



BROADBAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**SOUTH EAST TEXAS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
AND
SOUTH EAST TEXAS
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**MCM Elegante Hotel
FOUNTAINVIEW ROOM
2355 IH-10
Beaumont, Texas 77705**

**Thursday, May 6, 2021
11:30 a.m.**



AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Hardin County Judge, Wayne McDaniel, Chairman, Broadband Advisory Committee

2. DISCUSSION OF SETEDD'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) CARES ACT GRANT PROJECT AND MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE BROADBAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation and Environmental Resources, SETRPC

3. STATUS OF BROADBAND IN THE STATE OF TEXAS

Pam Waggoner, Broadband Solutions Manager, Connected Nation Texas

4. STATUS OF EFFORTS TO EXPAND BROADBAND ACCESS IN SOUTH EAST TEXAS

Jasper County Judge, Mark Allen

Dr. Dwayne Augustine, Superintendent Hamshire Fannett Independent School District

5. NEXT STEPS ON BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH EAST TEXAS

Rachael Robinson, Economic Recovery Coordinator, SETRPC

6. DISCUSSION OF TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING DATE

Bob Dickinson, Director, Transportation and Environmental Resources, SETRPC

7. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

8. SET NEXT MEETING DATE

9. ADJOURNMENT

**South East Texas Economic Development District &
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
Broadband Advisory Committee
May 6, 2021**



Our Plan

Hire an Economic Recovery Coordinator to work with local cities, counties, economic development corporations, area ports, and higher learning institutions on economic recovery efforts.

Currently our main focus is broadband development.

Priority Projects

Regional Broadband Strategic Plan

Broadband technology provides access to the highest quality internet services. Increased availability in the region could help expand medical professionals' access via telemedicine, enhanced educational opportunities, working from home, and economic development.

- Establish the SETEDD & SETRPC Broadband Advisory Committee.
- Develop a Broadband Business and Public Survey.
- Diversify strategies to nurture small business growth, innovation, information technology infrastructure and to strengthen organizations.

Broadband Economic Advantage



Overall, research shows that increased broadband adoption and availability positively impact household income, employment levels, the attraction of existing firms to rural areas, farm profits, civic engagement, and housing values. – *Broadband USA*

Studies show that broadband adoption and use is a more important factor than just availability. – *Broadband USA*



With the help of digital technology, rural small businesses have increased profits by almost \$70 billion per year. Only 45% of rural small businesses have “very good access to digital technology” by adopting online tools and technology, they would be able to increase sales by \$84.5 billion annually. – *C_TEC Rural Report*

Broadband Advisory Committee

Vision

The SETEDD and SETRPC Broadband Advisory Committee's vision is to increase access, availability, speed, reliability, consistency and affordability of broadband services to large and small businesses, local governments, schools, institutions of higher learning, medical facilities, non-profit organizations and the general public in our four county South East Texas Region.

Broadband Advisory Committee

Mission Statement

1. Facilitate and accelerate improvements by identifying and pursuing public and private funding opportunities to improve infrastructure through partnerships with private broadband providers through the most efficient process possible;
2. Identify, promote, facilitate and accelerate improvements to Broadband infrastructure in South East Texas Regional Planning Commission Region;
3. Provide advice in the development and implementation of policies, procedures, bylaws, reports and actions plan to enhance Broadband connectivity;
4. Provide advice on a systematic and coordinated approach to bring internet connectivity to all locations within the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission Region;

Broadband Advisory Committee

Mission Statement

5. Identify specific projects to enhance Broadband connectivity within South East Texas;
6. Recommend to the Committee informal or formal partnerships that would enhance the success of connectivity related projects;
7. Review grant applications for Broadband projects for the Committee's approval and submission;
8. Complete community consultation on the development and implementation of broadband connectivity plans and projects.

Broadband Advisory Committee

Mission Statement

9. Collect and maintain comprehensive information on the state of broadband in households, businesses, schools and public gathering areas in South East Texas;
10. Analyze internal data to identify areas negatively impacted by lack of availability and quality of broadband services in South East Texas to identify areas for improvement;
11. Develop a South East Texas Broadband Strategic Plan; and
12. Report to stakeholders on the current status and improvements to broadband services in South East Texas.

Thank You

Bob Dickinson

Director, Transportation & Environmental Resources Division

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission

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Rachael Robinson

Economic Recovery Coordinator

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission

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Broadband Business Survey

1. Business Name:
2. *Business Address:
3. *City or Town:
4. Telephone Number:
5. Email:
6. Respondent's Name:

7. Business Classification?
 - A. Agriculture, mining, & utilities
 - B. Construction
 - C. Manufacturing
 - D. Transportation & warehousing
 - E. Educational services
 - F. Health care & social assistance
 - G. Arts, entertainment, & recreation
 - H. Wholesale trade
 - I. Retail trade
 - J. Accommodation & food service
 - K. Information Finance, insurance, & real estate
 - L. Professional, scientific, & technical service
 - M. Management, administration, & support service
 - N. Other

8. How old is your company?
 - A. 5 Years or fewer
 - B. 6 – 10 Years
 - C. 10 – 20 Years
 - D. 20 – 30 Years
 - E. 30 + Years

9. Total Number of Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

10. Number of Full-Time Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

11. Number of Part-Time Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



12. Since starting your business have you increased, stayed the same or decreased the number of employees?

- A. Number of employees decreased.
- B. Number of employees stayed the same.
- C. Number of employees increased.

13. The percentage of online sales?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

14. Percentage of in-person sales?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

15. Approximately what percentage of your business sales come from customers outside of Southeast Texas?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

16. What kind of internet service does your business presently use?

- A. None
- B. Dial-up
- C. DSL
- D. Satellite
- E. Fiber Optic
- F. Don't know

17. How would you rate the current quality of your service?

- A. Excellent
- B. Good
- C. Fair
- D. Poor

18. Are you satisfied with your present internet service's?

Reliability?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Speed?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Cost?

- A. Yes
- B. No

19. How would you rate your business's ability to access and use digital technologies?



20. To what extent does your business utilize the following digital technologies and services?

Selling goods and services:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Advertising and Promotion:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Supplier communication and coordination:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Teleworking:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Social networking and accessing collaborative tools:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Website for your business:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Customer service and support:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Staff training and skills development:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Delivery of services and content:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

21. Of the internet applications (previously stated above) that you use, which is/are the most important?

- A. Selling goods and services
- B. Website for your business
- C. Advertising and Promotion
- D. Customer service and support
- E. Supplier communication and coordination
- F. Staff training and skills development
- G. Teleworking
- H. Delivery of services and content
- I. Social networking and accessing collaborative tools

22. Of the business applications (previously stated above) that your business doesn't use, are there any that would benefit your business?

23. Which of the internet applications/processes (previously stated above), would you or your employees benefit from learning more about?

24. Is there anything else that your business could do differently to increase sales and/or decrease costs, if you had better internet reliability and availability to a broader choice of internet applications/processes?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



25. Bringing reliable and robust internet services to Southeast Texas is one keyway to boost economic development for businesses. Do you have any other ideas, suggestions?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



Public Survey

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

County

City

Street

What is your zip code?

Including yourself, how many adults (age 18 or older) live in the place you currently live?

How many children (under the age of 18) live with you in the place you currently live?

HOME BROADBAND

Do you have internet access at home?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know

If yes, what type of connection do you have to the internet at home?

- A. Dial-up
- B. DSL
- C. Cable
- D. Fixed Wireless
- E. Cellular Satellite
- F. Fiber
- G. Other
- H. Don't Know

If no, which of the following is the most important reason why you don't have internet access at home?

- A. It is not available where I live
- B. I have access at another place such as my job
- C. It is too expensive
- D. I don't know how to use it
- E. I don't need it
- F. I don't have an adequate computer
- G. Some other reason
- H. Don't know

If you are on dial-up or satellite, why?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



- A. Only available option
- B. Too costly to charge
- C. Too much effort to change
- D. Learning curve is too steep
- E. I don't know what other options are available
- F. Other
- G. Don't know

What is your current monthly internet bill?

- A. Less than \$20
- B. \$20-49
- C. \$50 -99
- D. \$100 or more
- E. Don't know

Why are you using your current provider?

- A. I'm happy with my current provider
- B. Only option available
- C. Too costly to change
- D. Too much effort to change
- E. Learning curve is too steep
- F. I don't know what other options are available
- G. Other
- H. Don't know

Do you pay for bundled service (internet, Tv, Phone)?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know

INTERNET USAGE

Do you use the internet to check your email at home? If yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or I the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

- A. Do not check email at home
- B. Do, but connection is slow
- C. Do, and connection is adequate
- D. Don't Know

Do you use the Internet to shop on-line at home? If Yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



- A. Do not shop online at home
- B. Do, but connection speed is too slow
- C. Do, and connection speed is adequate
- D. Don't know

Do you use the Internet to watch online video, such as on YouTube or Netflix at home? If yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

- A. Do not watch online video at home
- B. Do, but connection speed is too slow
- C. Do, and connection speed is adequate
- D. Don't Know

Overall, do you consider your internet connection at home to be adequate for your uses?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know

Connected Nation Texas



Broadband Advisory Committee Meeting

South East Texas Economic Development District
And
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
May 6, 2021



Pam Waggoner

Broadband Solutions Manager, Connected Nation
Texas



Broadband Defined

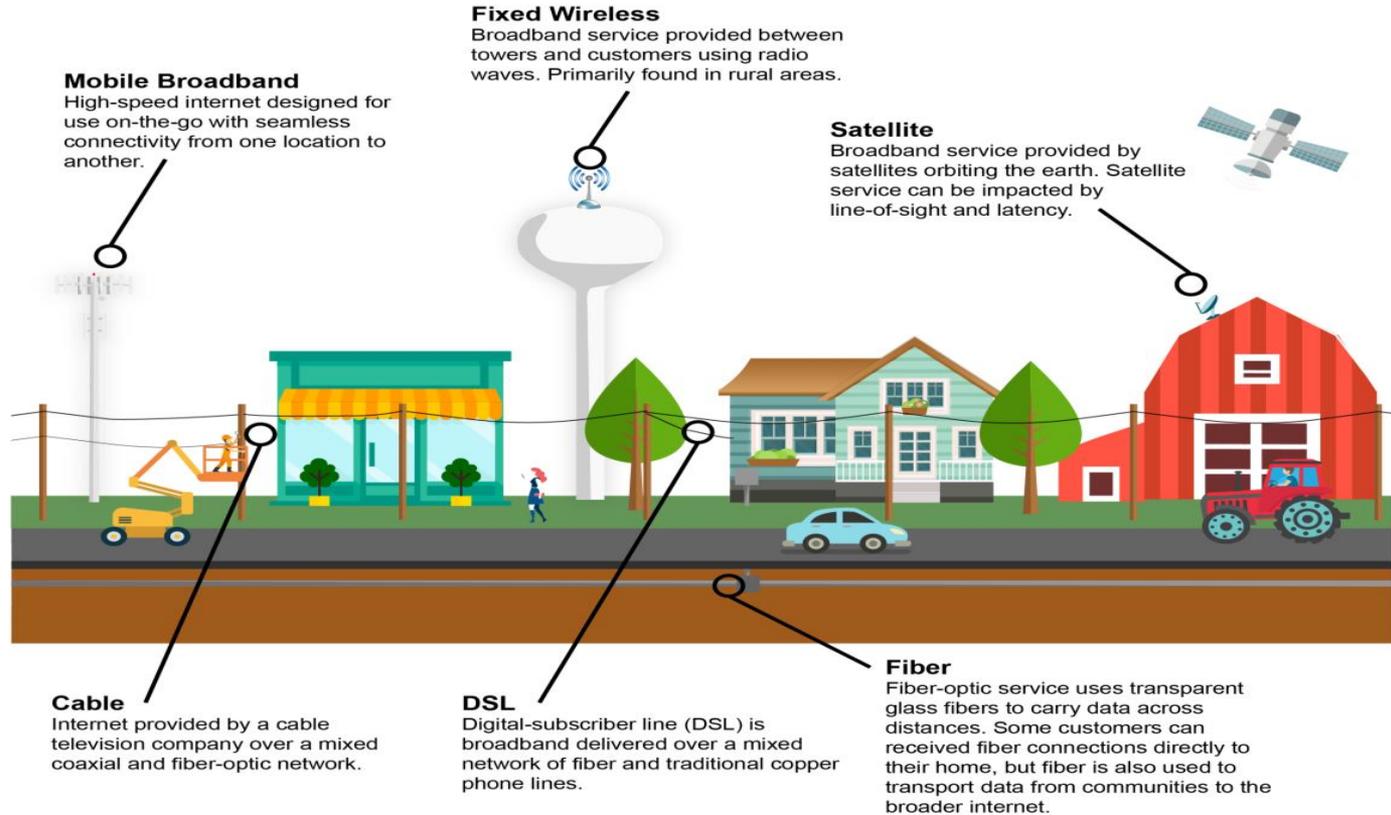


Broadband: More commonly referred to as high-speed internet access, technically, broadband is any kind of connection other than dial-up. Connection is always on.

Fixed, terrestrial broadband: Service designed for permanent, stationary use at a home, business, or institution

Mobile broadband: Wireless internet service designed for continuous use on a portable device

The current definition of broadband is 25/3 Mbps (set in 2015 by the FCC). The current average in the US is 182/66 Mbps.



Broadband Defined



Estimated
time to
download
2 GB file:



29 minutes



11 minutes



17 seconds

Devices
Supported:



Activities
Supported:

Web surfing,
e-mail, & moderate
HD streaming

Heavy HD streaming,
video conferencing,
large file transfer

Extreme HD, real-time
streaming, frequent & huge
file transfers

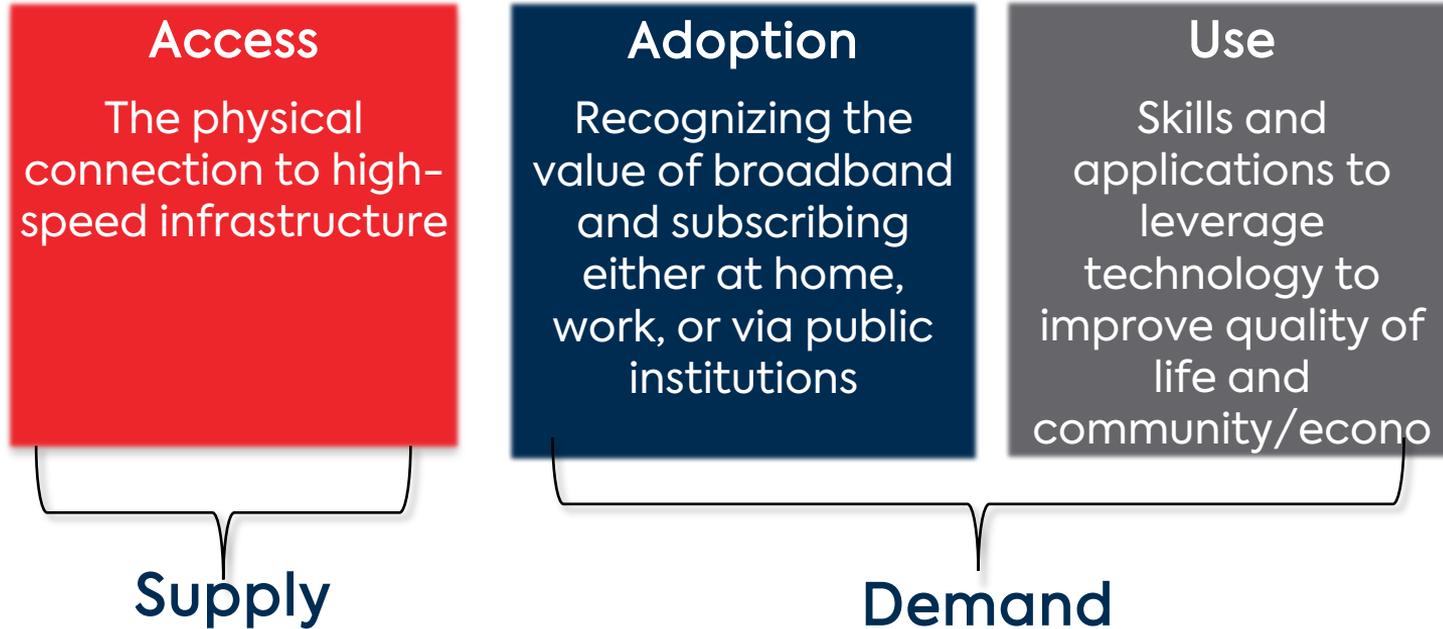
Primarily
used by:

Homes & Some
Businesses

Homes & Businesses

Businesses &
Some Homes

Broadband Defined



Texas and Federal Legislative Policy Discussion





Governor's Broadband Development Council (GBDC) was created in 2019 during the 86th legislature.

17 Member council, 15 members appointed by the Governor

Primary Duties:

- Research the progress of broadband development in unserved areas
- Identify barriers to broadband deployment.
- Research technology neutral solutions to overcome barrier to deployment
- Analyze how statewide access to broadband would benefit: economic development, educational opportunities, law enforcement, emergency preparedness, and the delivery of healthcare.

Recommendations out of the GBDC:

- Create a Statewide Broadband Plan; and
- Establish a state broadband office
- GBDC also believes that the Development of a state broadband funding program to incentivize deployment in unserved areas could benefit the broadband landscape of Texas and recommends it's continued study.



Gov. Greg Abbott  @GovAbbott · Feb 1



Declaring the expansion of broadband access an emergency item this session.

Broadband access is not a luxury—it is an essential tool that must be available to all Texans. [#SOTS2021](#)

#SOTS2021

“Broadband access is an essential tool that must be available to all Texans.”

— Governor Greg Abbott



The 87th Texas Legislature session is ongoing:

Connected Nation Texas is following all bills filed regarding Broadband and will bring you updates as they move through the chambers. There are around 60 bills filed.

SB5 and HB5: These bills are tackling the issues of:

- ❖ Establishing a State Broadband Office
House (Comptroller's Office)
Senate (UT System) + Board of Advisors
- ❖ Developing a State Broadband Plan
- ❖ State Broadband Mapping
- ❖ Infrastructure funding program



Texas Education Agency looking to secure multiple Internet Service Providers for Connect Texas Program

“This program could be a game-changer for Texas students.”

Connected Nation Texas applauds the efforts of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to connect all Texas students in need. The Region 4 Education Service Center (ESC) just released an RFP on behalf of the Agency for TEA’s Connect Texas Program.

“We are excited to see this proactive and forward-thinking initiative,” said Jennifer Harris, State Program Director, Connected Nation Texas. “This is an unprecedented effort to do a bulk purchase of broadband subscriptions on a massive, statewide scale. For that reason alone, this program could be a game-changer for Texas students.”



According to the RFP, the TEA Connect Texas Program is specific to Texas K-12 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and will include internet service as well as equipment needed to offer fixed broadband internet to “economically disadvantaged kindergarten through 12th grade households in Texas.”

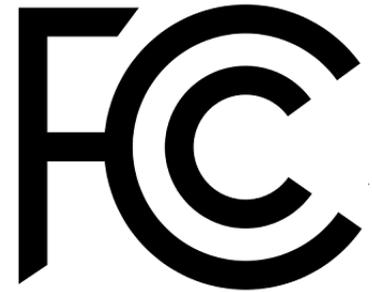
Internet Service Providers interested in responding to the RFP have until Tuesday, May 4 to do so. Interested parties should go to the following webpage to request a copy of the RFP: <https://public.omniapartners.com/solicitations>.



The Broadband DATA Act, which directs the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to collect more granular broadband coverage data and develop a broadband map depicting the availability of broadband services throughout the country, became Public Law 116-130 in March 2020.

This law sets the stage for a sweeping reform on how broadband data is collected, verified, and mapped by the FCC.

(DATA – Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability)



Broadband DATA Act was funded in December and is currently going through implementation with the FCC. We don't expect to see this new data until next summer at the earliest.



\$600 million rural broadband fund

Funds available: up to \$200 million for grants, up to \$200 million for 50/50 grant/loan combinations, and up to \$200 million for low-interest loans.

Applications for the second round of funding were accepted between January 31, 2020 and April 15, 2020.

Funds may be used for:

- Construction or improvement of buildings, land, and other facilities that are required to provide broadband service
- Reasonable pre-application expenses (which may not exceed 5 percent of the award amount)
- Acquisition and improvement of an existing system that is currently providing insufficient broadband service (eligible for 100 percent loan requests only)
- Terrestrial based facilities that support the provision of satellite broadband service



E-rate



Discounts for support depend on the level of poverty and whether the school or library is located in an urban or rural area. The discounts range from 20 percent to 90 percent of the costs of eligible services.

E-rate program funding is based on demand up to an annual Commission-established cap of \$4.15 billion.



The E-rate program is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company under the direction of the FCC. Specifically, USAC is responsible for processing the applications for support, confirming eligibility, and reimbursing service providers and eligible schools and libraries for the discounted services.

Note: This is [In School](#) or [In Library](#) connectivity only.

COVID-19 Relief/FY2021 Omnibus Appropriations Bill



Accurate Broadband Maps

Fully funds the Broadband DATA Act, Public Law 116-130, which directs the FCC to collect more granular broadband coverage data and develop a broadband map depicting the availability of broadband services throughout the country. The map will be used to target federal broadband resources to areas lacking service to ensure all Americans are connected.

Supply Chain Security

Fully funds the implementation of the Secure and Trusted Communications Network Act, Public Law No: 116-124, which provides assistance to small, rural telecommunications operators to remove components from their networks that pose a national security threat and replace it with equipment from trusted suppliers.

Emergency Broadband Benefit

Establishes an Emergency Broadband Benefit program at the FCC for eligible households experiencing economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary, one-time program will aid to qualifying low-income individuals and families to get connected or remain connected to internet access for the duration of the public health emergency. <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-providers>

COVID-19 FCC Telehealth Program

Provides an additional \$250 million to the FCC to carry out the temporary telehealth pilot program authorized under the CARES Act and requires that the Commission equitably distributes the funding to the extent feasible.



S. 4422, Connecting Minority Communities Act

Establishes an Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and appropriates \$285 million to support historically black colleges and universities, Minority Serving Institutions, and qualifying partnerships with minority-owned businesses to receive internet access.

Promoting Broadband Expansion to Unserved Americans

Establishes a \$300 million broadband deployment program at NTIA to support broadband infrastructure deployment to unserved areas, prioritizing unserved areas and areas that are more rural.

Tribal Connectivity

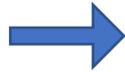
Establishes a \$1 billion program at NTIA to support broadband infrastructure deployment, telehealth, and broadband adoption activities for federally recognized tribal nations.



- Providers in Texas were allocated **\$362,662,934** to expand broadband to **310,962 unserved homes and businesses** over the next 10 years.
- Broadband providers will be required to have 40% of the locations they bid on served by the end of the third year of support, with an additional 20% required by the end of the fourth and fifth years of support. By the end of year six, revised location totals will be announced.
- Some locations that were initially bid on may still not have service until the end of year six, and any additional locations identified at that time **may not get service until the end of year eight!**
- Though this money is much appreciated and will help shrink the Digital Divide, these dollars are not an overnight solution.

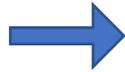
Awards by County

RDOF – Hardin, Jefferson and Orange Counties



Hardin County:

	<u>Total Received</u>
1. CCO Holdings, LLC (Charter Communications) (4,457 locations)	\$7,499,250
2. LTD Broadband LLC (104 locations)	\$306,700



Jefferson County:

1. CCO Holdings, LLC (Charter Communications) (2,807 locations)	\$449,236
2. LTD Broadband LLC (6 locations)	\$30,448
3. Resound Networks, LLC (136 locations)	\$426,555



Orange County:

1. CCO Holdings, LLC (Charter Communications) (1,302 locations)	\$1,156,683
2. LTD Broadband LLC (132 locations)	\$347,574
3. Windstream Services LLC, Debtor-In Possession (30 locations)	\$32,238



Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (Department of the Treasury): *\$10 billion* for “capital projects directly enabling work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency” – guidance necessary from Treasury

Emergency Connectivity Fund (FCC): *\$7.2 billion* for E-Rate support to reimburse schools and libraries for provision of eligible equipment and advanced telecommunications and information services during the pandemic, including for locations other than schools and libraries – guidance necessary from FCC



Revitalize America's digital infrastructure:

Generations ago, the federal government recognized that without affordable access to electricity, Americans couldn't fully participate in modern society and the modern economy. With the 1936 Rural Electrification Act, the federal government made a historic investment in bringing electricity to nearly every home and farm in America, and millions of families and our economy reaped the benefits. Broadband internet is the new electricity. It is necessary for Americans to do their jobs, to participate equally in school learning, health care, and to stay connected.

Yet, by one definition, more than 30 million Americans live in areas where there is no broadband infrastructure that provides minimally acceptable speeds. Americans in rural areas and on tribal lands particularly lack adequate access. And, in part because the United States has some of the highest broadband prices among OECD countries, millions of Americans can't use broadband internet even if the infrastructure exists where they live. In urban areas as well, there is a stark digital divide: a much higher percentage of White families use home broadband internet than Black or Latino families. The last year made painfully clear the cost of these disparities, particularly for students who struggled to connect while learning remotely, compounding learning loss and social isolation for those students.

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Biden Infrastructure Plan



The President believes we can bring affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband to every American through a historic investment of \$100 billion. That investment will:

Build high-speed broadband infrastructure to reach 100 percent coverage

- Prioritizes building “future proof” broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas so that we finally reach 100 percent high-speed broadband coverage. It also prioritizes support for broadband networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and co-operatives—providers with less pressure to turn profits and with a commitment to serving entire communities.

Promote transparency and competition

- Promotes price transparency and competition among internet providers, including by lifting barriers that prevent municipally-owned or affiliated providers and rural electric co-ops from competing on an even playing field with private providers, and requiring internet providers to clearly disclose the prices they charge.

Reduce the cost of broadband internet service and promote more widespread adoption

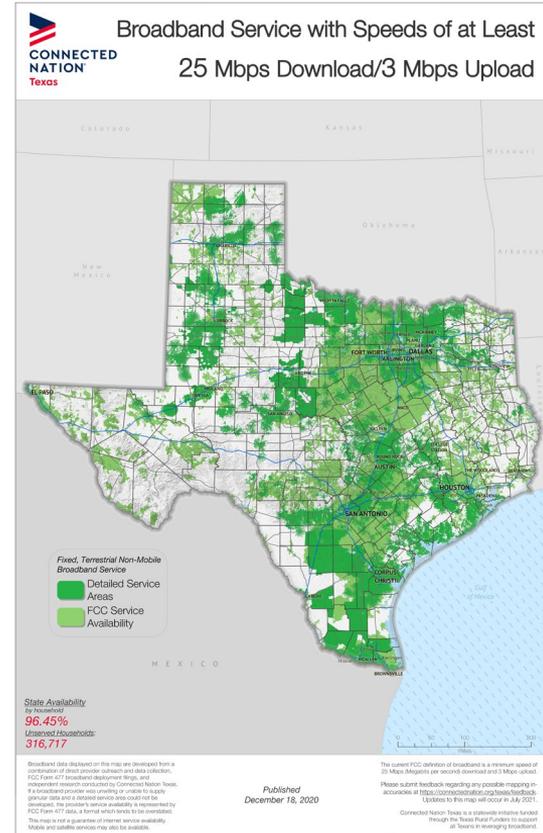
- While the President recognizes that individual subsidies to cover internet costs may be needed in the short term, he believes continually providing subsidies to cover the cost of overpriced internet service is not the right long-term solution for consumers or taxpayers.

Broadband Availability in Texas

Broadband Access in Texas



- 96.45% of households in Texas have access at 25/3, leaving 316,717 households unserved at the minimum speed considered broadband.
- Of note, 281,119 of these homes are in rural Texas.
- This means at least 877,907 Texans (776,277 who reside in rural Texas) do not have access to broadband at home to attend school, visit a doctor online, or work from home.
- That's like having the entire state of South Dakota not connected to broadband.

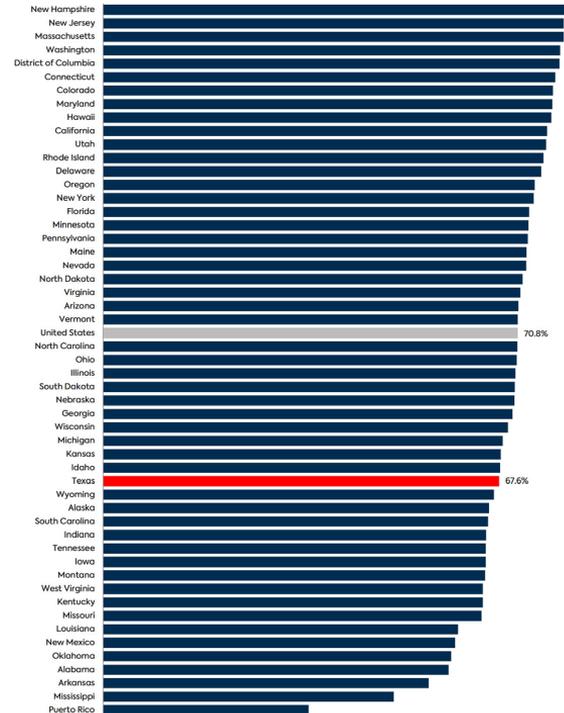


Broadband Adoption in Texas



- 32.4% of Texas households do not subscribe to fixed, terrestrial broadband service such as DSL, cable, fixed wireless or fiber.
- Texas 35th is in broadband adoption among other states and territories.

Adoption Rate:
Households with Broadband Subscriptions by State
(Rates include households that may or may not have access to broadband)



Broadband Adoption in Texas (Cities)



The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) ranked 623 communities with populations of 65,000 or more by:

- percentage of households without “wireline” broadband subscriptions (cable, fiber or DSL)
- percentage of each community’s households that lacked broadband Internet subscriptions of any type, including mobile data plans



Pharr (1st)

Brownsville (2nd)

Tyler (4th)

Harlingen (5th)

Beaumont (18th)

Bryan (33rd)

Longview (68th)

Killeen (71st)

Mission (75th)

Odessa (77th)



Mapping and Resources Available from Connected Nation

Broadband Maps Available from Connected Nation



STATE MAPS

The map products available here are in a statewide format. Broadband data are analyzed and these maps have been developed for public review and feedback.

COUNTY MAPS

Maps are available here for each county in the state. The maps developed at the statewide level are also available for each county.

Interactive Map

An interactive mapping application is available for users to create customized map displays of broadband availability.

Broadband Statistics

Access charts and maps can be found here, showing the status of broadband access in Texas.

www.connectednation.org/texas/mapping-analysis



Texas County Maps

EXPLORE YOUR COMMUNITY

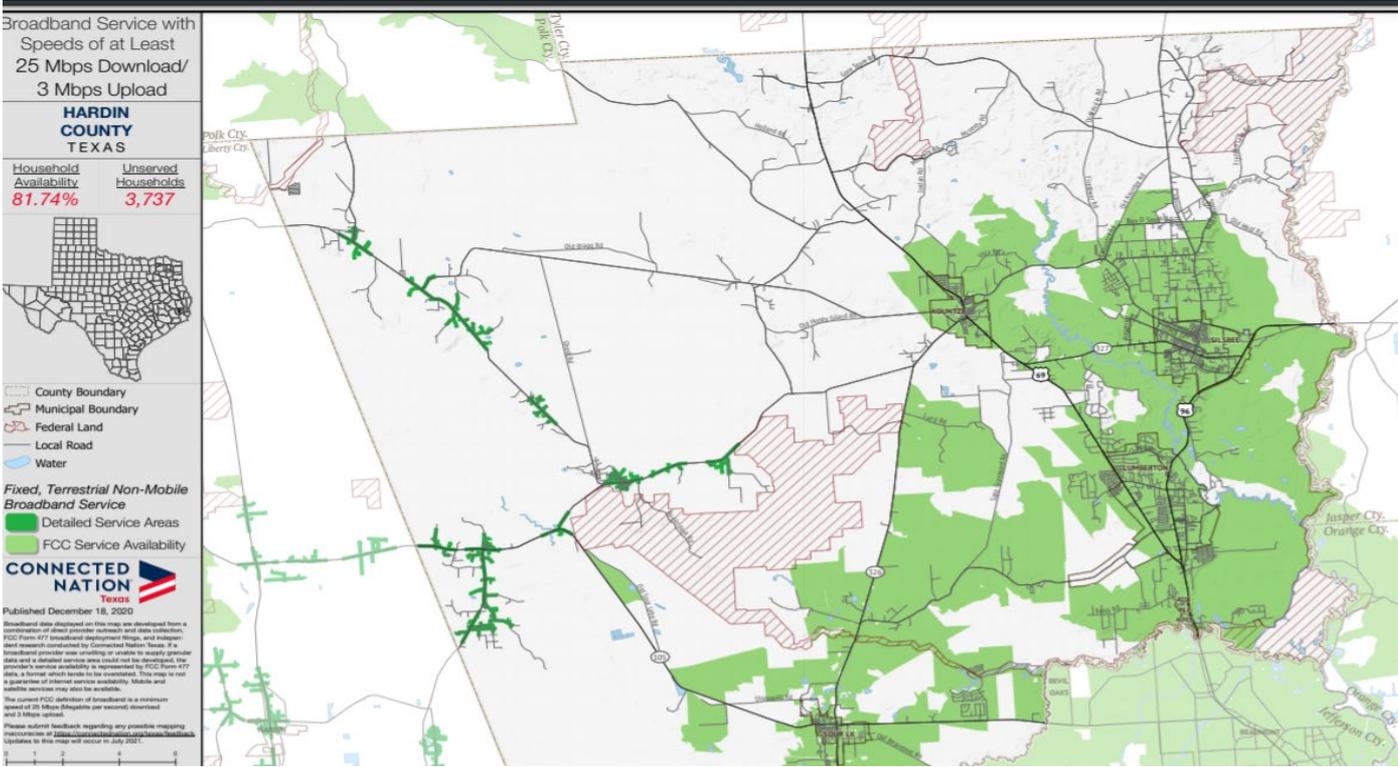
The broadband maps and statistics were initially published in January 2020. The maps were updated on July 31 and, most recently, on December 18 following additional public feedback, field validation, and provider input.

These updated maps (linked below) now include additional input from residents, businesses, and communities, as well as new, more granular data from internet service providers (ISPs). Texans are encouraged to submit feedback on the accuracy of the maps: <https://connectednation.org/texas/feedback>.

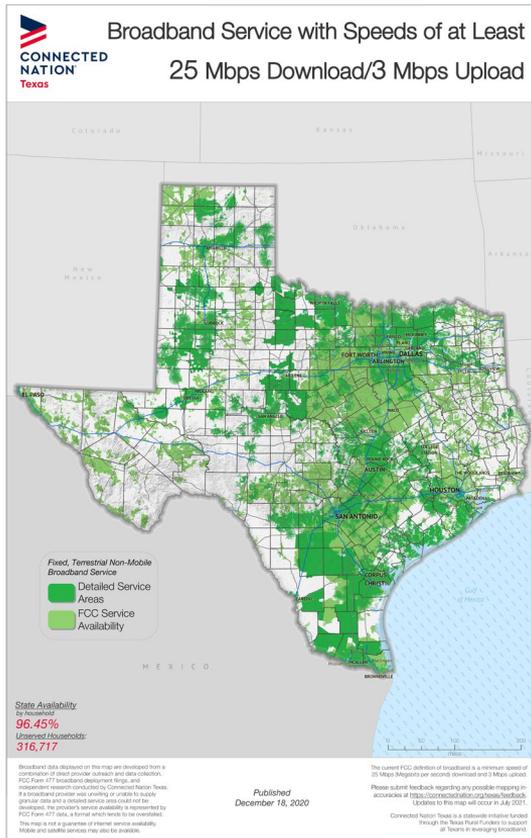
FIND YOUR COUNTY!

- Hardin County - 10x1
- Hardin County - 25x3
- Hardin County - 50x5
- Hardin County - 100x10

County Map



Statewide Broadband Maps & Data



Texas Statewide Broadband Availability Estimates by Speed Tier			
Among Fixed Technologies: Cable, DSL, Fiber, Fixed Wireless			
Speeds	Ununserved Households	Served Households	Percent of Households Served
10 Mbps Download x 1 Mbps Upload	116,139	8,806,794	98.70%
25 Mbps Download x 3 Mbps Upload	316,717	8,606,216	96.45%
50 Mbps Download x 5 Mbps Upload	541,145	8,381,788	93.94%
100 Mbps Download x 10 Mbps Upload	1,020,692	7,902,241	88.56%

The current FCC definition of broadband is a minimum speed of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

Help improve the maps: <https://connectednation.org/texas/feedback>

Source: *Connected Nation Texas, Dec 2020.*

RURAL Texas Statewide Broadband Availability Estimates by Speed Tier			
Among Fixed Technologies: Cable, DSL, Fiber, Fixed Wireless			
Speeds	Ununserved Rural Households	Served Rural Households	Percent of Rural Households Served
10 Mbps Download x 1 Mbps Upload	85,994	2,820,629	97.04%
25 Mbps Download x 3 Mbps Upload	281,119	2,625,504	90.33%
50 Mbps Download x 5 Mbps Upload	500,084	2,406,539	82.80%
100 Mbps Download x 10 Mbps Upload	903,348	2,003,275	68.92%

The current FCC definition of broadband is a minimum speed of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

Help improve the maps: <https://connectednation.org/texas/feedback>

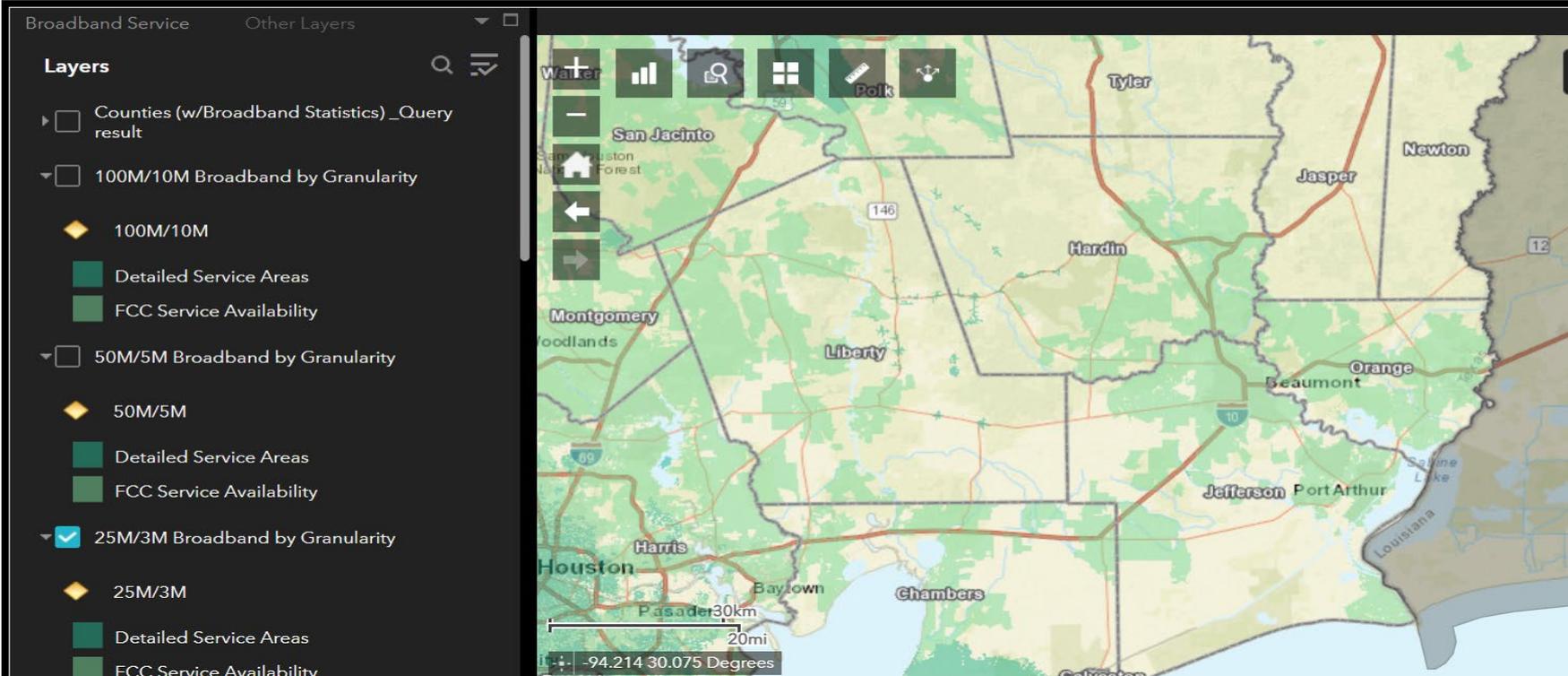
Source: *Connected Nation Texas, Dec 2020.*

Interactive Broadband Map & Data

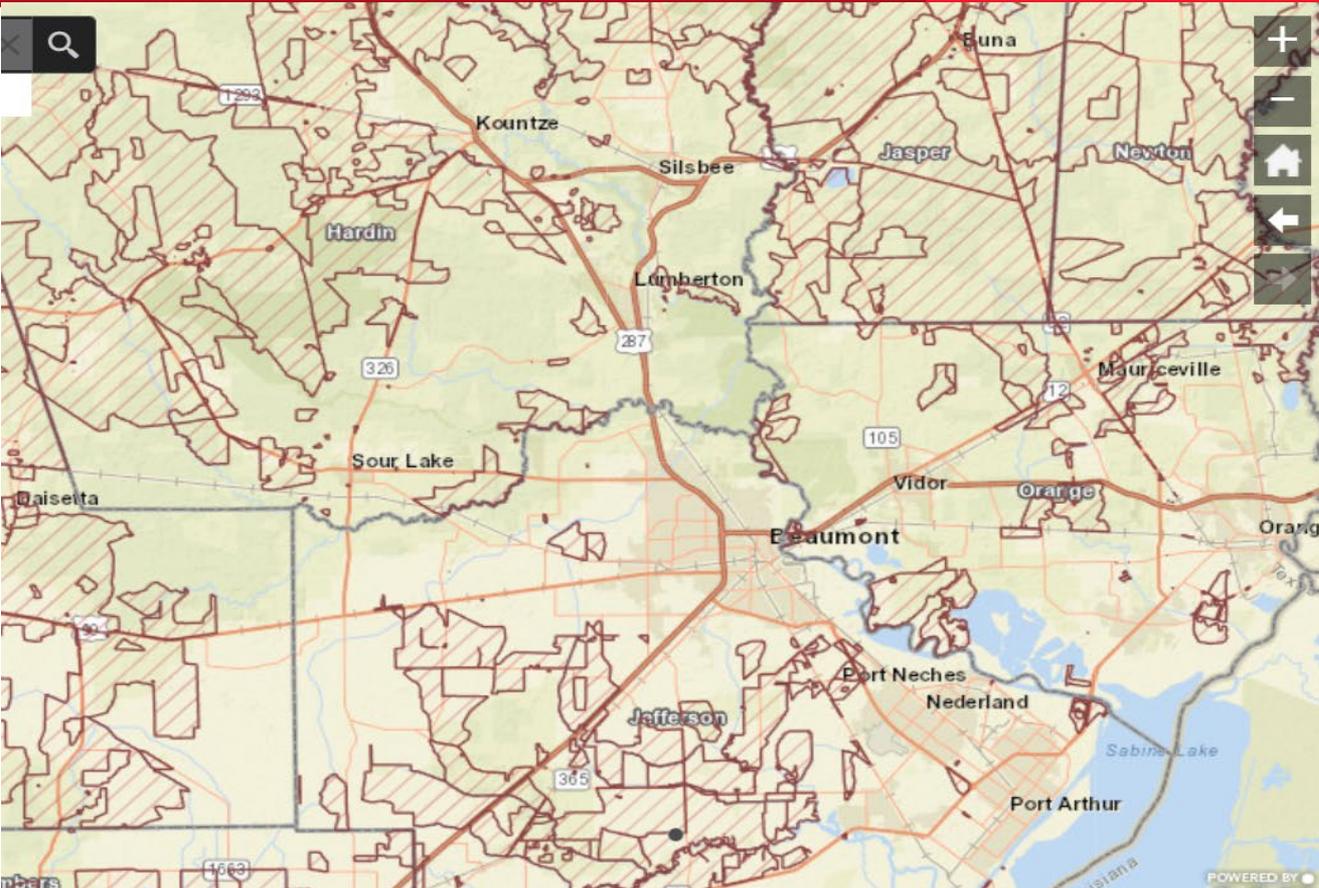


The Texas Broadband Map

Published December 18, 2020. Please provide feedback at <https://connectednation.org/texas/feedback>



RDOF – Jefferson, Hardin, Orange Counties



Other Layers

Layers

- FCC Registered Antenna Structures
- Community Anchor Institutions
- FCC Commitments and Deployments
 - Federal Buildout Commitments/Eligible Areas
 - Alternative-Connect America Cost Model (A-CAM) Eligible Areas
 - Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II Auction Winning Bid Areas
 - Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II Commitment Areas
 - Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Phase 1 Winning Bid Areas
 - Federal Subsidy Program Deployments (Zoom-in to see actual locations)
 - Boundaries/Districts
 - Broadband Adoption

Provider Locator Tool



The screenshot displays the Provider Locator Tool interface. A map of Texas is shown with a green and yellow overlay indicating provider locations. A modal window titled "Locate Provider(s) by Address" is open, containing the following elements:

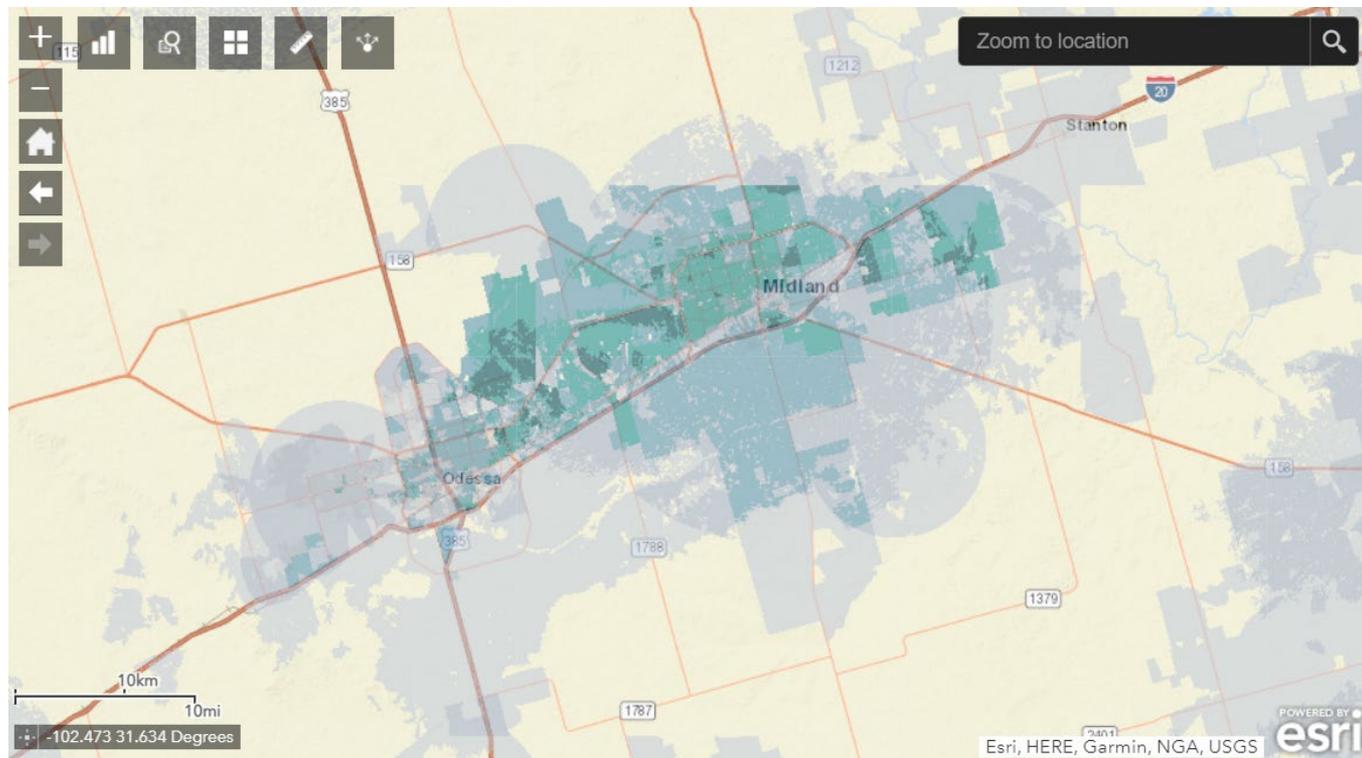
- Provider Details**: A section header.
- Instructions**: "Select a location below by inputting an address, using your current location, or dropping a pin on the map."
- Location**: A section header.
- Input Field**: A text box with the placeholder "Find address or place" and icons for location selection.
- Buttons**: "Reset" and "Find Provider Details".
- Footer**: "Incorrect information? [Let us know](#)".

The map background shows major cities like Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Amarillo, Oklahoma City, Lubbock, Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston. A search bar at the top right says "Zoom to location". The bottom right corner features the Esri logo and text: "POWERED BY esri Esri, Garmin, NGA, USGS".

Provider Density



- Density of Providers by Area (25M/3M) ...
- ◆ Count of Providers ...
- 5 or More Providers
- 4 Providers
- 3 Providers
- 2 Providers
- 1 Provider
- Density of Providers by Area (10M/1M) ...
- ◆ Count of Providers ...
- 5 or More Providers
- 4 Providers
- 3 Providers
- 2 Providers
- 1 Provider





Connected Nation Texas Community Engagements

What Do Communities Want?



Accurate broadband maps and data at the local level

Local planning resources to stimulate broadband infrastructure investment

State leadership to respond to local needs and proactively coordinate broadband activities and policies

Efficient ways to identify and pursue funding and resources

Student access to online resources to succeed outside the classroom

Connectivity to support telehealth & improve overall rural access to healthcare services

Community Assessments and Planning



A community engagement framework for facilitating the expansion of technology access, adoption, and use in a local or regional context.

ENGAGE

- Multi-sector community broadband planning team
- Community Technology Advisors

ASSESS

- Identify local assets and current projects
- Assess local broadband access, adoption, and use

PLAN

- Collaborate to develop a technology action plan
- Prioritize action items

PROMOTE

- Build awareness locally via events & media
- Implement priority projects



Questions?

Pam Waggoner

Broadband Solutions Manager

Connected Nation Texas

409-273-0007

pwaggoner@connectednation.org



Texas
Rural
Funders



**CONNECTED
NATIONSM**
Texas



Public Survey

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

County

City

Street

What is your zip code?

Including yourself, how many adults (age 18 or older) live in the place you currently live?

How many children (under the age of 18) live with you in the place you currently live?

HOME BROADBAND

Do you have internet access at home?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know

If yes, what type of connection do you have to the internet at home?

- A. Dial-up
- B. DSL
- C. Cable
- D. Fixed Wireless
- E. Cellular Satellite
- F. Fiber
- G. Other
- H. Don't Know

If no, which of the following is the most important reason why you don't have internet access at home?

- A. It is not available where I live
- B. I have access at another place such as my job
- C. It is too expensive
- D. I don't know how to use it
- E. I don't need it
- F. I don't have an adequate computer
- G. Some other reason
- H. Don't know

If you are on dial-up or satellite, why?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



- A. Only available option
- B. Too costly to charge
- C. Too much effort to change
- D. Learning curve is too steep
- E. I don't know what other options are available
- F. Other
- G. Don't know

What is your current monthly internet bill?

- A. Less than \$20
- B. \$20-49
- C. \$50 -99
- D. \$100 or more
- E. Don't know

Why are you using your current provider?

- A. I'm happy with my current provider
- B. Only option available
- C. Too costly to change
- D. Too much effort to change
- E. Learning curve is too steep
- F. I don't know what other options are available
- G. Other
- H. Don't know

Do you pay for bundled service (internet, Tv, Phone)?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know

INTERNET USAGE

Do you use the internet to check your email at home? If yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or I the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

- A. Do not check email at home
- B. Do, but connection is slow
- C. Do, and connection is adequate
- D. Don't Know

Do you use the Internet to shop on-line at home? If Yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



- A. Do not shop online at home
- B. Do, but connection speed is too slow
- C. Do, and connection speed is adequate
- D. Don't know

Do you use the Internet to watch online video, such as on YouTube or Netflix at home? If yes: Is the speed of your internet connection too slow, or is the speed of your internet connection adequate for this?

- A. Do not watch online video at home
- B. Do, but connection speed is too slow
- C. Do, and connection speed is adequate
- D. Don't Know

Overall, do you consider your internet connection at home to be adequate for your uses?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Don't Know



Broadband Business Survey

1. Business Name:
2. *Business Address:
3. *City or Town:
4. Telephone Number:
5. Email:
6. Respondent's Name:

7. Business Classification?
 - A. Agriculture, mining, & utilities
 - B. Construction
 - C. Manufacturing
 - D. Transportation & warehousing
 - E. Educational services
 - F. Health care & social assistance
 - G. Arts, entertainment, & recreation
 - H. Wholesale trade
 - I. Retail trade
 - J. Accommodation & food service
 - K. Information Finance, insurance, & real estate
 - L. Professional, scientific, & technical service
 - M. Management, administration, & support service
 - N. Other

8. How old is your company?
 - A. 5 Years or fewer
 - B. 6 – 10 Years
 - C. 10 – 20 Years
 - D. 20 – 30 Years
 - E. 30 + Years

9. Total Number of Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

10. Number of Full-Time Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

11. Number of Part-Time Employees
 - A. 5 employees or fewer
 - B. 6 -10 employees
 - C. 11-50 employees
 - D. 51-100 employees
 - E. >100 employees

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



12. Since starting your business have you increased, stayed the same or decreased the number of employees?

- A. Number of employees decreased.
- B. Number of employees stayed the same.
- C. Number of employees increased.

13. The percentage of online sales?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

14. Percentage of in-person sales?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

15. Approximately what percentage of your business sales come from customers outside of Southeast Texas?

- A. Less than 20%
- B. 20-39%
- C. 40-59%
- D. 60-79%
- E. More than 80%

16. What kind of internet service does your business presently use?

- A. None
- B. Dial-up
- C. DSL
- D. Satellite
- E. Fiber Optic
- F. Don't know

17. How would you rate the current quality of your service?

- A. Excellent
- B. Good
- C. Fair
- D. Poor

18. Are you satisfied with your present internet service's?

Reliability?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Speed?

- A. Yes
- B. No

Cost?

- A. Yes
- B. No

19. How would you rate your business's ability to access and use digital technologies?



20. To what extent does your business utilize the following digital technologies and services?

Selling goods and services:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Advertising and Promotion:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Supplier communication and coordination:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Teleworking:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Social networking and accessing collaborative tools:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Website for your business:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Customer service and support:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Staff training and skills development:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

Delivery of services and content:

- A. Daily
- B. Occasionally
- C. Never

21. Of the internet applications (previously stated above) that you use, which is/are the most important?

- A. Selling goods and services
- B. Website for your business
- C. Advertising and Promotion
- D. Customer service and support
- E. Supplier communication and coordination
- F. Staff training and skills development
- G. Teleworking
- H. Delivery of services and content
- I. Social networking and accessing collaborative tools

22. Of the business applications (previously stated above) that your business doesn't use, are there any that would benefit your business?

23. Which of the internet applications/processes (previously stated above), would you or your employees benefit from learning more about?

24. Is there anything else that your business could do differently to increase sales and/or decrease costs, if you had better internet reliability and availability to a broader choice of internet applications/processes?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.



25. Bringing reliable and robust internet services to Southeast Texas is one keyway to boost economic development for businesses. Do you have any other ideas, suggestions?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT RACHAEL ROBINSON AT RROBINSON@SETRPC.ORG.

By: Ashby

H.B. No. 1446

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1

AN ACT

2 relating to the expansion of broadband services to certain areas.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

4 SECTION 1. Section 490H.002(a), Government Code, is amended
5 to read as follows:

6 (a) The council is composed of one nonvoting member
7 appointed by the broadband development office and the following 17
8 voting members:

9 (1) two representatives of separate Internet service
10 provider industry associations, including at least one
11 representative of an association that primarily represents small
12 providers, as defined by Section 56.032, Utilities Code, appointed
13 by the governor;

14 (2) one representative of the health information
15 technology industry, appointed by the governor;

16 (3) two representatives of unaffiliated nonprofit
17 organizations that advocate for elderly persons statewide,
18 appointed by the governor;

19 (4) two representatives of unaffiliated nonprofit
20 organizations that have a demonstrated history of working with the
21 legislature and the public to identify solutions for expanding
22 broadband to rural, unserved areas of this state, appointed by the
23 governor;

24 (5) one representative of an agricultural advocacy

1 organization in this state, appointed by the governor;

2 (6) one representative of a hospital advocacy
3 organization in this state, appointed by the governor;

4 (7) one representative of a medical advocacy
5 organization in this state, appointed by the governor;

6 (8) one county official who serves in an elected
7 office of a county with a population of less than 35,000, appointed
8 by the governor;

9 (9) one municipal official who serves in an elected
10 office of a municipality with a population of less than 20,000
11 located in a county with a population of less than 60,000, appointed
12 by the governor;

13 (10) one representative of an institution of higher
14 education that has its main campus in a county with a population of
15 less than 60,000, appointed by the governor;

16 (11) one representative of a school district with a
17 territory that includes only counties with a population of less
18 than 60,000, appointed by the governor;

19 (12) one representative from a library association,
20 appointed by the governor;

21 (13) one member of the house of representatives,
22 appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; and

23 (14) one state senator, appointed by the lieutenant
24 governor.

25 SECTION 2. Section 490H.006(a), Government Code, is amended
26 to read as follows:

27 (a) The council shall:

- 1 (1) research the progress of:
- 2 (A) broadband development in unserved areas; and
- 3 (B) deployment of broadband services statewide;
- 4 (2) identify barriers to residential and commercial
- 5 broadband deployment in unserved areas;
- 6 (3) study:
- 7 (A) technology-neutral solutions to overcome
- 8 barriers identified under Subdivision (2); and
- 9 (B) industry and technology trends in broadband
- 10 services;
- 11 (4) analyze how statewide access to broadband would
- 12 benefit:
- 13 (A) economic development;
- 14 (B) the delivery of educational opportunities in
- 15 higher education and public education;
- 16 (C) state and local law enforcement;
- 17 (D) state emergency preparedness; and
- 18 (E) the delivery of health care services,
- 19 including telemedicine and telehealth; and
- 20 (5) study the outcomes of programs administered by the
- 21 broadband development office.

22 SECTION 3. Subtitle F, Title 4, Government Code, is amended

23 by adding Chapter 490I to read as follows:

24 CHAPTER 490I. BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

25 Sec. 490I.0101. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "broadband

26 service" means Internet service provided directly to end user

27 retail customers and capable of providing:

1 (1) a download speed of 25 megabits per second or
2 faster; and

3 (2) an upload speed of 3 megabits per second or faster.

4 Sec. 490I.0102. OFFICE. (a) The broadband development
5 office is an office within the comptroller's office.

6 (b) The comptroller may employ additional employees
7 necessary for the discharge of the duties of the broadband
8 development office.

9 (c) The broadband development office:

10 (1) is under the direction and control of the
11 comptroller;

12 (2) shall promote the policies enumerated in this
13 chapter; and

14 (3) may perform any action authorized by state or
15 federal law.

16 Sec. 490I.0103. POWERS AND DUTIES. The broadband
17 development office shall:

18 (1) serve as a resource for information regarding
19 broadband service in this state; and

20 (2) engage in outreach to communities regarding the
21 expansion and adoption of broadband service and the programs
22 administered by the office.

23 Sec. 490I.0104. BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT MAP. (a) The
24 broadband development office shall create, update annually, and
25 publish on the comptroller's Internet website a map designating
26 each census block in this state as:

27 (1) an eligible area, if fewer than 80 percent of the

1 addresses in the block have access to broadband service; or

2 (2) an ineligible area, if 80 percent or more of the
3 addresses in the block have access to broadband service.

4 (b) The map must display:

5 (1) the number of broadband service providers that
6 serve each census block; and

7 (2) for each eligible area, an indication of whether
8 the area has access to Internet service that is not broadband
9 service, regardless of the technology used to provide the service.

10 (c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), the office shall
11 use information available from the Federal Communications
12 Commission to create or update the map.

13 (d) If information from the Federal Communications
14 Commission is not sufficient for the office to create or update the
15 map, the office may request the necessary information from a
16 political subdivision or broadband service provider, and the
17 subdivision or provider shall report the information to the office.
18 The office may not require a subdivision or provider to report
19 information in a format that is substantially different from the
20 format required by the Federal Communications Commission.

21 (e) Information a broadband service provider reports to the
22 office under Subsection (d) is confidential and not subject to
23 disclosure under Chapter 552. The office may not share information
24 reported under Subsection (d) with a third party or contract with a
25 third party to collect, analyze, or use information reported under
26 Subsection (d).

27 (f) A broadband service provider or political subdivision

1 may petition the office to redesignate a census block on the map as
2 an eligible area or ineligible area. The office shall provide
3 notice of the petition to each broadband service provider that
4 provides broadband service to the census block and post notice of
5 the petition on the comptroller's Internet website.

6 (g) Not later than the 45th day after the date that a
7 broadband provider receives notice under Subsection (f), the
8 provider shall provide information to the office showing whether
9 the census block should or should not be redesignated.

10 (h) Not later than the 75th day after the date that a
11 broadband provider receives notice under Subsection (f), the office
12 shall determine whether to redesignate the census block on the map
13 and update the map as necessary. A determination made by the office
14 under this subsection is not a contested case for purposes of
15 Chapter 2001.

16 (i) The office is not required to create, update, or publish
17 a map under this section if the Federal Communications Commission
18 produces a map that:

19 (1) enables the office to identify eligible and
20 ineligible areas, as described by Subsection (a); and

21 (2) meets the requirements of Subsection (b).

22 Sec. 490I.0105. BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. (a) The
23 broadband development office shall establish a program to award
24 grants, low-interest loans, and other financial incentives to
25 applicants for the purpose of expanding access to and adoption of
26 broadband service in census blocks determined to be eligible areas
27 by the office under Section 490I.0104.

1 (b) The office shall establish and publish eligibility
2 criteria for award recipients. The criteria must require that
3 grants, loans, and other financial incentives awarded through the
4 program be used only for capital expenses, purchase or lease of
5 property, and other expenses, including backhaul and transport,
6 that will facilitate the provision or adoption of broadband
7 service.

8 (c) The office may not:

9 (1) favor a particular broadband technology in
10 awarding grants, loans, or other financial incentives;

11 (2) award grants, loans, or other financial incentives
12 to a broadband provider that does not report information requested
13 by the office under Section 490I.0104;

14 (3) award a grant, loan, or other financial incentive
15 to a noncommercial provider of broadband service for an eligible
16 area if a commercial provider of broadband service has submitted an
17 application for the eligible area; or

18 (4) take into consideration distributions from the
19 state universal service fund established under Chapter 56,
20 Utilities Code, when deciding to award grants, loans, or other
21 financial incentives.

22 (d) An award granted under this section does not affect
23 distributions received by a broadband provider from the state
24 universal service fund established under Chapter 56, Utilities
25 Code.

26 Sec. 490I.0106. BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT. (a) The
27 broadband development account is an account in the general revenue

1 fund.

2 (b) The account consists of:

3 (1) appropriations of money to the account by the
4 legislature;

5 (2) gifts, donations, and grants, including federal
6 grants; and

7 (3) interest earned on the investment of the money in
8 the account.

9 (c) The comptroller shall deposit to the credit of the
10 account federal money received by the state for the purpose of
11 broadband development, to the extent permitted by federal law.

12 (d) Money in the account may be appropriated only to the
13 broadband development office for purposes of:

14 (1) administering the broadband development program;
15 or

16 (2) creating or updating the map described by Section
17 490I.0104.

18 (e) The account is exempt from the application of Section
19 404.071.

20 Sec. 490I.0107. RULEMAKING. The comptroller may adopt
21 rules as necessary to implement this chapter.

22 SECTION 4. (a) Not later than the first anniversary of the
23 effective date of this Act, the broadband development office
24 established by Section 490I.0102, Government Code, as added by this
25 Act, shall prepare a state broadband plan that establishes
26 long-term goals for greater access to and adoption of broadband
27 service in this state.

1 (b) In developing the state broadband plan, the office
2 shall:

3 (1) collaborate, to the extent possible, with state
4 agencies, political subdivisions, broadband industry stakeholders
5 and representatives, and community organizations that focus on
6 broadband services;

7 (2) incorporate the policy recommendations of the
8 governor's broadband development council;

9 (3) favor policies that are technology-neutral and
10 protect all members of the public; and

11 (4) explore state and regional approaches to broadband
12 development.

13 SECTION 5. (a) The broadband development office
14 established by Section 490I.0102, Government Code, as added by this
15 Act, shall publish the map required by Section 490I.0104,
16 Government Code, as added by this Act, on the comptroller's
17 Internet website not later than September 1, 2022.

18 (b) Not later than January 1, 2022, the office shall publish
19 on the comptroller's Internet website:

20 (1) a map created by the Federal Communications
21 Commission that displays the number of broadband service providers
22 that serve each census block; or

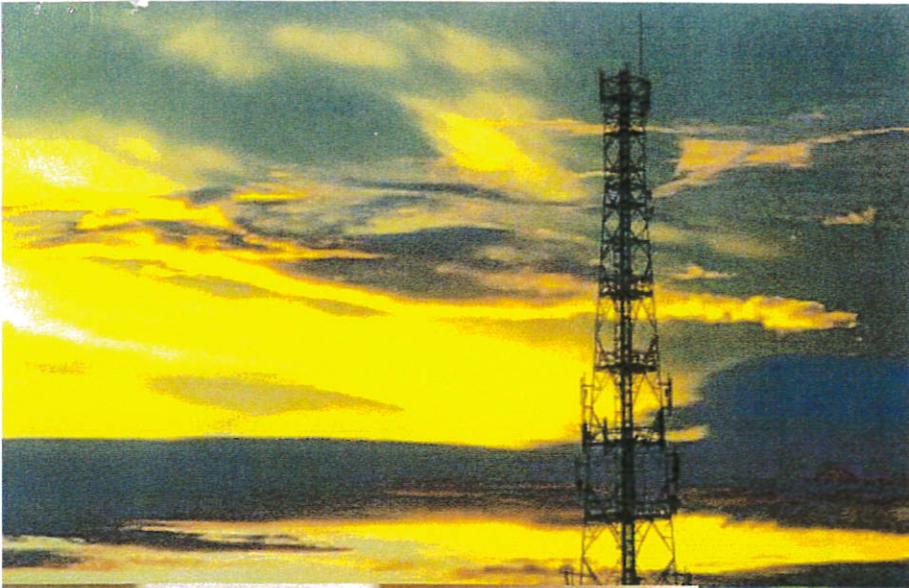
23 (2) a link to a map described by Subdivision (1) of
24 this subsection.

25 (c) For the purpose of administering the broadband
26 development program established by Section 490I.0105, Government
27 Code, as added by this Act, the office shall use a map described by

H.B. No. 1446

1 Subsection (b) of this section to determine whether an area is
2 eligible until the office publishes the map required by Section
3 490I.0104, Government Code, as added by this Act.

4 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.



"It's a 3-legged stool: people need water, electricity, and broadband":
Broadband Stories from Rural Texas

January 2021



Texas
Rural
Funders

"The Digital Divide became the Homework Divide in my district...We sent kids home with a device and a hotspot. We might as well have sent them home with a laptop and a rock, because they don't have broadband internet at home."

JOHN SEYBOLD, SUPERINTENDENT OF JASPER ISD

With the COVID-19 epidemic, rural Texans need broadband internet access more than ever before. Students were sent home from school in March, many in districts that moved to remote learning. Jasper ISD Superintendent John Seybold made the point very clear; students could be supported well enough in a school setting, but young people and their families migrated back to their schools, to town libraries, to McDonald's, to sit outside the building and do their work. Even though districts have invested millions in 1:1 initiatives to provide devices to all learners, and paired those devices with hotspots, connectivity in rural regions is limited for many reasons. Sometimes those limits are caused by the high cost of having only a single provider. Other times, siblings or parents studying and working on existing connections squeeze available bandwidth.

Operation Connectivity, the \$786M investment from Governor Abbott, Texas Education Agency, and Texas Division of Emergency Management, procured devices and reimbursed districts for eLearning devices and hotspots. This provides tremendous support for thousands of students. Yet, it simply does not address the underlying issue for hundreds of thousands of Texas children for whom that internet hotspot signifies the Digital Divide. Hotspots and devices don't address the larger issues of infrastructure, speed, and affordability of broadband access. The millions invested are a short-term remedy for the lack of planning for broadband access for all Texans. However, collaboration and targeted investment will engage more people in the economy for a generation of Texans.

While K-12 students put a face on the impact of insufficient broadband, there are many other faces to the problem. College students are at home, too, Zooming in to their classes to see

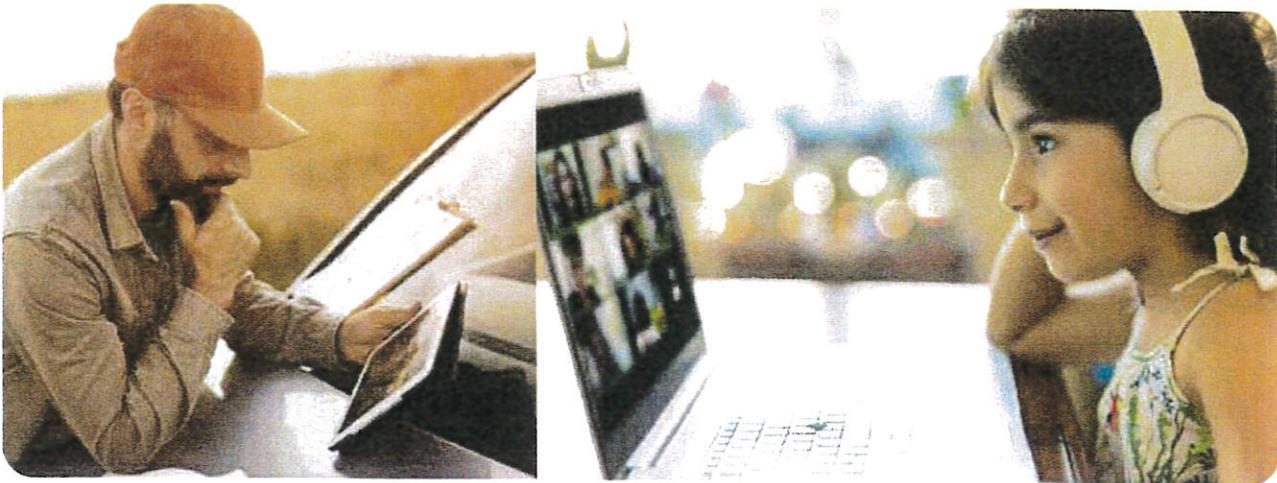
their professors. Telecommuting, once relegated to the margins of the workforce, has become commonplace for many workers whose offices closed with the pandemic, and stayed closed. Hospitals and clinics have limited access to patients in many instances, making telehealth options not only beneficial, but required for many Texas families.

Yet broadband constraints aren't new for many users. Police officers and EMTs use software that updates their internet access automatically when they hit a new cell tower. In rural parts of the state, first responders could have one to two minutes without a connection to the dispatcher. Body cams or ambulance-based video cameras that enable two-way, real-time communication, don't work, and can mean the difference of life or death for patients.

"Dropping the connection happens more than you think. When it does, it's high stakes and high stress."

KEVIN UNGER, IT DIRECTOR, BASTROP COUNTY

The speed, reliability, and cost that is considered standard in Texas's cities is not an option for many rural residents. T. L. L. Temple Foundation president Wynn Rosser shared that "We know that rural east Texans pay 400% more per megabit than do residents of DFW for less reliable, lower-speed connections...that means jobs. The 10-year economic impact is billions of dollars and 10,000 jobs. The opportunity to return to rural areas to live and work remotely, to connect to the 21st century economy and 21st century workforce is here, if the infrastructure was here. The rural lifestyle looks a lot better, if I can connect."



Texas's cities are expanding, and business and residences move together. Adena Lewis, Director of Tourism and Economic Development for Bastrop County, shares that people were leaving Austin before the COVID pandemic, but it has only accelerated since early 2020. "People found out they could leave their downtown offices and the life that went with it," she said, "and then they get here, and everyone in the family needs to be connected." Broadband is seen as a third utility. "It's a three-legged stool: people need water, electricity, and broadband."

Broadband is a non-negotiable for business expansion. Teresa Burnett, Executive Director of the Monahans Chamber of Commerce in Ward County, reports that area realtors lost prospects from Fortune 500 companies looking to relocate in the community because broadband wasn't available. Jasper County Economic Development Director Eddie Hopkins says, "If a community doesn't have broadband, businesses don't come. So much technology is needed, even in manufacturing. If they can't get broadband, I don't get any new prospects. It's plain and simple."

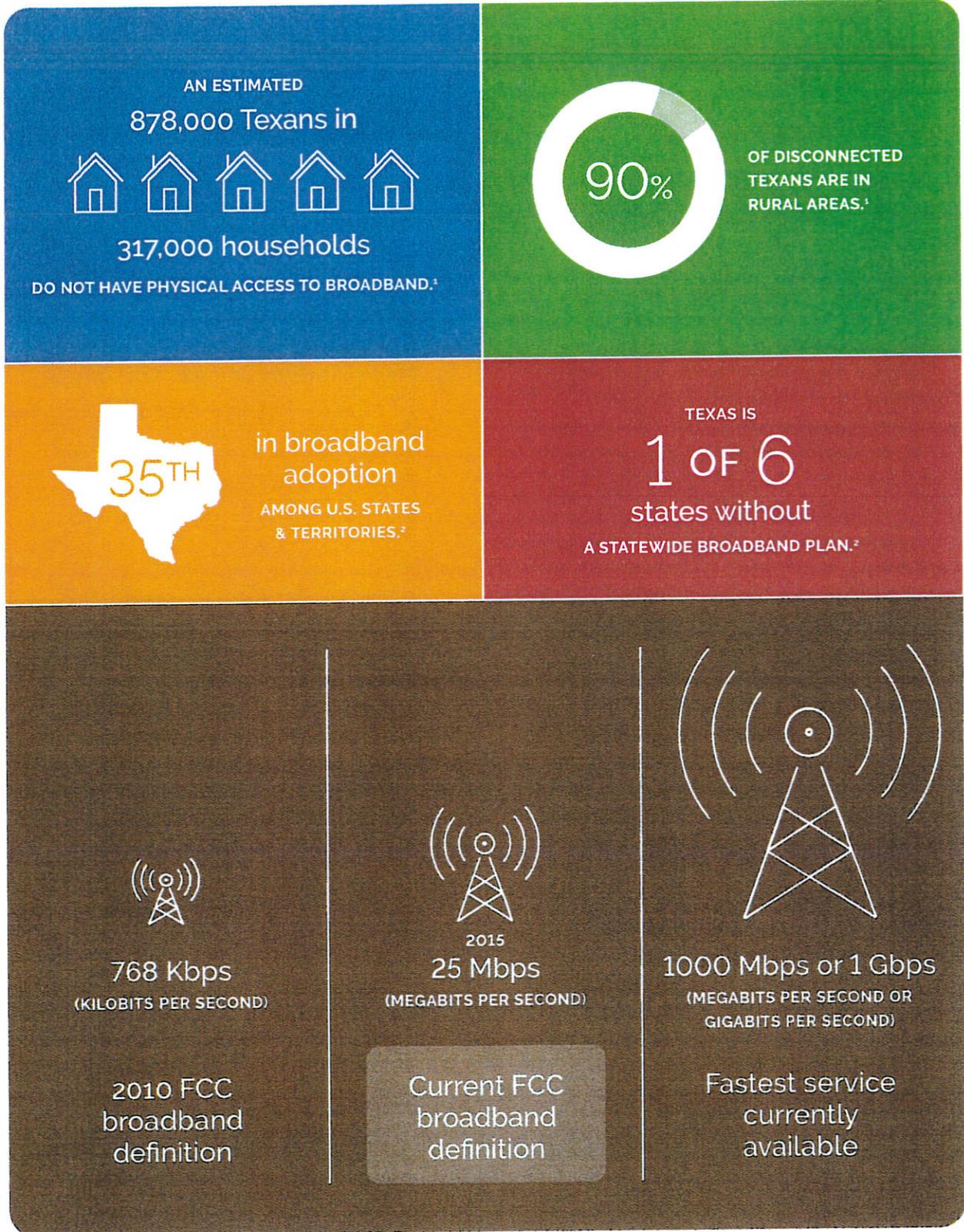
Texans on the move depend on strong broadband, too. Being "off the grid" has lost some of its allure for those enjoying hunting leases and rustic camping spots. And having to wait until you get to a town to find a hotel for the night or a restaurant to try doesn't cut it for travelers who value the safety and convenience of constant connection.

Rural broadband access was important last year, its importance has been heightened in the COVID pandemic, and it will matter next year and for years to come. A catalytic investment in broadband creates a cycle of economic growth, by expanding businesses, supporting growth in ecommerce and home-based businesses, and retaining more highly-educated and skilled workers in rural environments; this allows young people to stay local rather than leaving to seek higher-paying jobs in cities. These shifts lead to population growth and a growing tax base, which is rare across rural Texas, and nationwide.

"The reasons we need broadband are no different than the reasons we needed electricity in the early 1900s. The leadership we need now is no different than what we needed between President Roosevelt and President Johnson to ensure that rural residents have access to the utilities they need to participate fully in society."

— WYNN ROSSER, PRESIDENT OF T.L.L. TEMPLE FOUNDATION, LUFKIN, TEXAS

Rural Broadband by the Numbers



¹<https://connectednation.org/texas/what-can-texas-do/>, accessed 10/20/20
²<https://broadbandnow.com/bandwidth-calculator/>

Learning to Speak Broadband

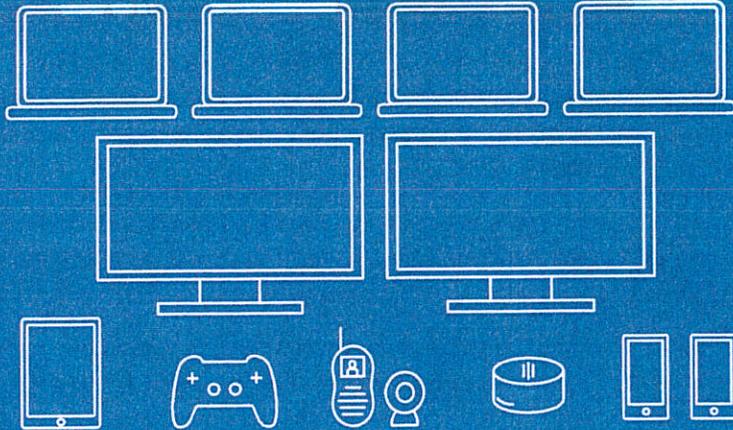
- **BANDWIDTH:** the measure of telecommunications and internet networks to transmit data and signals. It is generally expressed in gigabits per second (Gbps) or megabits per second (Mbps).
- **BROADBAND:** reliable high-speed internet access that is always on, defined by the Federal Communications Commission as having download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps. Texas has the same definition as the FCC. This definition was established in 2015.
- **COPPER:** copper wire is the foundation of telephone lines. While copper wire has historically gone to every address, the technology is not sufficient to provide broadband. **Fiber only loses 3% of the signal** over distances greater than 100 meters, compared to **copper's 4% loss of signal**.
- **DIGITAL DIVIDE:** the gap between individuals in a population who have access to the internet and other communication technologies and those who have limited to no access.
- **DIGITAL EQUITY:** recognizes that digital access and skills are now required for full participation in many aspects of society and the economy. Digital equity highlights that a lack of access and/or skills can further isolate individuals and communities from a broad range of opportunities.
- **DIGITAL SUBSCRIBER LINE (DSL):** a technology that transmits digital data over telephone lines. DSL service is typically 5-10 Mbps, far below the definition for broadband.
- **FIXED WIRELESS INTERNET:** an alternative to wired methods of connecting to the internet that connects two fixed locations. It is local instead of orbital like satellite internet, and doesn't depend on wires like cable, fiber, or DSL. Fixed wireless internet offers options to users with limited speed or **challenging line-of-sight issues, like in East Texas's Piney Woods**.
- **INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER (ISP):** a company that provides individuals, businesses, anchor institutions, etc., with a connection to the internet. ISPs include telephone and cable companies, wireless ISPs, electric cooperatives, and mobile wireless providers. They use different technologies to deliver internet service to their customers, including fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed wireless.
- **LAST MILE:** the technology or process of **connecting the local provider's internet infrastructure to the home** or small-business customer.
- **NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE:** the hardware and software components of a network that provide network connectivity and allow the network to function.
- **RIGHTS OF WAY:** legal rights to pass through property owned by another. They are frequently used to secure access to land for digging trenches, deploying fiber, constructing towers and deploying equipment on existing towers and utility poles.
- **SERVICE AREA:** the entire area within which a service provider offers or intends to offer broadband service.
- **TAKE RATE:** the percentage of customers within an ISP's service area who subscribe to, or "take," the service.
- **UNSERVED AREA:** **areas that lack physical access to broadband service** as defined by the state program.
- **UNDERSERVED AREA:** areas that have internet service at speeds higher than those that are defined as unserved but lower than those that have broadband service as defined by the state program.

How Much Internet Do I Need?

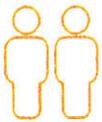


Family of 4

- 4 LAPTOPS
- 2 SMARTPHONES
- 2 SMART TVS
- 2 SMART HOME DEVICES (I.E., ALEXA, BABY MONITOR)
- 1 GAMING DEVICE
- 1 TABLET

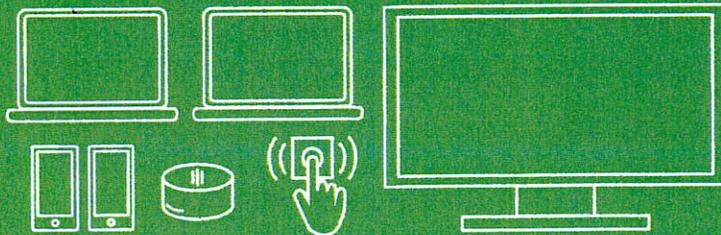


119 Mbps
USAGE AT A TIME



Couple

- 2 LAPTOPS
- 2 SMARTPHONES
- 1 SMART TV
- 2 SMART HOME DEVICES (I.E., GOOGLE MINI, VIDEO DOORBELL)



55 Mbps
USAGE AT A TIME

Key Broadband Stakeholders

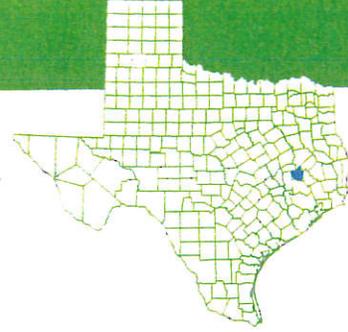
County coalitions across Texas consist of representatives from these core industries. This key will be used in the following profiles to demonstrate the industries represented by the coalition leaders.



Walker County

2019 POPULATION: 72,791

COUNTY SEAT: Huntsville



INDUSTRIES:



Agriculture



Health care



Education



Local government

Walker County is 70 miles north of Houston (and 20 minutes north of The Woodlands) via I-45. Currently, broadband fiber is available in Huntsville and a quarter-mile outside the city. Beyond that, broadband is sparse.



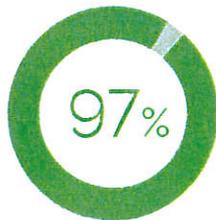
COMMISSIONER
JIMMY HENRY

For Walker County Commissioner Jimmy Henry, the struggle with rural internet hit home. When his two college-aged children came home to New Waverly in March to start remote learning, all he had was a dial-up option. "It was awful," he said. "My children had to go to the university library [at Sam Houston State in Huntsville] to reserve computer time. It shouldn't have had to be that way."

Broadband is no longer a convenience or luxury, but instead a necessity. A modern digital infrastructure with broadband service that is accessible and affordable for **all** is a critical component of a competitive regional ecosystem for its enterprise and residential stakeholders.

Henry and a coalition of community stakeholders decided to act. Their group of leaders, consisting of other county commissioners, the Forest Service from the Sam Houston State Forest, law enforcement professionals, and superintendents recognized that they could have more impact together. In January 2020, together with Connected Nation Texas, they launched a county-wide survey to assess broadband technology access and adoption.

Of 688 households surveyed in Walker County



OF INTERNET SUBSCRIBERS
would like more options

7 OF 10

INTERNET SUBSCRIBERS SAID
their current service
does not meet their needs
DUE TO SLOW SPEEDS AND
UNRELIABLE SERVICE AVAILABLE

2 OF 5

SAID THAT THEIR
mobile network was
their primary internet
connection
AT THEIR HOME

Walker County



Home Broadband Adoption¹



ALL CONNECTED COMMUNITIES



WALKER COUNTY, TEXAS

- Fixed connection (cable, DSL, fiber and fixed wireless)
- Non-fixed connection (dial-up, satellite and mobile only)
- No connection

The survey revealed that regional trends in Walker County echo national trends. "People who are less likely to have internet connectivity are poor, elderly, rural, speak English as a second language, or have less education – and that hasn't changed since the 1990s," says Larry Irving, the former U.S. Assistant Secretary for Commerce. Not being connected to the internet reduces people's chances of social distancing, having good health, educating their children, finding a job, and running a business. Many people, particularly the elderly, often have to go see a doctor or go shopping in person because they don't have access to telemedicine or online shopping.

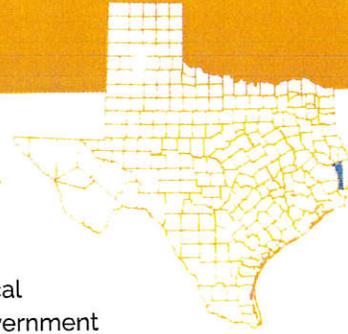
Telemedicine provides support for many rural Texans. With very few physicians practicing in rural Texas, tele-hospitalists care for critically ill patients via telehealth technology. Patients can be cared for closer to home, and the local hospital can generate new revenue. Additionally, rural hospitals have a limited number of medical specialists, and broadband provides access to specialists for consultation. The ability to administer mental health services via telehealth leads to better quality of life for the many Texans who suffer from mental illness. And "total wellness" not only relies on telemedicine, but on access to social interaction. Internet access can help individuals overcome social isolation. It can assist in maintaining the social health of elderly Texans by allowing them to have virtual contact with others while social distancing. Affordable, reliable high-speed internet access is important to enable all Texans to enhance their quality of life.

¹https://connectednation.org/texas/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/10/CN_Walker-County-Texas-Summary_FINAL-1.pdf, accessed 12/3/2020.

Jasper County

2018 POPULATION: 35,872

COUNTY SEAT: Jasper



INDUSTRIES:



Business



Education



Local
government



Economic
development



Health care



EDDIE HOPKINS,
JEDCO ED

"There are a lot of people in the metropolitan areas that don't understand the obstacles our kids have in the country, and it's not fair. I hate to be penalized because of my zip code. I'm hoping the initiatives

we're seeing with broadband will focus on rural Texas. It's not fair for our kids who have to live where they live, because of their parents. They're discriminated against based on where they're born." Jasper County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director before Eddie Hopkins makes that case for the impact of broadband.

His colleague, Jasper ISD superintendent John Seybold, shared that his students experience the Digital Divide as the Homework Divide. "We invested \$2 million in devices and hotspots for our 1:1 initiative. At school, we have reliable internet and we pay a lot of money for dedicated lines. Once you leave the building, it's not nearly as good. We were sending kids home with a device and a hotspot, and we might as well have sent them home with a laptop and a rock, because they didn't get internet. We had to depend on packets," he said, paper-based instruction and worksheets to try to keep students engaged and on grade level. Some districts wired buses with hotspots and would drive to rural areas in the evenings, enabling families to come together

after school to get broadband access. "It's a pretty smart idea," Hopkins shared, "but it's a shame they have to do that."



JOHN SEYBOLD,
JASPER ISD
SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Seybold also invests in building the skills of all his system's users. With the move to online instruction and the 1:1 device initiative, two instructional technologists work with parents and family members to support students

in using computers and accessing Google Classroom, the primary application used for online instruction.

"This isn't going to be solved this year, but five years down the road, broadband access in our district can eliminate the Digital Divide. Our kids are so limited in their exposure." Seybold shared that fiber was the best solution, referencing the "Pine Curtain," the dense Piney Woods of East Texas that hinder satellite internet, microwave transmission, and other lower-cost internet solutions from being sufficient. Hurricanes Ike and Rita wiped out cable providers by taking out the above-ground cable hardware on utility poles, an infrastructure system that could have been used to bring broadband internet to rural areas.

Jasper County



JUDGE MARK ALLEN

Judge Mark Allen provides another perspective. "I look at broadband as a utility," he said, "no different than electricity back in the 1930s and 1940s, when people had to work together to get state governments to see the importance of electricity." He referred to Lyndon Johnson and his early work as an elected official to bring electricity to rural Texans, deemed difficult and expensive to serve.

In 1935 Congress created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to make low-interest loans to electric cooperatives so that rural areas could be wired. But for Lyndon B. Johnson's constituents there was a catch: The REA required at least three families per mile of line, and the Hill Country was just too sparsely populated. Johnson began working to get enough farmers to join the newly formed Pedernales Electric Cooperative. With the same tireless energy that he had applied to his political campaigning, he traveled door to door urging families to sign up.¹

This Jasper County broadband coalition includes all five school district superintendents, hospitals and medical professionals, and local manufacturing companies. Through mapping available services and speeds across the county, they found significant gaps between what they experienced and what their broadband providers reported to the Federal Communications Commission. That discrepancy was common across many regions of rural Texas. Providers map coverage by towers, measuring 360 degrees of the coverage zone, though hills, trees, or other natural barriers often impact coverage. Hopkins shared that advocacy partners have helped develop more accurate maps for use for planning.

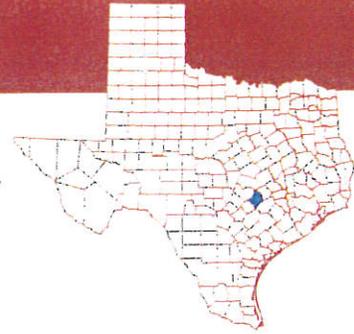
For Judge Allen, it's personal. "I have a deep appreciation for the lack of internet... We need to get to where we can utilize the internet like it's supposed to be. That's what it's going to take for our kids to achieve. Without that, it hinders our kids from their ability to compete when they graduate from high school and get into college or the job market. It's important to us."

¹<https://www.americanheritage.com/node/132467>

Bastrop County

2019 POPULATION: 88,723

COUNTY SEAT: Bastrop



INDUSTRIES:



Economic development



Local government

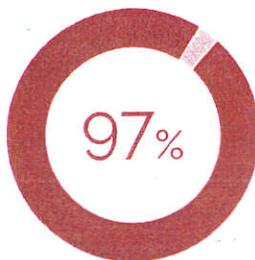


Health care

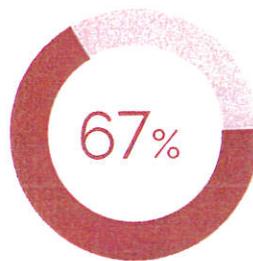


Public safety

Bastrop County was once a shining star for internet access in Texas. Ten years ago, Bastrop County was profiled for their high percentage of residents connected (when broadband speed was defined at 3% of the current definition). Yet, as technology moved on, Bastrop's infrastructure stood still. What was once a marketing strategy to draw companies and residents to Bastrop became a hindrance.



97% OF BASTROP COUNTY IS UNINCORPORATED resulting in businesses and residences with spotty internet service



67% OF THE POPULATION LIVES IN UNINCORPORATED AREAS with limited connectivity

Local leaders have seen robust real estate activity since the beginning of the COVID pandemic, with more interest in acreages as Austinites seek to work from home in the country.

Homes with broadband access are valued at 3.1% higher than homes without broadband access.¹



PAUL PAPE

"We've known for a long time we were behind the curve in getting broadband to our rural areas. The need now is higher than it's ever been," shares Judge Paul Pape of Bastrop County.

Bastrop County

Bastrop County echoes what has been shared in other counties. Economic development and tourism director Adena Lewis shares, "If a Texas legislator brings up a map of Bastrop County, we look like we are lit all over the county... The reality is that what the FCC says is available and what is available



ADENA LEWIS

on the ground does not match." Jennifer Harris of Connected Nation Texas puts that into context. "Federal data is not collected in a granular or timely manner, and is not validated in any sense, which leads to overstatement or understatement. Overstatement causes problems for communities because they don't qualify for federal funds, and providers don't see opportunities to grow because they think the area is covered."

Lewis shared that "Broadband is not a luxury item for streaming Netflix — this is how people make a living, this is how they talk to their doctors, this is how they educate their children. We have lost a lot of economic development in Bastrop County because of the high, high, high cost to get their lot lit with broadband access."

The Bastrop County Health Authority Dr. Desmar Walkes, who is leading the local response to the coronavirus pandemic, weighs in, too. "Access to health care through the internet is key to providing our community with vital information, as well as effective care. The lack of consistent internet service in



DR. DESMAR WALKES

Bastrop County limits public access to care, which ultimately costs all of us time, money, and in some cases, lives."

From a public safety perspective, Bastrop County IT Director Kevin Unger shares that having broadband is critical for law enforcement to be effective and community members to be safe. "We have video footage of what goes on in the



KEVIN UNGER

police cars and what goes on a body camera. Today, that all uploads when they get back to the sheriff's office." Unger shares, "If they had better broadband, footage could stream live to command posts, so supervisors could watch their people in the field and help them make decisions. If the sheriff wanted to see a SWAT team move in and advance people or pull people back, he could see that in real time. That's all done via radio now, and there are only so many people who can talk on a radio system at the same time." Reliable broadband would protect first responders and citizens in a county that currently has significant holes in coverage.

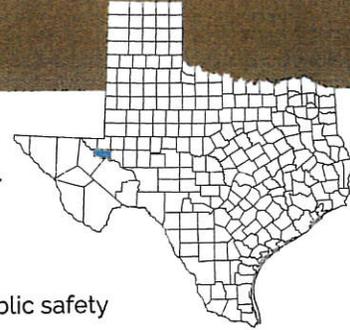
A broadband-focused coalition of county leaders has pulled together to quantify the demand and create a plan for moving forward. Bastrop County conducted a survey that received more than 4,500 responses, with representation from residents, business, public safety, library, agriculture, education, health care, and government providing their perspectives; they shared critical information on what services are available, how well they work, how much current access costs, and what they would pay for if service were expanded. Bastrop County's advocacy partner is analyzing responses, and the coalition is identifying funding sources for build-out.

Says Judge Pape. "We know we're going to have to have growth — the Tesla plant is closer to Bastrop County than downtown Austin. We would ideally plan pockets of growth and add fiber in the trench when it's dug by TxDOT or a private contractor." They are actively and collectively engaging to again make Bastrop County a shining star for broadband access.

Ward County

2018 POPULATION: 11,720

COUNTY SEAT: Monahans



INDUSTRIES:



Business



Economic development



Public safety



Cybersecurity



Health care

Ward County is in the heart of the Permian Basin. Due to the strength of the energy economy, Monahans has grown more than 10% since 2010, with five streets of new \$300K houses and expanded capacity for electricity, waste water, and trash.



TERESA BURNETT

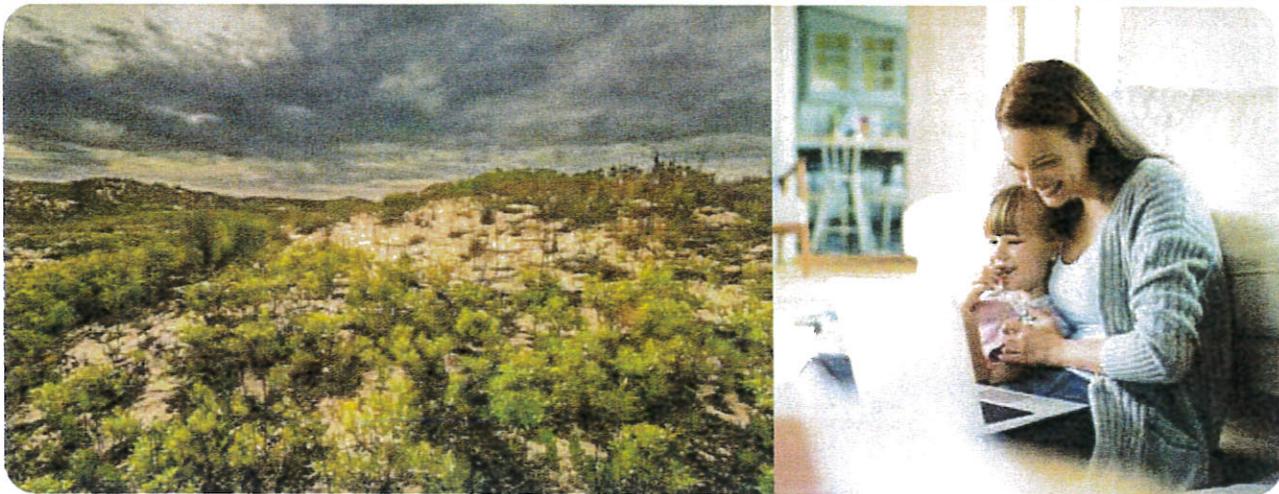
Since 2016, a coalition of local leaders has been engaged in pursuing county-wide broadband internet access. Teresa Burnett, the Executive Director of the Monahans Chamber of Commerce, was one of many community-oriented people who came together on the project. They collaborated with private philanthropy to provide support for a broadband study of the county. She was a key player in getting people to respond to the 2017 Connected Nation Texas survey, driving responses at 100% of the target rate in four weeks' time.

The results were astounding. Community members were surprised to learn they were paying for speeds that they weren't actually getting, and in fact, paying double what urban areas spend. Residents had difficulty connecting to the internet, and once connected, were often quickly booted off.

The school system, hospital, and sheriff's office all spent extra to install special connections to keep essential communications, such as 911 and dispatch, functioning. Across the board, residents reported being unable to use multiple devices in a building at the same time; for example, one person couldn't use their laptop while another person streamed a video. Burnett was the first-ever recipient of the Texas Broadband Hero award; during her November 2020 award ceremony, her internet dropped three times.

The Ward County team's research helped them identify benefits they wanted for their citizens. A reliable connection could literally save lives with paramedics being able to speak to a doctor while en route to the ER. Children could participate in virtual learning and grow technology skills to prepare them for the 21st century job market. Businesses could locate to Monahans with the guarantee of communication with headquarters, the ability to use their technology effectively, and even the simple assurance that their credit card machines would work.

Ward County



Teresa Burnett sees broadband as a security issue for the region. She says:

"If you want to hurt the United States, you're going to go where the source of the energy is, and we're a key target area. With us needing more services in broadband in our area, it's a necessity that we're connected to the world and the United States."

Engineer Carroll Faulkner partnered with the Ward County team on their technical plan. He identified federal grant money that is available to build the infrastructure. However, the application scoring mechanism and the way that national broadband data is collected puts Ward County at a disadvantage. He shared "Texas doesn't have a statewide plan, and the FCC mapping looked like connections were better than the speeds at which they were validated. We lose lots of federal dollars because of that."

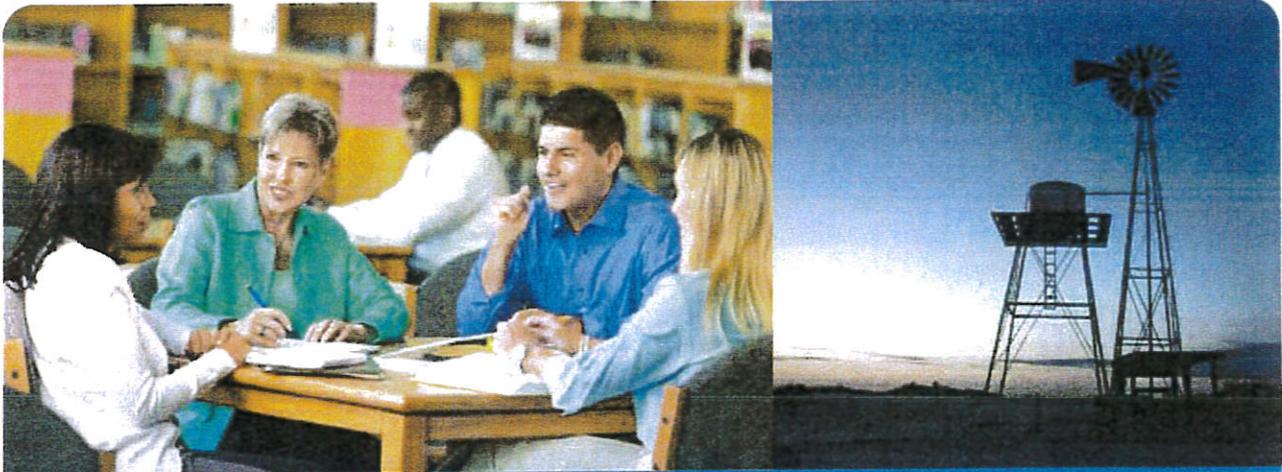


CARROLL FAULKNER

When the CARES Act was announced, the Economic Development Administration's regional office in Austin was allocated \$220M for grants. Grants from the Economic Development Administration typically go for water plants or roadways, but broadband was added to the list with this round. The Ward County community has been awarded a \$1.5M grant and raised a local match of \$600K. They plan to develop a public-private partnership with a private entity that wants to build and operate the system. The City of Monahans will own the system, and generate growing revenue for the city. The team is optimistic to break ground in early 2021. And Teresa Burnett can't wait to have a stable video connection as she recruits businesses to Ward County.

"Broadband internet used to be a luxury, and it used to be something not everybody had. You used it for online ordering or gaming. But it's not a luxury anymore. It's a necessity everyone ought to have in their household, their business, and their community."

TERESA BURNETT



Steps Communities Can Take to Improve Broadband Availability

Policymakers and other stakeholders can support community coalitions in their pursuit of securing broadband. Here is a sample process for bringing broadband internet to rural communities.

1

Establish a vision. Community members first need to pull together to establish a vision for what broadband access for all citizens will mean for them. Community anchor organizations engage and collaborate at this stage to activate their networks and accelerate involvement. There may be a community committee established with formal meetings, or joint accountability to drive the collaborative process of securing broadband.

2

Conduct a current state analysis. Review broadband maps for the community and assess available broadband services to understand the baseline service available.

3

Survey community members to understand goals, current state, and willingness to invest at different levels. Map the constituent groups you want to survey, and make person-to-person connections to achieve response targets.

4

Verify existing maps. Many counties have maps of the service that is provided in name, but what's true on the ground is often different. Sometimes it's the impact of terrain that makes the difference, and sometimes the unit for maps is too big for accurate reporting. Verifying broadband availability can be done in several ways, including speed tests, community surveys, public comment, and field validations of telecommunications infrastructure.

5

Develop a technology plan. There are an endless number of options on how to connect a community and provide all citizens with broadband. Identify partners to develop a thorough and efficient plan to connect across all sectors of the community. A critical and often overlooked step is measuring the current and future demand for broadband among residents, businesses, and community anchor institutions, and ensuring the plan meets these needs.

6

Activate partnerships. There are many players in the broadband ecosystem. Listen to and learn from diverse stakeholders groups and network with other communities to inform productive partnerships.

Expanding broadband into sparsely populated areas often produces low or zero return on investment for the private sector. This is due to significantly higher deployment costs, lengthier middle-mile networks, or challenging terrain. Partnerships can bridge this gap by bringing multiple assets together to successfully expand broadband access and adoption. A partnership among entities of all types, public, private, and non-profit, can deliver profitable and reliable service to rural Texans, while addressing economic challenges by sharing capital costs and enhancing revenue potential.

7

Take Action. It is a collective effort. Counties, Councils of Governments (COGs), workforce boards, companies, foundations, and the state are all resources. Work together to secure funds to incentivize buildout or reduce barriers that often discourage broadband deployment.

Awareness and urgency for improving broadband have reached unprecedented levels with the global pandemic. There is increasing support for partnerships and build-out through a combination of support from federal grants, state funding, corporate pledges, and local philanthropy. Now is the time.

8

Promote broadband benefits. Engage people in identifying ways that broadband will impact their lives. Engage with realtors, chambers of commerce, business and governmental users, students and parents. Map impacts and investments that make sense. **Share your story!** Enable others to learn from your success and challenges as they pursue their own process.

9

Learn, adapt, and replicate. Now that you've established these collaborative relationships across your community, what other issues do you want to take on? How can your success with broadband inform a bigger strategic plan for the growth of your community? Share the impact with your legislators and help them to see the new frontier for investment and engagement in rural Texas.

Policy Recommendations

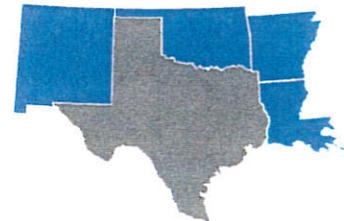
Governor Abbott has established a Broadband Development Council that completes an annual report each November. Policy recommendations from the [2020 report](#) include the following:

- Help educate community leaders and establish an Office of Broadband to be a single point of contact to direct efforts statewide, and to facilitate the development of the statewide Broadband Plan.
- Texas should establish a state Broadband Plan that:
 - Defines goals and objectives
 - Identifies steps to achieve them
 - Helps guide state investments
 - Provides a baseline against which to measure progress
 - Provides a framework for local planning efforts

Texas is one of only six states without a broadband plan. Yes, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma have broadband plans.

State legislators can support the development of local plans that:

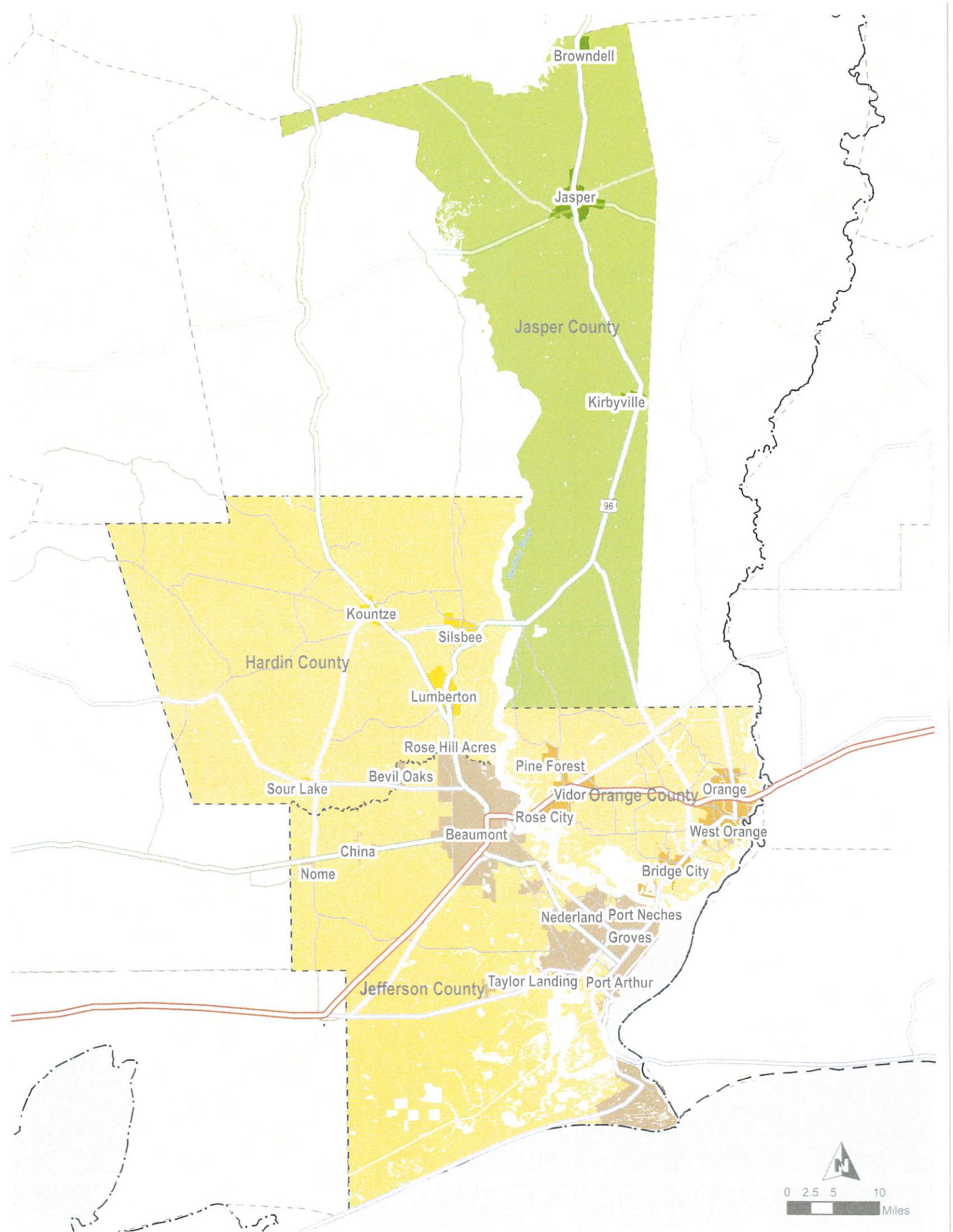
- Help educate community leaders and residents, putting them in a better position to work with providers to expand and accelerate broadband.
- Engage stakeholders with a wide range of interests to inform the plan's scope and scale. The process itself benefits the community by building the shared vision, buy-in, and relationships to develop sustainable solutions for the area, whether the solution is broadband or any other common good.



"Leaders across the state are working to organize their communities around broadband access, and have demonstrated time and time again the dogged determination we Texans pride ourselves on. With a state broadband plan and a dedicated office, Texas can amplify the good work already being done at the local level and take great strides toward getting all Texans connected."

ELLEN RAY, CHAIR OF TEXAS RURAL FUNDERS





Browndell

Jasper

Jasper County

Kirbyville

96

Kountze

Silsbee

Hardin County

Lumberton

Rose Hill Acres

Bevil Oaks

Sour Lake

China

Nome

Pine Forest

Vidor

Orange County

Orange

Rose City

West Orange

Beaumont

Bridge City

Nederland

Port Neches

Groves

Jefferson County

Taylor Landing

Port Arthur

