



From the Office of the President & CEO

Fiber Broadband Association
3050 K Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20007, USA

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Dear FBA Members,

Today marks a historic moment for all Americans with the passing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal, that includes an enormous \$65B investment for broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas and adoption by in-need consumers. This is the largest single Federal investment in broadband, and it will enable communities across the country to invest in fiber as their critical infrastructure, delivering jobs, economic development, online education, remote healthcare, public safety, smart grid modernization and a path to future services, such as 5G. This investment will not only greatly improve nearly every aspect of our lives today but will help ensure digital equity for generations to come. I want to thank our members for joining us on zoom calls with dozens of Congressional offices and for your efforts to help ensure this legislation gained bipartisan support. I also want to thank the FBA lobbyist team of Steve Perry and Kim Bayliss of Perry Bayliss, our regulatory chief counsel, Tom Cohen of Kelley Drye and our Public Policy Chair Ben Moncrief of C Spire, Policy Board Liaison Joanne Hovis of CTC and all the members of the FBA Public Policy Committee for their leadership, expertise, and passion as we worked to drive this legislation over the goal line.

As President Biden signs this bill into law, the clock will start at NTIA to implement the \$42.5B Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD), as they will have 6 months to develop the program guidelines and issue the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The issuing of the NOFO is contingent on the FCC releasing the updated broadband location mapping as required by infrastructure law and per the Broadband Data Act, which was signed into law last year.

The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act:

- Requires the FCC to collect granular service availability data from wired, fixed wireless, and satellite broadband providers.
- Sets strong parameters for service availability data collected from mobile broadband providers to ensure accuracy.
- Permits the FCC to consider whether to collect verified coverage data from state, local, and tribal governments, as well as from other entities.
- Creates a process for consumers; state, local, and tribal governments; and other groups to challenge FCC maps with their own data and require the FCC to determine how to structure that process without making it overly burdensome on challengers.

- Establishes a crowdsourcing process that will allow the public to participate in data collection.
- Strengthens enforcement against providers that knowingly or recklessly submit materially inaccurate broadband data.
- Requires the FCC to use the newly created maps when making new awards of broadband funding.

The \$65B in broadband infrastructure funding has a number of programs that will be administered by NTIA, the Rural Utilities Service and the FCC as follows:

- \$42.45B BEAD program will be overseen by NTIA which in turn will make grants to the states based on their number of unserved locations to fund broadband network deployment, adoption, and other broadband-related programs.
 - At least \$100 million is reserved for each of the 50 states.
- \$14.2B Affordable Connectivity Program which the FCC will oversee, and which will extend and modify the current Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and provide a \$30/month broadband subsidy for low-income and other in-need consumers.
- \$2.75B Digital Equity Program overseen by NTIA to ensure that “individuals and communities have the information technology capacity that is needed for full participation in the society and economy of the United States.”
- \$2B in additional funding for the RUS ReConnect programs.
- \$2B in additional funding for the Tribal Broadband Program, which NTIA oversees, and which will make its first awards shortly.
- \$1B for a new middle-mile program overseen by NTIA to build a high-speed backbone for communities, businesses, and anchor institutions.
- \$0.6B appropriation for tax exempt Private Activity Bonds (PABs), which states, and local governments can use to enhance broadband deployments.

Next Steps:

While the passing of the bipartisan infrastructure bill is a monumental milestone, our work is far from done. We now need to move our focus from Congress to NTIA and the state and local level. Only 26 states currently have broadband offices, and other states have a designate, which is typically a multi-agency broadband task force. And, while 40 states currently have broadband programs, these state broadband programs vary widely. The Fiber Broadband Association is currently developing a playbook to outline best practices from the top state broadband programs to help NTIA and to assist states in accelerating the availability and efficient deployment of



the broadband infrastructure funds. FBA will be working closely with both NTIA and the FCC in 2022, and we anticipate a high level of activity as the NOFO is under development, with no shortage of pushback from industry groups that view fiber as a threat.

In addition, the Fiber Broadband Association is working with the state broadband and workforce development offices in states to quickly scale our nationally accredited fiber optic technician training program (OpTIC) so that our industry has the boots on the ground to get fiber installed to every American.

While we are over a year away from seeing this broadband infrastructure funding deployed, there is no need to wait for starting fiber broadband projects. Billions (\$) of broadband funding has already been appropriated and is available today, as state and local government use their block grant ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding and the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. In addition, the FCC is beginning to release \$9B from Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund program, RUS is accepting applications for grants and loans that should total over \$1B for the Reconnect program, and NTIA will award \$1B in Tribal funding and almost \$300M for public-private partnerships.

We will need the assistance of all our Fiber Broadband Association members as we work at both the state and federal levels to ensure this funding is deployed for fiber projects. As an industry, we have a once in a generation opportunity to accelerate the deployment of fiber broadband networks to ensure digital equity and enable every community to leverage economic and societal benefits that only fiber can deliver.

Sincerely,



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