

EMANUEL CLEAVER, II
FIFTH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

Mr. Larry Page
Chief Executive Officer
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

February 5, 2015

Dear Mr. Page,

On March 30, 2011, after a competitive selection process, both Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas were selected as launch sites for the Fiber project. Our communities were excited to be selected for this groundbreaking project to accelerate high-speed broadband access for all. Today I write to ask Google to take additional steps to close the digital divide in Kansas City, specifically for low-income communities.

At pre-registration by the September 2012 deadline, nearly all of the neighborhoods which failed to qualify for the service were located east of Troost Avenue, the city's historical socioeconomic dividing line. It soon became clear that Google would have to grapple directly and indirectly with the socioeconomic complexities of Kansas City. Under these circumstances, digital registration for the digital divided proved to be ineffective. At the time, Google took significant additional steps to outreach to communities east of Troost, through the use of ice cream trucks, door to door outreach, and other innovative strategies. However today, more work needs to be done.

Fiber, as a key piece of infrastructure, has a tremendous influence on the development of Kansas City—potentially increasing property values, contributing to economic development, and attracting new entrepreneurs and businesses. According to the Wall Street Journal, just 10% of low-income neighborhoods subscribed to 1 gigabit Google Fiber, and 5% to the 5 megabit service. In comparison, 42% of residents in middle and higher income neighborhoods took advantage of the 1 gigabit service, while 11% use the slower option.

These glaring disparities highlight the inherent challenges we face if we truly wish to address Kansas City's current digital divide. Perhaps more troubling, these preliminary statistics also suggest the beginning of potential "digital redlining" in our city.

Last month, Google announced a unique partnership with the city of Austin, Texas – the "Unlocking the Connection" program to help bridge the digital divide for those who live in public housing. This program has many features that may benefit Kansas Citians. For example,

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in Kansas City, residents are required to pay a \$300 construction fee in order to gain access to Fiber. In Austin this fee may be waived, offering a truly free solution for those who cannot afford installation fees. It also appears that the Austin project will use more creative solutions to install and launch high-speed connections within the selected housing developments, rather than relying on stark criteria for qualification and fiber build-out. Elsewhere, advocates have developed innovative shared access solutions, where fast internet connections are shared to quickly bring online entire communities. Previously, a Fiber representative stated that this would violate the Fiber Terms of Service.

Today I'm writing to request that Google take additional steps to assist in closing the digital divide in Kansas City. I urge Google to sit down with local Kansas City Housing Authority officials to develop a strategy to help us reach the project's ultimate goal of connecting our under-served residents. I have also made requests to the Kansas City Housing Authority to sit down with a diverse group of community stakeholders, including Google, to work to address the KC digital divide.

Additionally, I would urge Google to relax terms of service to allow for a shared, Internet solution where fast connections are distributed over WiFi and can capture more locations within the selected communities.

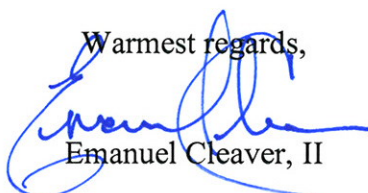
Finally, while I was happy to see the change which allowed multi-family dwellings to connect to Google Fiber, at no cost to landlords, the rebooting of advocacy and awareness efforts within certain communities may allow new swaths of interested residents to take advantage of the affordable Fiber option.

As the newly appointed Ranking Democratic Member of the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, a top priority of mine will be to ensure that low-income and vulnerable communities have the resources they need to succeed and remain free from digital redlining. Google remains uniquely positioned to become a leader in closing the digital divide. Without a doubt, the investment that Google has made into Fiber in Kansas City has been an economic and entrepreneurial boon. And while efforts such as the Digital Inclusion Fund are making a real impact, for the 25% of Kansas Citians who do not have internet access at home, it is simply not enough.

Kansas City, MO and Kansas City, KS were the first models of accelerating high-speed broadband access to the communities that need it the most. In Kansas City and across the nation, we cannot let the digital divide stand in the way of achieving the American dream. I hope Kansas City can become the national model for connecting the unconnected, and demanding the best for our constituents and communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Warmest regards,



Emanuel Cleaver, II