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WIA Reports Continued Pandemic-Related Tribal Siting Delays

The Wireless Infrastructure Association said that its members are continuing to experience delays in tribal reviews of wireless infrastructure projects as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an ex parte filing posted today in WT docket 19-250 and WT docket 17-79 reporting on a phone conversation with Will Adams, wireless legal adviser to Commissioner Brendan Carr, the point person on wireless infrastructure deployment at the Commission, WIA said that it “appreciates the Commission's continuing efforts to address barriers to broadband deployment. The Commission has made great strides in addressing delays that occur with Tribal reviews; however, as WIA discussed previously regarding delays that have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, members continue to experience these delays in geographic areas where historic properties may be located that are of religious and cultural significance to certain Tribes. In particular, through August, WIA members report experiencing delays and tolling of projects in Idaho and Washington State with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe; in Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming with the Comanche Nation; with the Confederated Tribes of Salish & Kootenai; with the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office; in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming with the Kiowa Tribe; in Massachusetts and Rhode Island with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe; in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming with the Northern Arapaho Tribe; with the Pueblo of Laguna; and in Nevada with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

“WIA members work diligently to ensure that they comply with all applicable reviews and make reasonable and good faith efforts to consult with Tribes and NHOs that may attach religious and cultural significance to historic properties that may be affected by an undertaking; however, the ability to deploy broadband to new areas, especially those that are underserved and in need of connectivity and public safety services, is hindered substantially when these reviews cannot be completed due to indefinite tolling,” WIA added.- Paul Kirby, paul.kirby@wolterskluwer.com

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