

RURAL BROADBAND INSIGHTS FOR CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



WITH PARTNER JONATHAN CHAMBERS

# Co-ops Connect FYI

By Jonathan Chambers • Apr 17, 2025

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## An Open Letter to Secretary Lutnick: The 'B' in BEAD Should Stand for Build...



*“As I think of DOGE cutting things, I don’t know about elsewhere, but we actually build things here. You can’t cut your way to a new road. You can’t cut your way to a new bridge. You can’t cut your way to a new air traffic control system. We’re actually going to build in this Department.”*

**–Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy**

April 11, 2025 Speech at FAA Tech Center

**On the topic of broadband,** Commerce Secretary Lutnick can give a similarly resonant speech.

Now, I’m not much of a speechwriter, but I’d offer these words by way of suggestion for his remarks:

“You can’t cut your way to new broadband infrastructure. We’re actually going to build in this Department. In the 1930s and 1940s, local rural communities built the electric infrastructure that has lasted for more than 80 years. We are going to help local rural communities build the next generation of broadband infrastructure. Which also will last for decades to come.

**We will follow these principles.**

**First,** BEAD is an investment in the future of rural America, not a subsidy program.

- The purpose of BEAD funds is to build infrastructure in underinvested rural areas.
- Let’s build **now**.

**Second,** building infrastructure creates American jobs – construction jobs, manufacturing jobs, and jobs enabled by advanced communications networks.

- Build America, Buy America provisions are already in place for BEAD, which means fiber-optic cables, duct, poles, connectivity equipment, and electronics are already being made in America.
- Let’s create more jobs **now**.

**Third**, we will invest for the long term. Americans' tax dollars should only be used for assets that have a lifespan of at least 30 years.

- Spending money more efficiently means investing in infrastructure that is built to last.
- Let's invest for the long term ***now***.

**Fourth**, we should not shortchange rural homes and businesses. Rural broadband infrastructure should be comparable to the broadband infrastructure in urban and suburban America.

- When COVID shut down the country, rural areas were hit harder *because* the broadband infrastructure was inadequate.
- Let's not repeat that mistake by underinvesting on my watch.

**Finally**, we should let local communities decide what their communities need.

- Who should make the decisions as to whether fiber, coaxial cable, fixed wireless, or satellite are the best use of public funds?
- The NTIA team in Washington? The broadband office of the state capitol? Or the people who live and work in rural America?

**I think everyone knows the answer to that one."**

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Secretary Lutnick, like you, I grew up in the 1960s on the North Shore of Long Island. I have spent my career building broadband infrastructure. The past decade, I've only built in rural America. If you want help ensuring the buildout of rural infrastructure (or wordsmithing your speech), give me a holler.

*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 [here](#).*

