

TESTIMONY OF RAVINDRA MAYWAHLALL
LIBERTY VI COUNTRY MANAGER
BEFORE THE 36TH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
April 23, 2025

Mr. Chairman, members of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Housing, Transportation and Telecommunications, senators, legislative staff, ladies and gentlemen, I am Ravindra Maywahlall, Liberty VI General Manager. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Committee to provide information on present infrastructure projects, and updates on other topics.

I take this opportunity to introduce Rayeq Badran, Area Manager RAN Planning & Engineering, Jorge Perret, Connect USVI Program Manager and Jean Santiago, In-house Regulatory Manager all of whom can take your questions later.

Connect VI Update:

To date we have built approximately 10,800 homes passed. Currently we are working on projects on Barren Spot and, Clifton Hill in St. Croix and Mariendal, Frydenhoj and Bovoni in St. Thomas. We are working closely with DPW and maintaining an open line of communication throughout the different stages of the project. I want to take this opportunity to thank Commissioner Gabriel and his team for their time and continued support.

We are also happy to report that we have finalized the pole attachment agreement with WAPA and are having weekly meetings to start getting pole attachment permits for the aerial part of the project. Initial permits are expected before the end of April. Currently we have submitted approximately 34 project applications to WAPA, that amount to approximately 8,000 home passes. I thank CEO Knight, Attorney Sinclair and the rest of the WAPA team for their commitment and drive in getting us to where we are today during a time they faced many challenges.

As mentioned in the last update, we had reached an interim dark fiber lease agreement with ViNGN, which played a pivotal role in allowing us to reach the 10,800 homes passed. Over the last several months we have had several meetings on finalizing a long term IRU agreement, which we believe should be completed before the end of May. CEO Adams and his team has been of tremendous help, and we thank them for their continued support on this project.

Mobile Update

Regarding our mobile network, in 2024, we added four new sites to enhance network coverage and capacity. These additions have expanded 5G coverage and increased network speeds by up to 26% for customers in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This represents a 19% increase in mobile sites in the territory with all sites equipped with LTE technology. According to the latest Census, these sites now cover 99.3% of the population. Overall, these improvements have significantly enhanced 5G coverage. We are aware that these improvements do not address all issues, but we continue to optimize our networks to improve the remaining shortcomings. In the 2024 benchmarking survey performed by

Global Wireless Solutions Inc and Ookla, Liberty network was found to be the fastest on St. Croix and tied with one of our competitors on St. Thomas.

We also have nine deployment projects scheduled for 2025, which include the following:

(5)- LTE/5G expansion projects

These are to install LTE/5G technology in already existing sites, improving the service speed for customers using those sites. This initiative will deploy an all-new frequency to Liberty's network (600 MHz) that will be translated into a better customer experience.

(4) New site builds (monopoles)

We aim to address coverage and capacity issues with four additional new site builds or monopoles. We are in the permitting process for these additional new site builds, one in St. Thomas, two in St. Croix, and one in St. John. All four sites are part of the commitment between the USVI government and the FirstNet Authority.

We are also pleased to say that our operations have normalized, where portability requests are being addressed in a business-as-usual manner with very few instances requiring special attention or action. There are still a few customers with billing inaccuracies, but rest assured that our team continue to refine our processes to eliminate these.

Finally, we are aware that the Virgin Islands Broadband Office (VIBO) has allocated the \$27.1 M in BEAD funding for workforce development training, community digital competency initiatives and economic transformation initiatives. Nonetheless we have requested that some of the funding be allocated for a subsidy similar to the one provided by the Affordable Connectivity Program. This would allow Virgin Islanders to receive help towards their broadband bill and support the initiatives the VIBO has already announced.

I reaffirm our commitment as partners to this Legislature, the Government of the Virgin Islands and the community as a whole. We will be agents of change to provide improved telecommunications services to these Virgin Islanders.

Finally, I am happy to report that in 2024 our CSR arm, Liberty foundation, donated \$77,500 in grants, sponsorships and donations to 17 non-profits in the territory. Overall, Liberty and Liberty Foundation have benefited 27 nonprofit organizations in VI with \$416,000 in donations since 2020.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with this Commission and its members, DPW, WAPA and other entities as a community partner, promoting the development of telecommunications services and the communities within the Virgin Islands. We will continue partnering with the government of the USVI and the community as a whole, to make these Virgin Islands better for future generations to come; by ensuring that the USVI has a best-in-class telecommunication infrastructure that will attract more businesses to the territory and provide best in class services to the citizens of these islands.

Before closing, I would be remiss if I did not express heartfelt thanks to my team, for their unwavering support during a very trying period. We could not achieve what we have without their devout commitment and hard work to deliver for our customers.



Once again, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. Please let me know if I can provide you any additional information or clarification. At this time my team and I would welcome any questions that you may have.

Respectfully,

s/ *Ravindra Maywahlall*

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