

Position Paper The Broadband Conduit Deployment Act of 2017

Position

The Plastic Pipe Institute supports **The Broadband Conduit Deployment Act of 2017**¹, a bill "...to provide for the inclusion of broadband conduit² installation in certain highway construction projects, and for other purposes". This bill would "...require States to evaluate the need for broadband conduit...as part of any covered highway construction project." Further, "If the evaluation reveals an anticipated need in the next 15 years for broadband conduit beneath hard surfaces to be constructed by the project, the conduit shall be installed under the hard surfaces as part of the covered highway construction project."

PPI supports this bill because it is a low cost, high yield investment in America's infrastructure. While a "covered" (asphalt or concrete) highway is being constructed, the incremental cost of installing plastic broadband conduit, with 100 year expected service life, below that highway is very small, in comparison to the overall cost of any highway project. However, *after* a covered highway project is completed, the cost for installing broadband conduit would be much higher, due to the demolition and replacement of the existing highway surface, or even when utilizing other, less disruptive, installation technologies.

This bill safeguards against unnecessary installations. It states that "The Secretary may waive the application of this section if the Secretary determines that the waiver is appropriate with respect to a covered highway construction project based upon..." a variety of factors.

PPI, whose manufacturing member firms employ well over 100,000 people across the country, encourages the House to speed approval of this important bill for America.

Background

Originally proposed as the "Broadband Conduit Deployment Act of 2015", this house bill proposed by Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Greg Walden (R-OR), has recently been debated by the House Communications Subcommittee. The original bill and 2017 version are nearly identical.

It is a fact that the US lags behind other first world economies in broadband accessibility and speed. Neither side of the aisle disputes that access to broadband increases our competitiveness internationally, furthers education, provides more opportunity to advance the less fortunate of our citizens, and is a powerful job creator. Investment in the nation's broadband infrastructure using cost-effective and common-sense techniques, as proposed in this bill, is the right thing to do.

¹ <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF16/20170321/105740/BILLS-115pih-BroadbandConduitDeploymentActof2017.pdf>

² The term 'broadband conduit' means a conduit for fiber optic cables that support broadband or, where appropriate, wireless facilities for broadband service.