

COAI applauds directions issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation(BMC), Mumbai to reduce Access Charges for OFC laying from Rs. 1 Lakh/ KM to Rs. 1000/ Km

Mumbai, 24.05.2022: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation under directions as per Hon'ble Administrator (Standing Committee) Resolution has reduced the Access Charges for laying of telecom optical fiber cable to Rs. 1000 per Km from Rs. 1 Lakh per Km. This is a substantial reduction and will benefit the industry. COAI thanks and look forward to working with DoT, Secretary, the Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, officials of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), officials of the IT Department of Mumbai, LSA officials of the Department of Telecommunications, and industry representatives for this initiative that will help in the quick rollout of broadband across Mumbai and achieving the goal of "Broadband for All". This directive is a positive move to achieve India's digital revolution, meet the National Broadband Mission (NBM) targets and achieve the ambition of smart cities.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Mumbai was levying Rs. 1 Lakh per Km as access charges for laying of Optical Fibre Cables (OFCs) as per old Guidelines for Trenching Activity – 2015. After due deliberations by COAI and its members with the State Government of Mumbai, the Telecom infrastructure policy was issued by the Government of Maharashtra on 17th February 2018 via Government Resolution No. DIT065/CR1/2018 that superseded the erstwhile policies/Government orders, in line with RoW Rules issued by Department of Telecommunication vide gazette notification dated 16th November 2016. As per clause (B) (12) of the said Policy, the amount of administrative charges for laying of optical fibre is Rs. 1000 per km of fibre. As per clause (B) (16) of the said Policy, no other tax, fee, cess, or surcharge shall be levied by local authorities. All other charges are to be subsumed in the administrative charges to be paid to the Department of Information Technology.

In various meetings and submissions, COAI raised concerns that the proposal to recover access charges for the Right of Way for the laying of optic fiber cable is contradictory to RoW Rules, 2016 and Telecom Infrastructure Policy of Maharashtra, 17th February 2018. This had become a big roadblock coming as a threat to the existence and upcoming telecom infrastructure rollouts in the state of Maharashtra.

Appreciating the directions issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Mumbai, **Lt. Gen. Dr. SP Kochhar, Director General** said "COAI has been taking up this issue directly with Maharashtra State Government & Municipal Corporation and through DoT HQ and LSA. COAI and its members were continually following up on this issue with the State Government requesting for withdrawal of Access Charges. Though we had requested the zero Access Charge in line with the RoW 2016 Rules, however, this is a substantial reduction and will benefit the members. COAI will continue to push for zero access Charges in line with RoW rules in BMC and other Municipalities/Districts wherein it is being levied. We encourage other local municipalities to withdraw the additional access charges being levied in line with RoW Rules, 2016 to make Mumbai/ Maharashtra digitally advanced. This is a positive step toward making Mumbai digitally advanced and achieving the goal of "Broadband for All. We are grateful to DoT, Secretary for his continuous support and guidance on various RoW related & industry issues".

In the State Broadband Committee Meeting of Mumbai held on 12th Nov 2021, the Hon'ble Chief Secretary of Maharashtra have given directive to form an inter-department committee to solve various issues across Mumbai that are hindering the roll-out of Telecom Infrastructure across the State like levying of exorbitant restoration Charges, access Charges, etc.