

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Jessica Del Fiacco  
612-540-5997, [jessica@nextcenturycities.org](mailto:jessica@nextcenturycities.org)

## **Municipal Broadband Networks are an Opportunity, Not a Threat**

*A Response to Commissioner O’Rielly’s Blog Post*

For the second time in as many months, Commissioner O’Rielly has [attacked municipal networks](#) on spurious grounds that they are a threat to First Amendment liberties. The following can be attributed to Deb Socia, Executive Director of Next Century Cities.

Local governments have invested in municipal broadband networks to improve internet access for everyone, advance educational outcomes, support public safety, and ensure a healthy business climate. Local governments rarely choose to pursue municipal broadband as a first option, but are willing to take risks and make meaningful investments to address connectivity gaps in their communities when necessary. If Commissioner O’Rielly and the FCC were more focused on fixing known problems with broadband internet access across the U.S., the responsibility would not fall on cities to take action.

Commissioner O’Rielly cannot identify a single instance of a municipal broadband network infringing on anyone’s freedom of speech. He dances around the issue with examples of national governments around the world, but the Mayor of Chattanooga is not comparable to the Prime Minister of some national government on another continent.

Local government officials have a Constitutional obligation to uphold free speech. Mayors and councilmembers are accountable to their constituency - they live and shop and attend events with the residents in their communities. If they are not adhering to the expectations of that community, they will be held accountable on election day.

We do agree with Commissioner O’Rielly that people should not engage in ad hominem attacks against public officials. But other than that, he makes significant errors in his continued attacks on municipal networks. We would prefer that he focus on improving internet access for everyone rather than attacking what [Consumer Reports](#) has identified as the best internet access in the country.

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***Next Century Cities*** is a non-profit membership organization of over 190 communities, founded to support communities and their elected leaders, including mayors and other officials, as they seek to ensure that all have access to fast, affordable, and reliable internet access. Next Century Cities celebrates broadband successes in communities, demonstrates their value, and

*helps other cities to realize the full power of truly high-speed, affordable, and accessible broadband. For more information, visit [www.nextcenturycities.org](http://www.nextcenturycities.org).*