



# The Obama Administration's FCC: Wrestling with Convergence and Communications Policy

**Richard S. Whitt**  
**Washington Telecom and Media Counsel**



NATOA Conference -- New Orleans 2009  
*"Communications and Change in the Obama Era"*

October 1, 2009

# Google's Mission



Organizing the world's information and making it universally accessible and useful.



# Major FCC Policy Initiatives in 2009



- DTV Transition
  - Completed June 2009
- National Broadband Plan Docket
  - Launched April 2009
- Network Neutrality Rulemaking
  - Launched October 2009
- Wireless Market Inquiries
  - Launched September 2009



# The National Broadband Plan



By February 17, 2010, the FCC is required to submit to the Senate Commerce Committee and the House Commerce Committee “a report containing a national broadband plan.”



**“The national broadband plan ... shall seek to ensure that all people of the United States have access to broadband capability and shall establish benchmarks for meeting that goal.”**

# *The FCC's Major Challenges*



**Congress' mandate for the FCC to provide a plan to establish national broadband capability and to determine benchmarks is made more challenging by various impediments.**

- Rapidly-changing markets and technologies
- Economics of communications infrastructure
- Lack of timely, relevant, and objective broadband deployment and adoption data
- Shortage of time to develop and adopt a plan
- New leadership and personnel



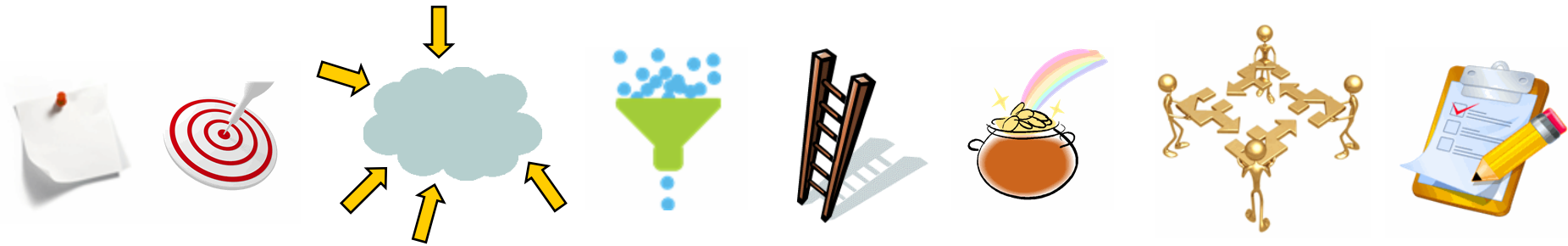
# Suggested Approach: An Evolving Plan



The proposed framework is a flexible, iterative, and comprehensive process.



Repeat



**We should aim to facilitate an environment that over time stimulates investment and innovation in -- and usage of -- broadband technologies and applications.**

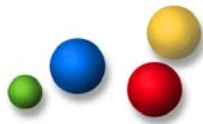


## *The Key Issue: Who Gets The Spillovers?*

**Increasingly, broadband networks & their users are going to battle over market and policy issues.**

**As technology allows networks and services to separate, users are starting to gain the upper hand in a “**value chain tug of war.**”**

# *“Net Neutrality” Deconstructed*



**“Net neutrality”**

**=**

**“Broadband network openness”**

**Network neutrality is about the outcome, not the path.**

**Network neutrality exists (more or less) right now.**

**Reliance on the “openness” norm alone probably is not sufficient.**



# *Broadband Deconstructed*



## What it is

**“Communications/transportation/information/  
entertainment/interactivity” infrastructure.**

## What it is not

**The Internet.**

**Internet access.**

**A content delivery system.**

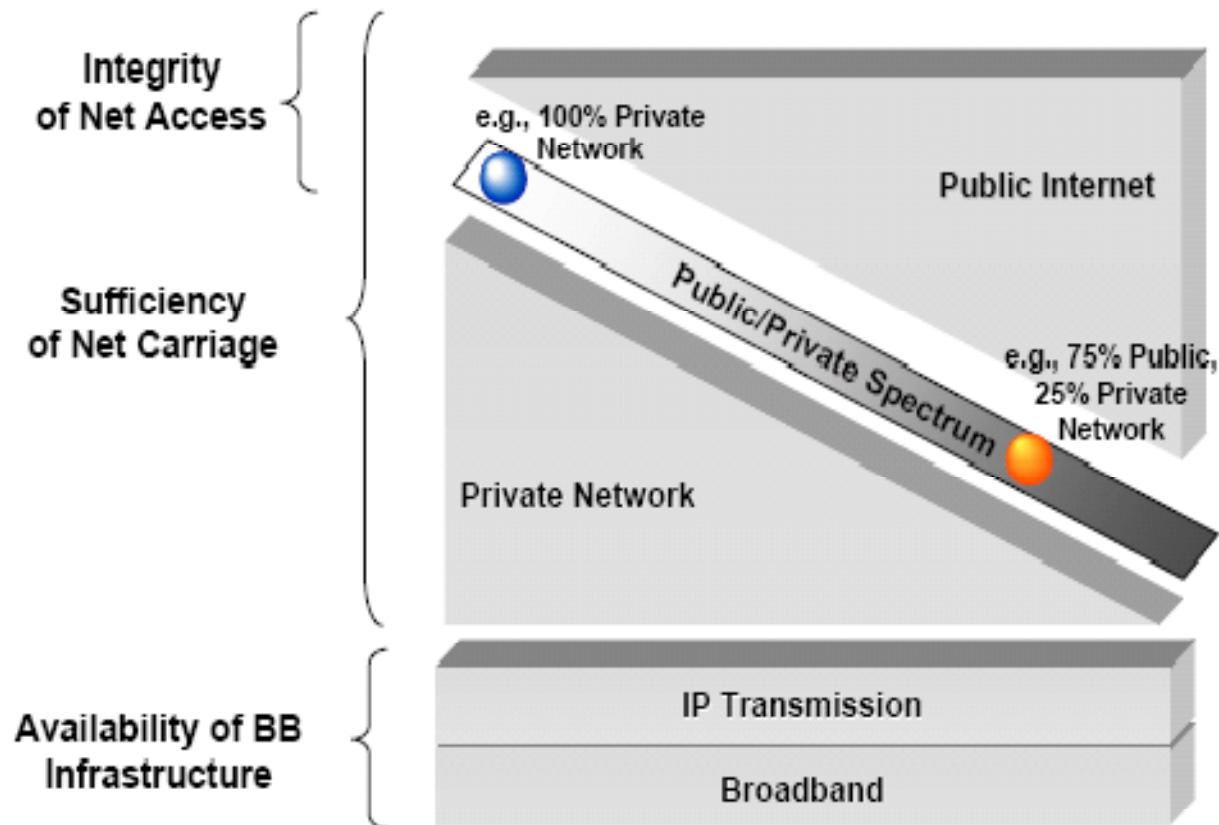
**Your vegetables.**

# Three Dimensions of Broadband



**Broadband offers three ways of serving as an optimal Internet platform:**

- availability (supply) of infrastructure
- sufficiency (robustness) of carriage
- integrity (openness) of access



**THREE DIMENSIONS OF BROADBAND  
AS AN OPTIMAL INTERNET PLATFORM**

# *The Word In 2010: "Reform"*



FCC initiatives next year could include:

- Broadband policy
- Open Internet policy
- Universal Service
- Intercarrier Compensation
- Special access
- Spectrum policy





**Thank You!**

---

***Rick Whitt***  
***[whitt@google.com](mailto:whitt@google.com)***