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NEW RURAL CELLULAR TOWERS MAY BE JEAPORDIZED BY LACK OF FCC FUNDING

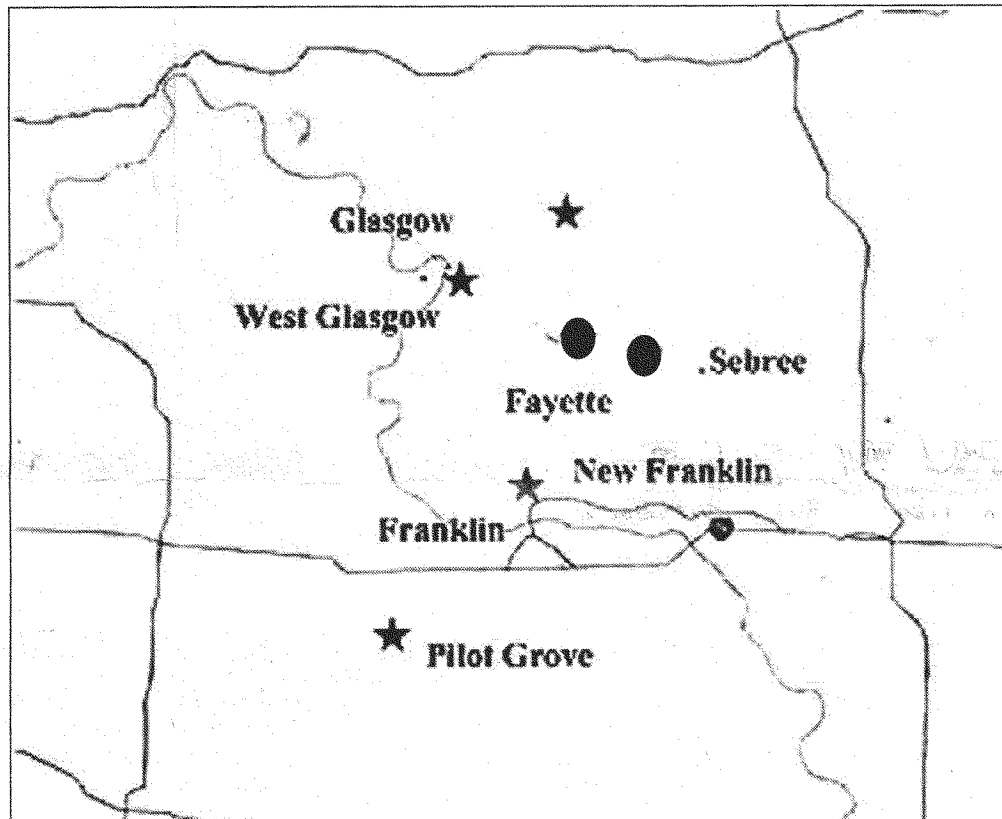
⁷⁷BOONVILLE, Mo. — To underscore the importance of continued federal funding for rural wireless infrastructure, U.S. Cellular Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Jay Ellison, Missouri 6th District Senator Carl M. Vogel and other community partners gathered recently in Columbia, Mo. to announce a major network expansion. U.S. Cellular will invest \$3 million to build 10 new cell sites in rural Missouri, the first towers the company will build using federal Universal Service Fund (USF) support.

The 10 new cell sites will be added to enhance coverage in and around Cole Camp, Dell Junction, Ellsinore, Fayette, Lincoln, Mansfield, Spring Fork, Stover and Warsaw, Mo. This investment will add to the extensive network of more than 500 U.S. Cellular towers across the state.

Despite this announcement, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has signaled its intent to cap the USF "very soon" — most likely in the next few weeks. This is especially dangerous for Missouri as the USF provides critical support for wireless companies to build new cell towers in high-cost areas across the country, including rural communities in Missouri.

If the proposed federal cap goes through, the \$11 million in new federal funds that would have come into Missouri annually will be put on hold indefinitely, compromising U.S. Cellular's planned investment of 39 new sites during the next two years.

"It is U.S. Cellular's pleasure to serve rural communities throughout Missouri with support from the Universal Service Fund," said Jay Ellison, executive vice president and COO of U.S. Cellular. "We can't understand why the FCC is moving



// Graphic courtesy of U.S. Cellular

forward with the cap in the face of resounding opposition from rural citizens across the country. U.S. Cellular recently testified before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee because this is such an important issue for Americans. Fourteen members of Congress have submitted letters to the FCC describing how important the federal USF is to their constituents, and this ill-informed political agenda will only compromise rural communities across the country."

Area first responders, including police officers and firefighters, have said that without adequate wireless coverage they cannot quickly and reliably deal with

critical safety issues. As more people rely on cell phones to make emergency calls, E-911 technology is useless in areas without wireless coverage and in high-cost rural areas wireless companies rely on federal support to make these resources available to smaller communities.

"Fayette is excited and grateful that U.S. Cellular will soon be bringing our community the same access to a robust and high-quality wireless network that the residents of larger cities enjoy," said William Fisher, mayor of the City of Fayette. "A cap on the Universal Service Fund would be an unfortunate step backward for rural communities like mine throughout

U.S. Cellular's two current cellular phone towers in the Boone's Lick are marked with circles in the map at left; proposed towers are marked with stars. The company says the expansion is possible because of support from the federal Universal Service Fund, administered by the Federal Communication Commission. U.S. Cellular says its expansion into rural areas is costly and the plan may be jeopardized if the FCC follows through on a plan to cap the USF.

the state of Missouri."

"For victims of domestic violence, reliable wireless service can literally mean the difference between life and death," said Colleen Coble, CEO of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence. "We serve many rural women who often struggle with poor wireless coverage. That's why we support U.S. Cellular and the Connecting Rural America coalition, because they're working to improve access to quality wireless service in Missouri and across America."

Congress created the USF to make sure that telecommunications technology doesn't leave rural communities behind. The USF has enabled wireless carriers such as U.S. Cellular to build hundreds of towers in rural communities nationwide and bring new service to areas that would not have otherwise had access.

U.S. Cellular is calling on Congress and the FCC to protect universal service funding for wireless carriers serving rural America. Rural consumers pay into the fund and deserve access to the same reliable wireless service and choices found in urban America.

For more information, visit
www.connectingruralamerica.org.