

Travel Trip Report

Attendee: Peter Montinola - Commissioner, Guam Public Utilities Commission

Event: NTCA 2025 Fall Conference

Location: Las Vegas, Nevada

Dates: October 15-18, 2025

1. Purpose of Travel

The purpose of attending the NTCA 2025 Fall Conference was to represent the Guam Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and engage with national stakeholders on broadband development, particularly with regard to USAC (Universal Service Administrative Company) funding programs. Guam's unique geographic and economic conditions require strong advocacy to ensure equitable access to federal broadband support for rural and underserved communities.

2. Key Sessions Attended

- Broadband Infrastructure & Resiliency: Panels discussing rural deployment challenges, fiber expansion, and climate resiliency.
- Universal Service Fund (USF) Updates: Sessions reviewing high-cost program administration, ACAM adjustments, and BEAD program integration.
- Regulatory Perspectives: Roundtables with commissioners from other states and territories on balancing oversight with enabling rapid broadband deployment.
- Territorial Focus: Meetings with NTIA and FCC staff regarding broadband mapping and the importance of equitable treatment for Guam.

3. Key Learnings & Insights

- USAC Certification Requirements: Confirmed that PUC approval remains critical for annual certifications to unlock broadband expansion funds for Guam carriers.
- Funding Flexibility: NTIA and FCC are considering more flexible timelines and benchmarks for territories due to geographic isolation and higher construction costs.
- Resiliency Priority: Increasing national emphasis on network hardening (fiber undergrounding, redundant submarine cables, microgrid backup power) aligns with Guam's needs in a typhoon-prone region.
- Partnership Opportunities: Other territorial commissions (e.g., Puerto Rico, USVI) create opportunities to jointly advocate for special funding carve-outs.

4. Guam-Specific Implications

- Advocacy Needed: Guam PUC should continue pressing for recognition of unique deployment costs and vulnerabilities.
- Carrier Engagement: Local telecom providers must be encouraged to submit accurate, territory-specific data to FCC/USAC to counter broadband map underreporting.
- Policy Alignment: Guam PUC can align with federal resiliency priorities to strengthen the case for additional subsidies.

- Future Planning: Guam should position itself as a pilot territory for resilient broadband deployment strategies.

- Currently, the total BEAD funding for Guam is \$156M. As of today, only \$1.8M has been utilized.

5. Future Networking & Stakeholder Engagement

- Meet with FCC Wireline Competition Bureau staff regarding certification streamlining.
- Held discussions with USAC representatives on improving coordination with territorial regulators.
- Engage with commissioners from Alaska, Hawaii, and tribal authorities on shared rural/remote deployment challenges.
- Establish contacts with NTCA member rural telcos interested in technical partnerships and knowledge exchange.

6. Recommendations & Next Steps

1. Formalize PUC Advocacy group highlighting Guam's unique broadband challenges and funding needs.
2. Carrier Data Improvement: Work with Guam telecoms to ensure accurate FCC map data submissions.
3. Regional Coalition: Explore forming a "Territorial Broadband Advocacy Group" with Puerto Rico, CNMI, and USVI commissions.
4. Resiliency Projects: Encourage Guam carriers to prioritize resiliency in funding applications to align with federal trends.
5. Annual Follow-up: Ensure Guam PUC has a strong presence at future NTCA and FCC events to sustain visibility.

7. Conclusion

Attendance at the NTCA 2025 Fall Conference provided valuable insights into evolving federal broadband policy, funding mechanisms, and resiliency priorities. Guam PUC's active participation ensures that the island's unique challenges are recognized at the national level and that telecom providers can continue to access critical USAC funding for broadband expansion in rural and underserved communities.