computer repairs and maintenance issues.

Friona and Bovina customers may leave computers in need of repair at the WT Services office at 1010 Columbia in Friona, where they will be picked up and transported to the Hereford location for work. Repaired machines will then be returned to the Friona WT Services office.

FCC Chairman admits USF support system flaws hurt Broadband transition

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler acknowledges that the support system for the vital Universal Service Fund is increasingly outdated and that flaws in the Universal Service system have made transition to Broadband difficult for rural areas and their service providers.

Wheeler owned up to the problems in remarks before more than 1,500 members of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association on September 21 during the association's Fall Conference in Boston, Mass.

Wheeler's remarks centered on the need for universal access to broadband services.

"I know rural providers are doing everything they can to get comparable broadband service at comparable rates to their constituents. I also know that flaws in our universal programs have made transition to a broadband world challenging. The manner in which the USF support mechanisms operate were always complicated, and are increasingly outdated. We recognize the problem, and we want to do something about it," Wheeler said.

He outlined his preferred path forward with regard to the ongoing Universal Service Fund (USF) reform debate. His plan includes four parts:

- A voluntary path to using a cost-based model for support, similar to the model currently in use by price-cap carriers.
- A new mechanism that replaces high-cost loop support and interstate common line support mechanisms for carriers that choose not to go to the model.

- A timely transition period to the new mechanism.

- A budget for the program, including specific budgets on capital and operating expenditures that can be recovered through the program.

Wheeler is also circulating a public notice at the commission regarding USF and the intended uses for its support mechanisms. He said it is important that the Commission takes steps to prevent fraud and abuse within the fund.

NTCA issued a statement from Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield regarding how to collectively tackle the challenges of providing and sustaining universal access in rural areas.

"The keys are now to make sure any reforms that are made build upon and sustain the successes realized thus far, while also positioning community-based providers to continue investing and

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Broadband Opportunity Council recommends Feds modernize, expand programs boosting rural efforts

The Broadband Opportunity Council has recommended modernizing federal programs and expanding program support for investments in Broadband technology by rural cooperatives.

The Broadband Opportunity Council released its report and recommendations for expanding broadband deployment and adoption by addressing regulatory barriers and encouraging investment and training on September 21.

President Obama created the Council in March and charged it with gathering input and reporting on how the federal government can support Broadband deployment, competition and adoption.

The Council is co-chaired by the secretaries of Commerce and Agriculture, and includes representatives from 25 federal agencies.

In the report, the Council made four recommendations to the Obama administration regarding Broadband deployment and use:

- Modernize federal programs to expand program support for broadband

investments.

- Empower communities with tools and resources to attract broadband investment and promote meaningful use.
- Promote increased broadband deployment and competition through expanded access to federal assets.
- Improve data collection, analysis and research on broadband.

Several proposals were made for carrying out each recommendation, including expanding eligibility for the Rural Utilities Service Telecommunications Program, streamlining federal processes, promoting interagency coordination and lowering barriers to investment.

The report further contemplates a series of stakeholder forums for iden-

tifying indicators of community connectivity that would form an index that local governments would use to attract broadband investment.

The Broadband Opportunity Council report asks federal agencies to implement the various proposals in the next year-and-a-half to achieve the goals set forth by the council.

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400 minutes for \$15 monthly.

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FCC chairman admits flaws in USF

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delivering high-quality, affordable services in rural areas going forward. As an industry that has lived through prior changes that hindered rather than fostered investment, we know firsthand the importance to consumers and communities of both getting reform done and getting reform right."

FCC Commissioner Mi-

chael O'Rielly also attended the joint Industry & Regulatory Policy/Competitive and Advanced Services Committees meeting September 20 during the Fall Conference. He discussed his views on the ongoing USF reform debate and the need to deliver on the commission's commitment to updating existing mechanisms by the end of the year.