

RURAL BROADBAND INSIGHTS FOR CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



WITH PARTNER JONATHAN CHAMBERS

Co-ops Connect FYI

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Know Your Numbers: Unserved and Underserved Locations in Electric Co-op Service Territories



Over the past couple of months, Mike Byrne and I have been reviewing and sorting the figures from the new National Broadband Map (NBM). When we were at the FCC, Mike created the first NBM (not the data, but the map), and we've been involved in multiple iterations ever since.

I will share some of the data and our observations here in the coming weeks.

What I'll share is based on the first version that was published at the end of the year.

- While the FCC processed challenges to the location fabric and collected challenges to the service availability claims of ISPs, **neither of those issues is yet relevant.**
- The FCC will use the **revised data fabric in the next broadband data collection** (collected by March 1)
- An updated map will likely be issued in June.

The big picture:

The service availability challenge will not be reflected in the maps until the end of the year, if then.

Top Line Numbers



The FCC counts over 112 million Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSLs), which are structures that the FCC considers could be served by broadband.

- As I have written previously, **the FCC does not count as BSLs** housing units, most businesses, schools, libraries, government buildings, anchor institutions, churches, agriculture, trailer parks, or many locations that would normally count in rural America.
- It counts structures in a manner that has **no correlation to the Census, nor any peer review**. So, there's that.
- Of the 112 million BSLs, **over 6 million lack** any wireline or licensed fixed wireless provider reporting availability of 25/3 Mbps and are considered unserved.
- **An additional 6 million lack** any wireline or licensed fixed wireless provider reporting availability of 100/20 Mbps and are considered underserved.

The allocation of \$42.5 billion from the BEAD program is a state's percentage of unserved locations only, while all underserved locations are eligible for funding.

By our calculations:

- Of the 6 million unserved BSLs, **3 million are located in 767 electric co-op service territories.**
- Of the additional 6 million underserved BSLs, **another 2.5 million are located in co-op territories.**

Georgia, As An Example



To provide an example of just one state, here are the statistics from Georgia.

Over two-thirds of the unserved and underserved locations are in co-op service territories.

- (In the table below, ***underserved*** includes all locations lacking 100/20 Mbps.)

Name	BSL_Locations	Unserved_locs	Underserved_locs
GEORGIA	3,693,447	308,506	430,909
North Georgia Electric Member Corp	87793	8528	13989
Rayle Electric Membership Corp	14898	5228	5938
Planters Electric Member Corp	13468	4325	4886
Pataula Electric Member Corp	3392	1995	2396
Colquitt Electric Members Corp	44569	17657	22093
Upson County Electric Member Corp	7160	2066	2679
Carroll Electric Member Corp	51167	10170	14746
Walton EMC	89102	7259	10886
Greystone Power Corp	99068	2654	4804
Hart Electric Membership Corp	32961	8470	10446
Altamaha Electric Member Corp	12849	5861	7603
Sumter Electric Member Corp	13724	7691	9268
Snapping Shoals EMC	87015	3333	5768
Central Georgia Electric Member Corp	53466	8878	12473
Irwin Electric Member Corp	9464	4452	5190
Flint Electric Membership Corp	74205	5625	9092
Satilla Rural Electric Member Corp	34193	14590	15996
Grady Electric Member Corp	22154	5373	6688
Washington Electric Member Corp	11719	6369	6759
Mitchell Electric Member Corp	26781	7277	7929
Ocmulgee Electric Member Corp	7325	3952	4947
Jefferson Electric Member Corp	27986	4899	5567
Lamar Electric Membership Corp	15188	6634	7839
Sawnee Electric Member Corp	135638	1265	2914
Habersham Electric Member Corp	27906	3743	5817
Blue Ridge Mountain EMC	31254	5547	11673
Jackson Electric Member Corp	171001	9914	17199
Cobb Electric Membership Corp	142720	234	804
Three Notch Electric Member Corp	9795	1460	1556
Canoochee Electric Member Corp	14488	3629	4810
Little Ocmulgee Electric Member Corp	6807	2691	5485
Excelsior Electric Member Corp	14650	624	675
Oconee Electric Member Corp	10445	2318	5554
Okefenoke Rural Electric Member Corp	20332	3012	4523
Tri County Electric Membership Corp	16544	3616	4499
Slash Pine Electric Member Corp	3625	1894	2272
Amicalola Electric Member Corp	47662	11311	16789
Middle Georgia Electric Member Corp	4407	2490	3011
Coastal Electric Member Corp	15709	1434	2248
Coweta Fayette Electric Member Corp	54740	2360	3455
Tri State Electric Member Corp	13476	1321	3506

The Final Word



When estimating whether it is feasible to build a fiber network in your service territory, a co-op should take the potential BEAD funding into account.

- I expect that after removing RDOF census blocks and locations funded by the first and second rounds of the American Rescue Plan Act, there will be **fewer than 7 million unserved and underserved locations** eligible for funding.
- That would mean \$42.5 billion chasing 7 million places to build, or **over \$6,000 per location on average**.
- Conexon's average cost to build in rural America is **less than \$3,000 per location**.

Why it matters:

1. **There is enough money to build fiber** to all unserved and underserved locations.
2. **There will also be waste, fraud, and abuse** ([see January 20 edition](#)).

The big picture:

Know your numbers.

- According to the FCC's new map, in half of all co-op service territories in the country, at least one-third of the locations are unserved or underserved.
- In over 200 co-op service territories, more than half of the locations are unserved or underserved.
- BEAD contains sufficient funding to serve all your members.

The bottom line:

Some provider is going to receive BEAD funding for each unserved and underserved location in the country.

Who do you trust to bring fiber broadband to all your members? AT&T, Comcast, Windstream, Charter, CenturyLink, Cox?

That would be a bad bet.

Bet instead on yourselves.

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