

Broadband Infrastructure: Invest in the Future

Rural Broadband Is Infrastructure

Numerous lawmakers agree on a bipartisan basis that rural broadband is a critical component of our nation's infrastructure system. Just as ports, highways, bridges and airports are important to our economic future, so are the digital highways that allow e-commerce to flow across our country. Unlike urban areas that benefit from large populations, rural areas lag behind in broadband infrastructure due to difficult terrain and very low populations.

Remove Unnecessary Barriers

- Duplicative government permits that are costly and time consuming to navigate represent a major barrier to broadband deployment.
- Requiring better coordination among federal agencies for broadband projects, expediting use of existing federal rights-of-way, and allowing states to conduct reviews for federal lands would allow providers to put more resources toward deployment while respecting the importance of environmental and other reviews.
- Ensuring reasonable rates, terms, and conditions for pole access would speed network deployment while respecting the rights of pole owners.

Prevent Overbuilding

- With many rural areas lacking the business case for even one broadband provider to operate without federal support, we must take great care not to spend scarce federal dollars on multiple, competing networks in the same area.
- Infrastructure dollars directed toward rural broadband deployment should be coordinated with existing federal broadband programs at both USDA and the FCC to prevent costly duplication.
- Congress should also resist involving more agencies in supporting broadband deployment, as USDA and the FCC already have the expertise in place to quickly deploy large quantities of federal dollars for support of rural broadband.

The Future is Fiber

- When allocating resources for broadband, Congress should invest in technology that can be readily upgraded to deliver the fastest speeds over the long-term life of the asset being built, rather than supporting technologies that are cheaper to deploy now but unable to provide meaningful internet access over time.
- It is now unmistakably clear that all Americans need high-speed, symmetrical, and low-latency broadband capabilities that only fiber can deliver.
- The FCC has noted the essential nature of fiber to achievement of both national 5G goals and broader connectivity needs in rural America.
- NTCA encourages support for the *Serving Rural America Act* (H.R. 6456), which would establish an FCC-administered grant program that would support high-speed rural broadband connections and ensure coordination with other broadband programs.