WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A key House committee approved about $3 billion in grants to expand Internet service on Thursday, including a provision opposed by mobile phone companies that calls for increased Internet openness.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over most Internet and telecommunications issues, cleared the Democratic-written provisions for high-speed Internet and wireless expansion into rural and hard-to-serve areas.

A contentious part of the package requires Internet service providers that receive grant money to abide by so-called “open access” principles, which bars providers from discrimination of applications and content.

The Democrats' overall $825 billion economic stimulus plan includes tax cuts and funding for roads, mass transit, healthcare and other projects. The bill is expected to go before the full House next week for a vote.

Potential recipients of the grant money include Internet service providers such as telephone companies AT&T Inc and Verizon Communications Inc and cable company Comcast Corp, though analysts say it is unclear whether they will take advantage of the funds.

Waxman said the proposal is aimed at "service providers, infrastructure companies, or a state or unit of local government."

(Editing by Gerald E. McCormick)