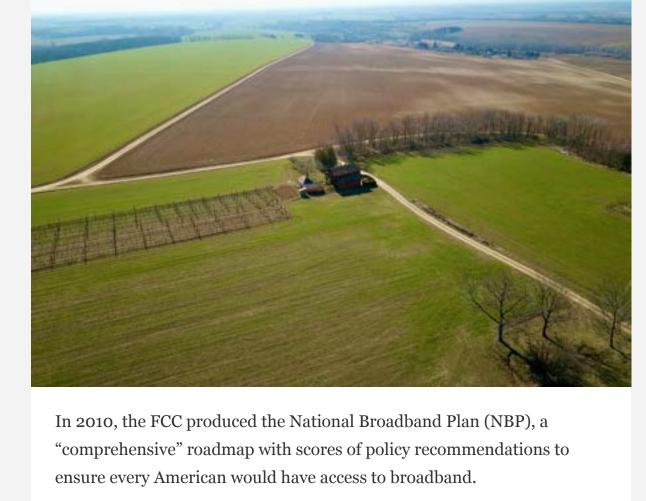
## Co-ops Connect FYI By Jonathan Chambers • Mar 28, 2025

Smart Brevity® count: 2.5 mins...726 words

Is History Going to Repeat Itself for

## Rural Broadband Access?



• In the decade that followed, nothing was more damaging to rural broadband service than the National Broadband Plan.

• The NBP became the basis of the FCC's reforms to its universal

What does the National Broadband Plan have to do with **BEAD?** 

With BEAD, the Trump Administration is at risk of repeating the

**Historical Context** 

mistakes of the Obama Administration.

service programs.



**Three points** of note regarding the 2010 landscape when the NBP was published: • Cable broadband was already available to 100 million urban/suburban households, **and** cable providers were rolling out

**without** any government involvement.

behind by the time the money was spent.

rural America.

behind.

generations behind.

DOCSIS 3.0 – a new standard that delivered 100 Mbps downstream

• The FCC budgeted \$45 billion over 10 years to achieve the rural 4/1

Mbps standard through its Universal Service High-Cost Fund. The

FCC then began spending tens of billions on subsidies to incumbent

telecommunications companies using 4/1 Mbps — as opposed to 100 Mbps downstream — as the baseline standard. 4/1 Mbps as a standard for rural America was already two generations behind when it was adopted; it was *three* generations

Fast-forward 10 years to 2020, when COVID hit: Rural American

households, lacking access to 100 Mbps, were dramatically unprepared to

work from home, attend school online, and participate in the economy.

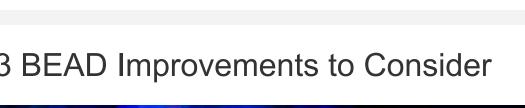
• You can trace the unpreparedness directly back to the NBP's goals for rural Americans. The bottom line: With BEAD, there is a risk history will repeat itself, particularly if the

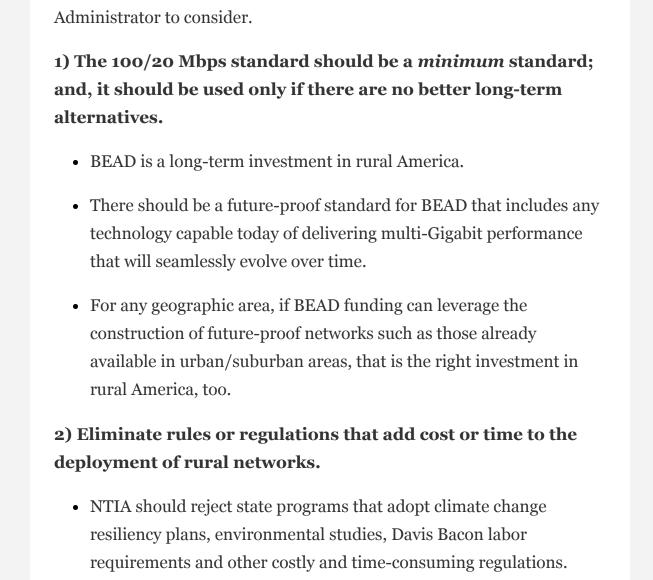
term "technological neutrality" is used to justify substandard service for

• The 100/20 Mbps BEAD standard already is two generations

• By the time BEAD money is spent, 100/20 Mbps will be three

3 BEAD Improvements to Consider





Yesterday, the Senate Commerce Committee held a confirmation hearing

I would propose three specific improvements to BEAD for the new NTIA

for the new NTIA Administrator, Arielle Roth.

**My recommendations for Nominee Roth:** 

• In my experience, the ones who truly care about getting broadband decisions right are the people affected by decisions, i.e., local officials.

• Redoing a state application process may delay some states on the

front end, but it will save considerable time in the long run.

3) Local input should not only be considered; it should be

dispositive.

how BEAD is spent in their counties, including giving county councils a veto on awards to sub-grantees. • If county officials does not approve a plan for their county, they

• I would give county councils a leading role in the decisions about

should be given the proportionate BEAD allocation for their county to get the job done themselves. In the coming weeks, I will lay out more specific details about each of these suggestions. I would welcome any ideas you might care to share.

Feel free to forward this **Co-ops Connect FYI** to colleagues who want to stay in the know on all things broadband! Subscribe to Conexon's weekly newsletter <u>here</u>.

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