# NEXT CENTURY CITIES

## THE GUBERNATORIAL ISSUE

*February 2022*

## A LETTER TO YOUR GOVERNOR

**CONNECTING WITH AMERICA'S GOVERNORS ON BROADBAND PROGRAMS THAT COULD TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES**

## HELLO TO OUR NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**WELCOMING BRIAN DONOGHUE TO THE NEXT CENTURY CITIES TEAM**

## RECONVENING IN-PERSON

**NCC HOSTS THE FIRST REGIONAL CONVENING OF 2022 ON MARCH 3RD IN SOUTH BEND, INDIANA**

## MEMBER LISTENING SESSIONS

**NCC MEETS WITH PHILADELPHIA LEADERS AND CONNECTS LOCAL OFFICIALS WITH THE NTIA**

# WHAT'S INSIDE
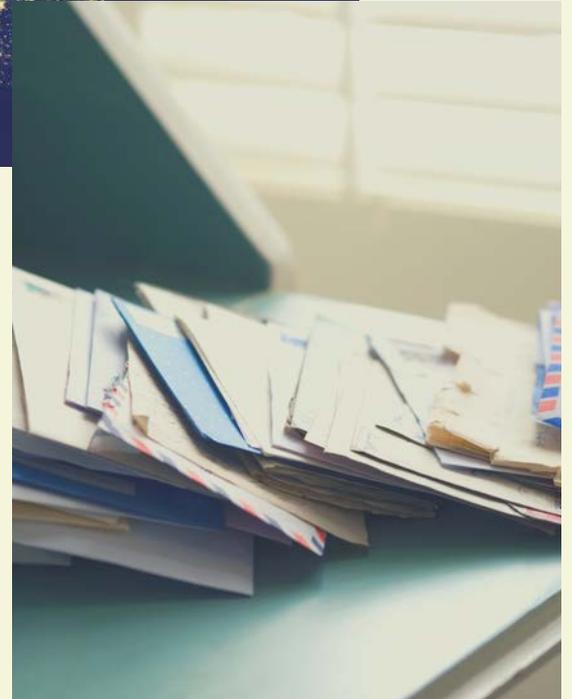
MADISON, WI

# CONNECTING WITH AMERICA'S GOVERNORS ON BROADBAND PROGRAMS THAT COULD TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

*by Corian Zacher and Lukas Pietrzak*

On February 28, 2022, Next Century Cities shared letters with governors across all 50 states supporting a renewed commitment to digital inclusion and broadband investments enabled by the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** ("IIJA").

The IIJA, passed by Congress and signed by President Biden in November 2021, allocated $1.2 trillion for federal, state, local, and Tribal projects to develop new and update aging infrastructure – roads, bridges, and broadband – from coast to coast.
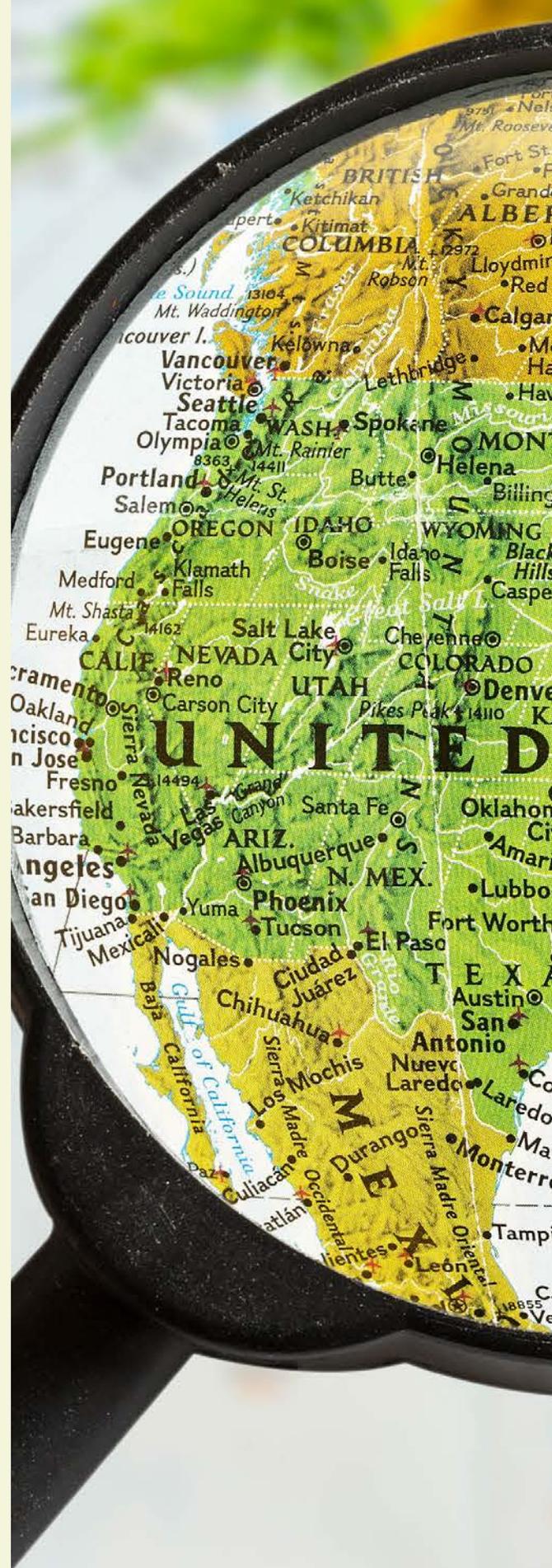
Within the $1.2 trillion, $65 billion is reserved to specifically support broadband access and adoption projects at the state and local levels. Of that funding, $45.45 billion will be distributed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration ("NTIA") to the states, Washington, D.C., and the territories. **The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment** ("BEAD") program will first distribute money to support planning and mapping. Once that phase is complete, states and localities can apply for additional funding to complete projects that target the most disconnected communities.

Continue reading **here.**

# Access the Letter to Your State Governor

*Click hyperlink below.*

Alabama (AL)

Alaska (AK)

Arizona (AZ)

Arkansas (AR)

California (CA)

Colorado (CO)

Connecticut (CT)

Delaware (DE)

Florida (FL)

Georgia (GA)

Hawaii (HI)

Idaho (ID)

Illinois (IL)

Indiana (IN)

Iowa (IA)

Kansas (KS)

Kentucky (KY)

Louisiana (LA)

Maine (ME)

Maryland (MD)

Massachusetts (MA)

Michigan (MI)

Minnesota (MN)

Mississippi (MS)

Missouri (MO)

Montana (MT)

Nebraska (NE)

Nevada (NV)

New Hampshire (NH)

New Jersey (NJ)

New Mexico (NM)

New York (NY)

North Carolina (NC)

North Dakota (ND)

Ohio (OH)

Oklahoma (OK)

Oregon (OR)

Pennsylvania (PA)

Rhode Island (RI)

South Carolina (SC)

South Dakota (SD)

Tennessee (TN)

Texas (TX)

Utah (UT)

Vermont (VT)

Virginia (VA)

Washington (WA)

West Virginia (WV)

Wisconsin (WI)

Wyoming (WY)

# WELCOMING

# BRIAN DONOGHUE

First, thanks to the Next Century Cities' network for the warm welcome. Before joining NCC, I served as Director of Civic Innovation for the City of South Bend,Indiana where I worked across two Mayoral administrations. Alongside a group of dedicated public servants and nonprofit practitioners, we built strong, sustainable partnerships to drive direct outcomes for residents. We expanded digital opportunities using collaborative programming, improved broadband infrastructure, and device distribution programs.

One key partnership from my time in South Bend involved working with the library and a local dark fiber nonprofit. Like other cities, our municipal efforts to bridge the digital divide started with bringing Internet to families who struggled with access to the current broadband infrastructure. We leveraged investments by collaborating with the founders of **South Bend Code School** to develop scholarship-funded programming for children and adults. None of our success would have been possible without South Bend community leaders convincing seven anchor institutions to prepay for ten years of subscription fees to get a dark fiber backbone built in the early 2000s.

As we move into a future where affordable at-home broadband is essential for participation in a digital society, it's important to acknowledge the uphill battle these types of community-based initiatives required long before distance learning and remote work became integral. I still live in South Bend and can see how that project and others improve the quality of life for residents. Efforts similar to those undertaken in our community have created platforms from which genuine efforts toward digital equity can be launched.

At Next Century Cities, I plan to help communities build from their strengths to capitalize on the unprecedented amount of attention and funding focused on bridging digital gaps for low-income residents. The **bi-partisan infrastructure bill** committed around $65 billion in broadband funding. Helping communities address decades of structural inequality through this infusion of funds is an incredibly exciting opportunity. I also want to acknowledge that this historic federal investment comes as a direct result of years of dedicated advocacy from organizations like NCC, our 200+ member municipalities, and partners like the Benton Institute.

I hope that my experience as a local official and community builder will help other local and state leaders prepare more inclusive broadband strategies and equip them to compete for federal funding. I am also looking forward to working with the NCC team and the group of passionate advocates to facilitate the state and local policy changes required to help permanently close the digital divide.

Finally, as COVID restrictions ease, I hope to meet you in your hometown to hear your challenges and success stories. NCC is working to connect cities across the country to foster collaboration that drives the best outcomes possible for residents. Local leaders can give each other a leg up as we address problems that are all too common regardless of geography.

You can reach me via email at **brian@nextcenturycities.org**. Together, we can amplify local voices in federal and state conversations about digital divides that are inherently local. That is vital to addressing digital inequities.

In partnership,

Brian
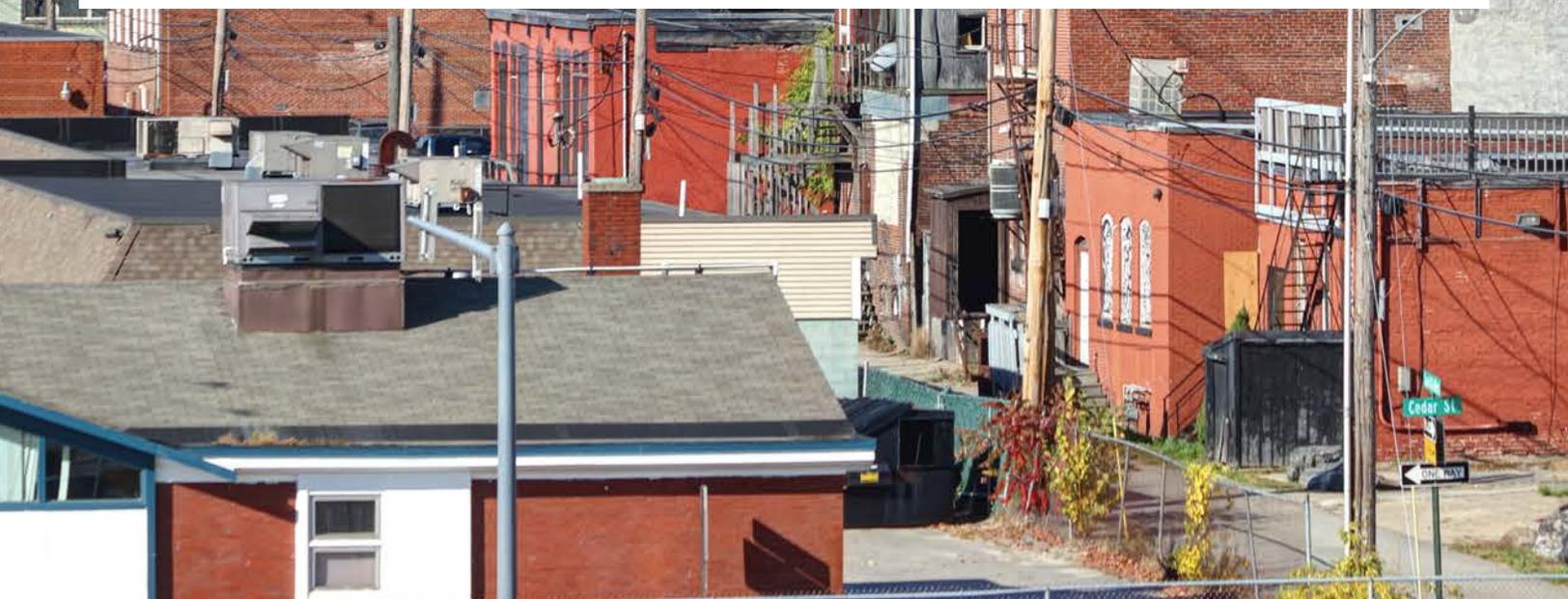
# MEET US IN SOUTH BEND

**TOGETHER WITH PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS & THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, IN**

Next Century Cities

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND

## Register Here

## MARCH 3, 2022
## 9 A.M. - 1 P.M. ET

**Local, state, and federal leaders will come together to identify community-based connectivity needs that should be addressed by the influx of federal and state broadband funding opportunities.**

- Registration | Coffee Break

- Introduction to Next Century Cities and The Pew Charitable Trusts

- Remarks from Mayor **James Mueller** @SBMayorMueller

- Welcome from South Bend, Indiana, CIO, **Denise Riedl** @DKLinn

- The City of Bloomington's Digital Equity Plan and Local Policy Developments from **Rick Dietz**, Director of IT @rickdietz

- NCC Municipalities are Changing Resident Broadband Outcomes by **Brian Donoghue** and **Corian Zacher**, Next Century Cities @corianzac

- Best Practices in States Nationwide with **Kathryn de Wit** & **Jake Varn**, The Pew Charitable Trusts @km_dewit @JakeVarn

- How a Regional Mapping Initiative Evolved Into a Statewide Collaboration by **Tom Bliss**, Executive Director, Southeast Nebraska Development District

- Insights from a State Broadband Office by **Earnie Holtrey**, Program Manager for the Director of the Indiana Broadband Office of Lt. Governor @INBroadband

- Incorporating Local Insights into Federal Policy by **Ryan Johnston**, Next Century Cities @ryjulio35

- Lunch Keynote: How Federal Broadband Funding Can Help Accelerate Local Broadband Goals | **Andy Berke**, Special Representative for Broadband at NTIA and former mayor of Chattanooga, TN @AndyBerke

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA


GULFPORT, MS


HARTFORD, CT


MISSOULA, MT

# WHY BROADBAND DATA STILL NEEDS TO BE A PRIORITY

**By Francella Ochillo**

It's an exciting time to work on broadband. States and municipalities that have been desperate for resources started making announcements on how Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding could power broadband programs for their residents within days of it becoming law. However, the promise of new investments did not diminish the threat of unreliable data influencing state and federal grant awards this year.

Inaccurate broadband data can sabotage well-intentioned broadband programs. It continues to compromise broadband deployment strategies and funding prospects for adoption programs in municipalities throughout the United States and its territories.

In May 2021, Next Century Cities published a report, **Broadband Mapping Across the U.S.: Local, State, and Federal Methods & Contradictions**, detailing local, county, and state efforts to collect their own data. Last month, I published an article, "**Measuring Broadband Should No Longer Be Binary**," on some of the fundamental flaws with how the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) evaluates broadband access. We cannot let up on this issue.

The FCC is working to create more granular maps, most recently reported in its **February 22nd public notice**. Still, local and state officials need to be specific about which metrics need to be included in federal data sets, especially those related to affordability and adoption barriers, and steadfast in reaching out to the **FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau** to share insights. It has been reenergized with new leadership, Bureau Chief Alejandro Roark. NCC's Policy Counsel Ryan Johnston can also help identify opportunities for member municipalities to share insights or to schedule a meeting.

# NATIONAL BROADBAND RESOURCE HUB

**a free online community for government leaders and nonprofits working to expand broadband access and affordability**

The **National Broadband Resource Hub** is a philanthropically-backed, independent resource for state and local broadband offices and nonprofits. It includes case studies and broadband resources. The platform will eventually include a free Help Desk for consultations and events for local leaders to share best practices and access resources for evaluating public-private partnerships.

Collaboration among leaders at all levels of government is critical to connect everyone in the United State with the tools, skills, and service they need to get online. Local officials are often the first line of communication with people who are disconnected. NCC supports state practices that bolster local efforts, promote information sharing, and convene community leaders. By continuously highlighting local challenges and opportunities, NCC provides an important perspective that respects the balance between technological development and human impact.

With more broadband resources available for local leaders than ever before, the Broadband Resource Hub is a great way to keep up with community initiatives happening nationwide. Whether getting started on a new initiative or sharing your own expertise, there are plenty of opportunities to plug into broadband projects in all corners of the country and meet advocates tackling important issues in innovative and thoughtful ways.

# NEXT CENTURY CITIES HOSTS A LISTENING SESSION WITH DIGITAL LITERACY ADVOCATES IN PENNSYLVANIA

"Consider best practices in similarly-situated communities nationwide."

On Tuesday, February 8, 2022, the Next Century Cities team met with members of the **Philadelphia Digital Literacy Alliance** to identify digital literacy success stories and challenges faced by residents across the city. The Alliance is a coalition of institutional stakeholders working to alleviate Philadelphia's digital divide.

Juliet Fink-Yates of the City of **Philadelphia's Office of Innovation and Technology** offered an in-depth perspective of the state of connectivity and action in Philadelphia.

She also gave an overview of the recently passed **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** and how it impacts efforts to advance digital equity in Pennsylvania communities.

In light of upcoming federal and state broadband funding, Next Century Cities urged members to consider best practices in similarly situated communities nationwide and reiterated the importance of identifying quantitative and qualitative data points that could make grant funding applications more competitive.

# LISTENING
## TO MEMBERS

**BY RYAN JOHNSTON**

When the **Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act** ("IIJA") was signed into law, the **National Telecommunications and Information Administration** ("NTIA") was tasked with distributing 48 billion dollars to expand broadband availability nationwide. Since then, the NTIA has hosted webinars and listening sessions to help state and local officials understand how these new programs can support local broadband plans.

On February 22nd, NCC hosted a listening session with NTIA officials and local and state leaders representing 24 municipalities and three states in attendance. NTIA's Broadband Program Specialist Julia Pulidindi explained each program's objectives and highlighted the nuances of particular interest to state and local officials.

Continue reading **here.**

LOCAL OFFICIALS URGED THE NTIA TO BE EXPLICIT WITH STATES THAT IIJA FUNDING SHOULD BE USED TO SUPPORT URBAN AND RURAL AREAS.

# NCC Hosts Panel Discussion with Local Government Officials at the 2022 Net Inclusion Conference



The Net Inclusion Conference is a marquee event from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance. Every year, the organization works with a volunteer committee of local digital inclusion advocates to host a three-day conference for digital inclusion practitioners nationwide.

This year, program managers, community leaders, broadband advocates, and others descended into Portland, Oregon, to celebrate monumental changes in the broadband landscape since the last time that the 2020 conference in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Francella Ochillo, NCC's executive director, moderated a panel with local officials from Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. The experts included:
- Juliet Fink-Yates, Ed.M, Digital Inclusion Manager, City of Philadelphia;
- Rebecca Gibbons, Strategic Initiatives Manager, City of Portland; and
- Candelaria Mendoza, Smart City Coordinator, City of San Antonio.

They shared challenges, victories, and best practices related to municipality's digital inclusion strategies.

Continue reading about NCC at NDIA [here](#).

# BIPARTISAN TECH 2022

## Virtual Conference

## March 29, 2022

Digital inequities have a bipartisan impact on communities nationwide. Register **here**. Learn about speakers and the schedule **here**.

**Next Century Cities**

PHILADELPHIA, PA


COLUMBUS, OH


LOUISVILLE, KY


LARIMER COUNTY, CO

# MEMBERS ARE IN THE NEWS

## PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
The City of Philadelphia released a **5-Year Digital Equity plan** with a goal of helping the city establish a baseline of digital equity. They identify the three key pillars of digital equity are: Internet access, devices, and digital literacy. The City of Philadelphia also established an **executive order**.

## OHIO CITIES
Ohio cities and organizations advocating for high-speed, high quality Internet access launched a formal association. **Broadband Access Ohio** believes that communities deserve the flexibility to offer broadband programs that meet the needs of their residents and encourage economic development. Local leaders from NCC's membership who are on the Board of Directors include:
- Mayor William Roth, City of Fairlawn, Chairman of the Board
- David Corrado, CEO, Medina County Fiber Network
- Paul Leedham, Chief Innovation Officer, City of Hudson
- Sam Orth, Director of Technology, City of Columbus
- Commissioner Steve Hambley, Medina County

## LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
Louisville, Kentucky, announced a **partnership** that will offer refurbish and distribute laptops and tablets to residents in need.

## COLORADO COUNTIES
A partnership between Loveland and Larimer County, Colorado, **will expand service** to those living and working in unincorporated areas.

ANN ARBOR, MI

MIDDLETOWN, RI

Rhode Island bill **aims to expand broadband access and adoption**.

MISSOULA, MT

Merit's Moonshot EDU series will present a webinar on execution and deployment of fiber infrastructure on March 16th. **Register here**.

Montana **seeks proposals to expand access to rural broadband**.

# BROADBAND NEWS

CHARLESTON, WV

A West Virginia bill **proposes additional accountability tools** for broadband funding.
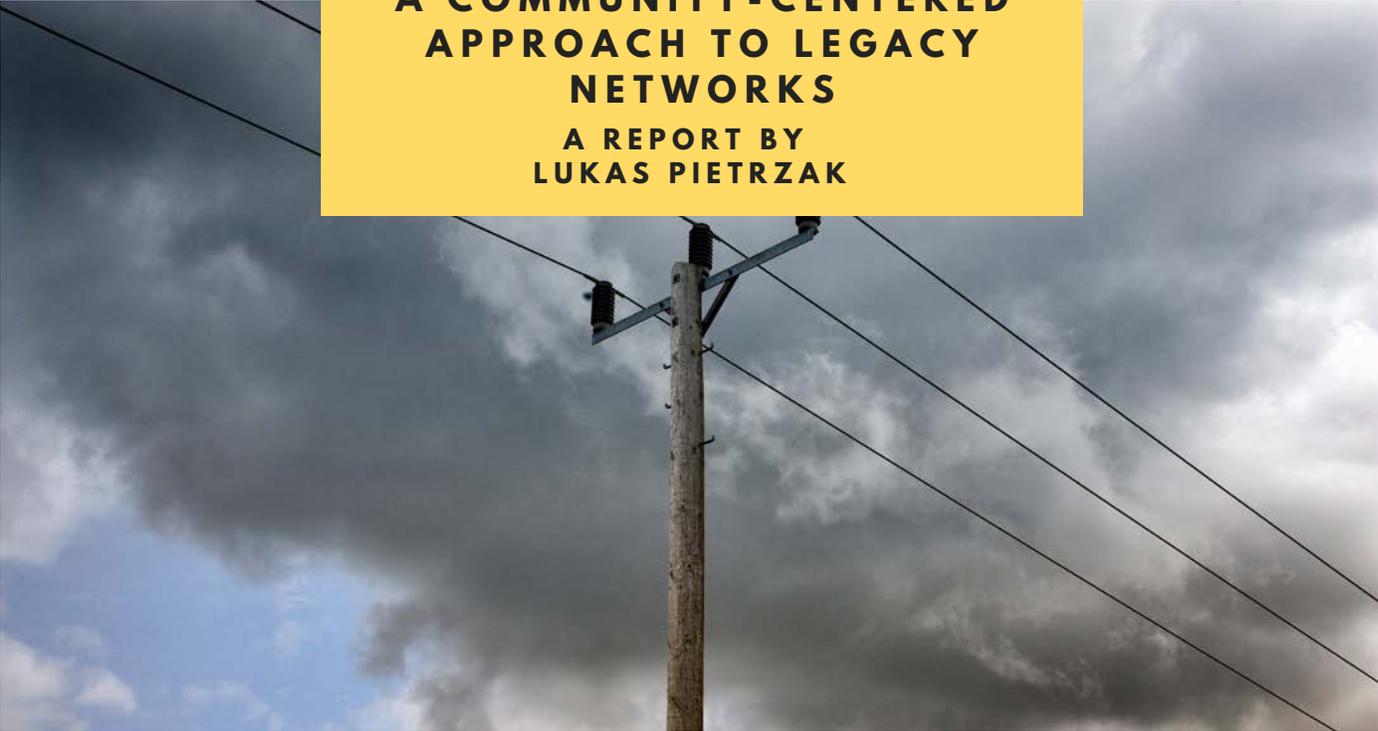
# A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH TO LEGACY NETWORKS

## A REPORT BY LUKAS PIETRZAK

Hundreds of millions of people log on to the Internet to access their classes, attend medical appointments, bank, connect with family, and more every day. Each of these users gets online believing it will be there whenever needed. However, as Internet Service Providers ("ISPs") increasingly implement plans to discontinue upgrades or fully retire legacy telecommunications networks, customers discover that reliable Internet connections have been interrupted. Some households do not have an affordable alternative.

On February 10th, Next Century Cities released a new paper, *What Comes Next? A Community-Centered Approach to Legacy Network Retirement*, advocating for the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") to revisit consumer-protection safeguards to guide legacy telecommunications network retirement. The report also highlights direct connections between rural electrification in the early 20th century and our modern broadband Internet marketplace.

In 2015, the FCC introduced and approved **regulations** designed to facilitate safe, transparent, and robust systems to retire or upgrade outdated networks. Those rules promoted open lines of communication between ISPs, customers, and government officials. Recognizing the imbalanced power dynamics in a broadband marketplace with limited competition, the FCC created regulations to ensure that customers would be informed of network transitions and potential service disruptions. Notably, the agency determined that consumers needed the power to challenge decisions and claims.

Consumer-focused safeguards also ensured customers would have access to a reasonable alternative if ISPs discontinued their service. As leaders at all levels of government consider necessary changes to the current broadband landscape, legacy network retirement policies are an excellent place to reinstate guidelines that promote competition, protect public safety, and empower local leaders.

Continue reading **here**.

## ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB PROJECTS ON IMPROVING HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH DATA PRIVACY

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub introduced their first set of projects from their 2021 Fellowship class. The projects propose creative solutions for prior authorization delays, insecure medical devices, and improving healthcare procurement.

## DIGITAL EQUITY IN BALTIMORE

The City of Baltimore is hiring a Digital Equity Coordinator. Apply **here**.

## ARIZONA BROADBAND

The State of Arizona is looking for an Assistant Broadband Director. The **Assistant Broadband Director** will be responsible for managing a large portfolio of broadband initiatives and grants across the state of Arizona.

## PORTLAND BROADBAND PLANNING

The Office for Community Technology at the City of Portland is adding a **Community Broadband Planner**. The Broadband Planner will lead broadband infrastructure planning and deployment strategies under the framework of the City's Digital Equity Action Plan (DEAP).

## DIGITAL INCLUSION IN SAN ANTONIO

The City of San Antonio is hiring a Digital Inclusion Coordinator. Apply **here**.

BALTIMORE, MD


PHOENIX, AZ


PORTLAND, OR