



Broadband Expansion

The collective future of Pennsylvanians hinges on addressing the challenges to broadband expansion that are preventing access to opportunities and information to many of our residents.

Although the need for internet access continues to increase across the nation – as the backbone of business, and as a tool for education, health care, emergency services and other key parts of our everyday lives – broadband access continues to be recognized at all levels of government as one of the biggest hurdles of the 21st century. The pandemic has further exposed the lack of availability and the need of Pennsylvanians for high speed and reliable internet access for key parts of our everyday lives, especially with schools and businesses constantly adapting to changing norms as counties continue to navigate life after COVID-19. Even in places with access to broadband, counties are using the technology more than before, often leading to capacity issues.

But high speed and reliable internet access has become a necessity, and our communities cannot continue to wait for infrastructure that is critical to economic vitality and personal quality of life. Even agricultural work has become increasingly dependent on connectivity as technology is added to traditional farm equipment and new tools, such as drones, help improve productivity. Without broadband, a significant number of Pennsylvanians are missing access to opportunities, while rural areas in particular find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain residents and encourage business development.

Even before the pandemic, counties have been at the forefront of broadband expansion in the commonwealth and are continuing to develop partnerships and creative solutions that work to provide internet connectivity for their residents and better bandwidth capacity statewide. With the increased reliance on use of connectivity alongside federal, state and local investment in bridging the digital divide, counties have been exploring projects and ways to be leaders on expanding access. Counties can share their best practices and innovative

ideas, such as regional cooperative models, that have seen success in Pennsylvania and throughout the country, to create and build meaningful collaborative partnerships to ensure no Pennsylvanian gets left behind.

With the promise of billions of dollars in federal investment under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the development of the statewide Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, counties have come a long way in addressing internet connectivity, but these steps are just the beginning of implementing strategic, thoughtful approaches to ensuring all Pennsylvanians have the access they need and deserve. Federal, state and local governments, as well as the private sector, must continue to work together to deploy the resources and data needed to make meaningful progress on broadband expansion to all areas of the commonwealth, rural and urban. The health and future viability of our communities has an impact on the strength of our entire commonwealth. Broadband expansion is critical to move all Pennsylvanians forward together.

COUNTIES SUPPORT:

- Working together with federal, state, local and private stakeholders to develop strategies for successful broadband expansion that maximizes resources and minimizes overbuild.
- Identifying successful approaches and sharing best practices that can be replicated with other comparable communities.
- Partnering with higher education and research entities to leverage data, develop needed informational resources and build on technological innovations that aid in advancement of broadband infrastructure deployment and service provision.
- Identifying funding resources and partnering with stakeholders to ensure deployment of resources are responsibly allocated to best fit the areas of greatest need.