

Connected Nation Texas

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WHAT IS BROADBAND?

Broadband Defined

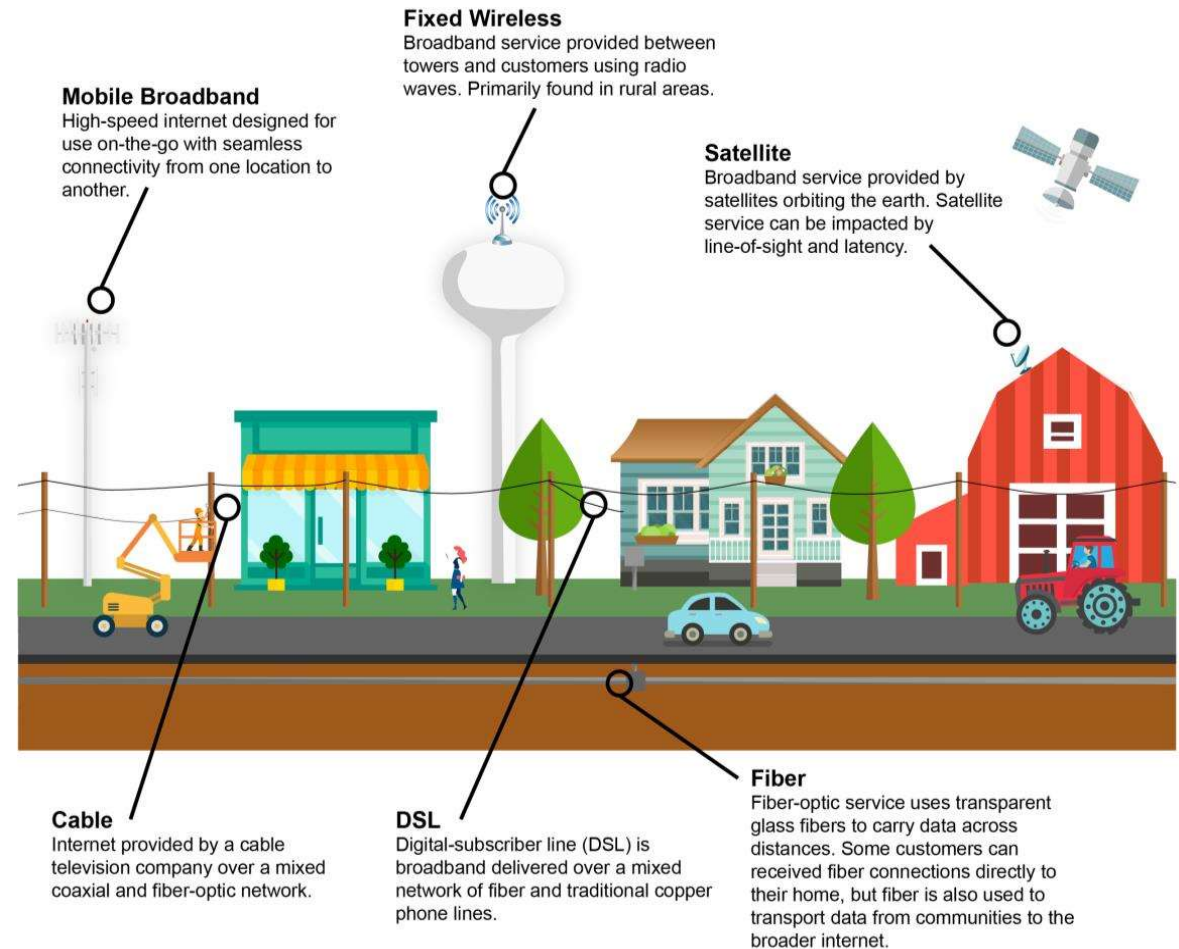


Broadband: More commonly referred to as high-speed internet access, technically, broadband is any kind of connection other than dial-up. Connection is always on.

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







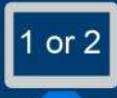
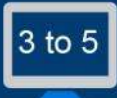

Mobile broadband: Wireless internet service designed for continuous use on a portable device

The current definition of broadband is 25/3 Mbps (set in 2015 by the FCC). The current average in the US is 195/69 Mbps.



Broadband Defined



	 10 Mbps	 25 Mbps	 1 Gbps
Estimated time to download 2 GB file:	 29 minutes	 11 minutes	 17 seconds
Devices Supported:	 1 or 2	 3 to 5	 10+
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



Access

Physical connection to high-speed infrastructure.

Adoption

Recognizing the value in broadband and subscribing either at home, work, and/or via public institutions.

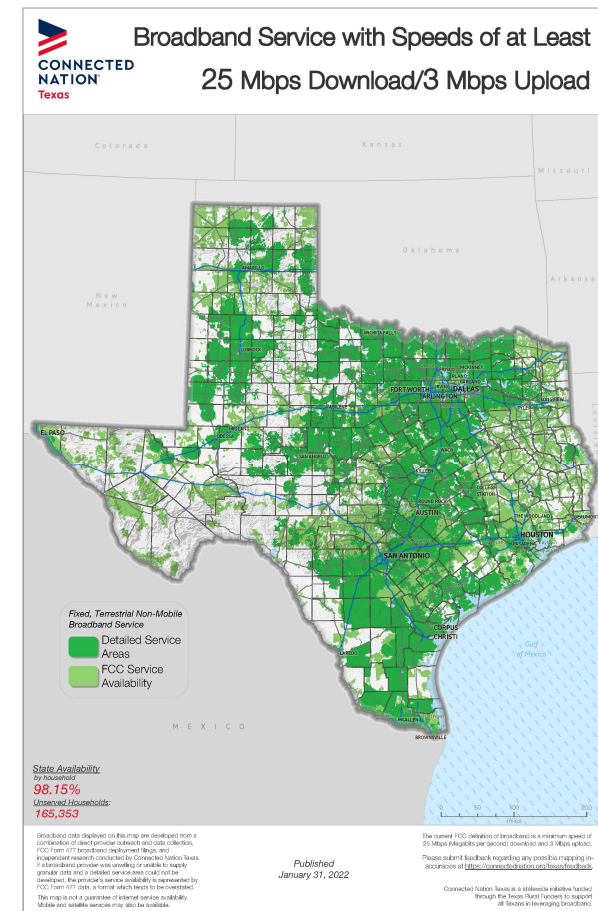
Use

Having the skills necessary to utilize and leverage broadband and related technologies across sectors.

Broadband Access in Texas



- 98.15% of households in Texas have access at 25/3, leaving 165,353 households unserved at the minimum speed considered broadband.
- Of note, 141,730 of these homes are in rural Texas.
- This means at least 478,595 Texans (409,061 who reside in rural Texas) do not have access to broadband at home to attend school, visit a doctor online, or work remotely.

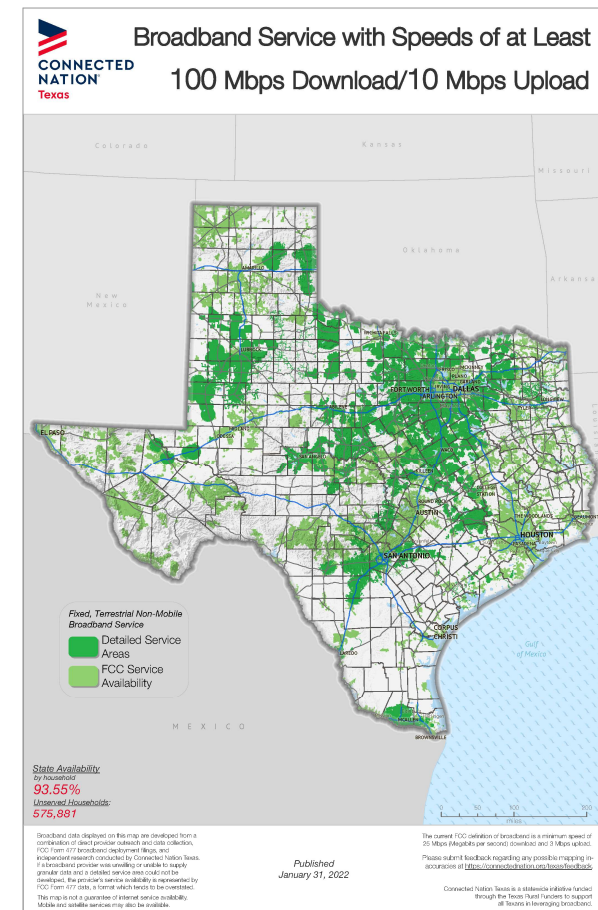


Broadband Access in Texas



- More than 575,000 households (over 1.6 million people) don't have speeds necessary for modern technology*, accessing critical internet resources
- Rural availability drops significantly as speeds increase, especially compared with overall Texas availability.
 - For rural areas, availability decreases from 95.12% at 25/3 speeds to 82.6% at 100/10 speeds.

*100/10 (minimum speed for new builds in IIJA is 100/20)

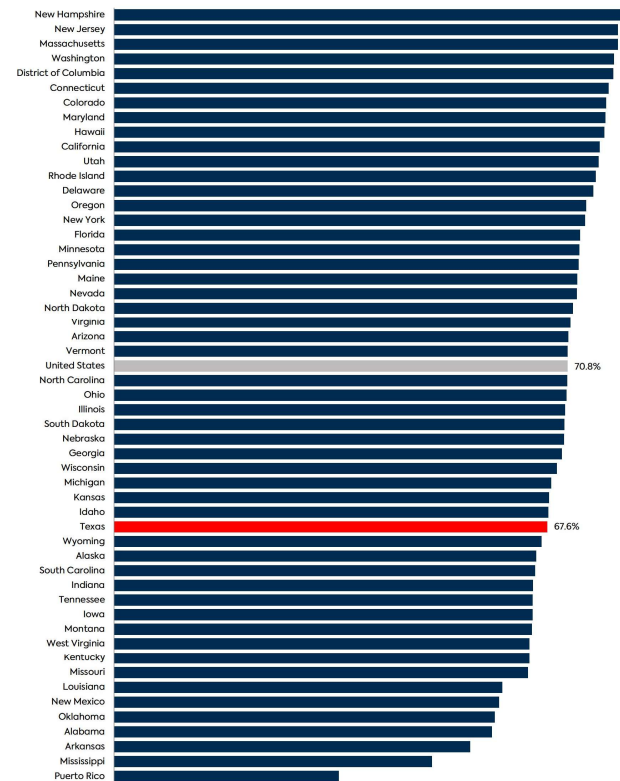


Broadband Adoption in Texas



- **32.4%** of Texas households do not subscribe to fixed, terrestrial broadband service such as DSL, cable, fixed wireless or fiber.
- Texas is **35th** 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)



2015-2019 American Community Survey

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 (1 st)
Brownsville (2 nd)
Tyler (4 th)
Harlingen (5 th)
Beaumont (18 th)
Bryan (33 rd)
Longview (68 th)
Killeen (71 st)
Mission (75 th)
Odessa (77 th)



INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act



On August 10, 2021, the U.S. Senate voted 69-30 to pass a \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure package that took months of negotiation. The House voted 228-206 to send the bill to the President's desk on November 5th and it was signed on November 15th. The infrastructure bill contains **\$65 billion in broadband funding**. Key elements of that funding include:

- \$42.45 billion for states to work with localities and service providers to improve broadband networks, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the Department of Commerce. **All states receive a minimum of \$100 million and larger states can expect to receive much more than that minimum amount**
- \$1 billion for middle mile funding
- \$14.2 billion to make the Emergency Broadband Benefit program permanent, changing the program's name to the Affordable Connectivity Fund (up from \$3.2 billion that funded EBB during the pandemic). The permanent benefit will subsidize \$30 per month of an eligible household's broadband costs
- **\$2.75 billion for Digital Equity Act competitive grant programs**



BROADBAND EQUITY, ACCESS, AND DEPLOYMENT (BEAD) PROGRAM

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



Who is Eligible for Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Grants?

Each of the 50 U.S. states is eligible for Equity, Access, and Deployment Program support as are the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

What are Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Grants For?

- broadband deployment to unserved and underserved areas,
- connecting eligible community anchor institutions,
- **data collection, broadband mapping, and planning,**
- installing internet or Wi-Fi infrastructure or providing reduced-cost broadband within a multifamily residential building (priority given to unserved households or locations with high concentrations of families with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty line),
- **broadband adoption (including providing affordable internet-capable devices), and**
- additional uses determined necessary by the NTIA.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



Broadband Network Quality of Service Requirement

Subgrantees must use the funds to deploy broadband networks that provide service:

- at a speed of not less than 100 megabits per second for downloads and 20 megabits per second for uploads;
- with a latency that is sufficiently low to allow reasonably foreseeable, real-time, interactive applications;
- with network outages that do not exceed, on average, 48 hours over any 365-day period; and
- provide access to broadband service to each customer served by the project that desires broadband service.

Low-Cost Plans

New networks will also be required to offer **at least one low-cost broadband service option** for eligible subscribers.

MAPS!



BEAD program money will not flow until the FCC has made public new maps showing where broadband service is and isn't available!

The FCC is in the process of updating its current broadband maps with more detailed and precise information on the availability of fixed and mobile broadband services. The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act, signed into law in March 2020, requires the FCC to change the way broadband data is collected, verified, and reported. Specifically, the FCC must collect and disseminate granular broadband service availability data (broadband maps) from wired, fixed-wireless, satellite, and mobile broadband providers.

To do this, the FCC is required to establish the **Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric** (a dataset of geocoded information for all broadband service locations, atop which broadband maps are overlaid) as the vehicle for reporting broadband service availability data. Additionally, the FCC must put forth specified requirements for service availability data collected from broadband providers, and it must create a **challenge process** to enable the submission of independent data challenging the accuracy of FCC broadband maps.

In November 2021, the FCC awarded the contract for Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric development to CostQuest Associates. But an unsuccessful bidder filed a post-award protest and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has 100 days to issue a decision on the protest. The FCC must wait on the GAO decision before moving forward on Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric development.

Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program



By mid-May 2022, NTIA will issue a notice of funding opportunity to states, informing them of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and the **minimum amount of financial support will be made available to each state**. At that time, NTIA will outline the requirements for applications, including standards, developed in consultation with the FCC, for how states will assess the capabilities and capacities of a prospective subgrantee (that is, any entity that receives BEAD grant funds from a state to carry out planning, broadband infrastructure deployment, data collection, broadband mapping, providing affordable internet-capable devices, etc.).

Networks built with BEAD program funds are required to offer low-cost service plans for low-income consumers. NTIA will consult with the FCC to create a website that allows a consumer to determine if they are eligible to receive a federal or state broadband service subsidy or for a low-income plan on a BEAD-supported network.



AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM



Affordable Connectivity Program

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is now the Affordable Connectivity Program

How does this affect consumers?

The biggest change is that the **monthly subsidy is being reduced from \$50 to \$30 per month** for most participants. (Individuals living on Tribal lands will continue to receive a \$75 monthly subsidy under the ACP.)

Individuals currently enrolled in the EBB should automatically be enrolled in the new ACP program by their current service provider. However, there are some exceptions to this rule.

- Households that qualified for the EBB by meeting the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's Covid-19 program will need to requalify for the ACP. This only specifically applies to Covid-19 programs; enrollment in other low-income programs does not require individuals to requalify for the ACP.
- Participants in the EBB who qualified based on “substantial loss of income due to job loss” will be expected to re-apply to the ACP.



Affordable Connectivity Program

ACP has expanded access as compared to the EBB

- ACP eligibility rules allow individuals at or below 200 percent of the poverty level to enroll in the ACP. Under the EBB, eligibility had been limited to individuals at or below 135 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Under the ACP, unlike the EBB, individuals enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) now automatically qualify to participate.
- The ACP also allows individuals to qualify based on their participation in Tribal assistance programs like Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Under the EBB, participation in these programs was not sufficient to automatically qualify.



Affordable Connectivity Program

What changes for providers?

While new providers wishing to opt in to participating in ACP must currently be delivering services to end users, they are no longer required to demonstrate that they were providing services of December 1, 2020. This change **greatly expands the number of providers able to participate in ACP as compared to EBB, allowing for more nontraditional and newer providers to participate in the program.**

Participating providers are prohibited from:

- Preventing eligible households from participating due to previously missing a payment. Even if the household has been delinquent in the past, they are still allowed to participate in the ACP and providers must provide services.
- Charging early termination fees for ACP subscribers who decide to terminate their contracts early.
- Requiring a credit check as part of a consumer's ACP application.
- Applying the ACP benefit to a household bill in a less-than-timely manner. This is to prevent consumers from experiencing service interruptions due to perceived non-payment that is really just a delay in applying the ACP benefit to the consumer's bill.
- Inappropriately upselling and down-selling services.
- Preventing existing customers from applying for the ACP.
- Imposing any restriction on ACP recipients that prevents them from switching to another eligible ACP provider.

Questions?

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