NEXT CENTURY CITIES

JUNE 2022

THE BROADBAND ACCESS SUMMIT

Advocates from communities nationwide convened in Cleveland, Ohio to focus on #InternetForAll.

FEDERAL FUNDING IS COMING.

Does your state have a plan?

POLE ATTACHMENT POLICIES

impact broadband deployment.

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Broadband Access Summit in Cleveland Highlights the Partnerships and Possibilities of #InternetForAll

Next Century Cities had the privilege of co-hosting the **Broadband Access Summit** with the Pew Charitable Trusts in Cleveland, Ohio. In light of our commitment to support local leadership, NCC sponsored a delegation of **17 local officials and community leaders** to attend. Local leaders had unique opportunities to interface and learn from federal and state leaders who are responsible for broadband program development.

Conference festivities began on June 21, 2022, with a reception for local broadband leaders to connect and share their experiences working to improve access and adoption. Many have recently launched innovative partnerships in their communities.

The conference programming kicked off with welcome remarks from Pew's Kathryn de Wit, director of its Broadband Initiative, who shared the two core themes of the conference. She encouraged local, state, and federal leaders to demonstrate the art of the possible in order to deliver on #InternetForAll goals.

Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, participated in a fireside chat. He shared his view of what success would look like after the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) implements the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** broadband funding programs. Secretary Davidson drew comparisons between the current opportunity and the work of prior generations to build electric, highway, and water infrastructure. Additionally, he stated his hope that when we look back on this time period in ten or twenty years, it will be recognized as our moment to build the broadband infrastructure that helped people succeed in a modern economy.

Local leaders shared the story of Cleveland's long history of work to advance digital equity. Leon Wilson, the CTO of the Cleveland Foundation, offered an analogy that centers his systems-level work in the space. According to Wilson, when trying to solve the issue of fish becoming sick from environmental concerns in the lake, you could spend all your time trying to fix the fish, but you really need to address the lake and the groundwater for the fish to flourish.

Cuyahoga County's Chief Innovation Officer, Catherine Tkachyk, **discussed her plans** to bring low-cost, high-speed internet access to roughly 25,000 residents, or 85% of their unconnected households. Tkachyk emphasized the importance of partnerships in digital equity efforts. In her perspective, knowing how to leverage expertise is far more effective than training to become an expert in every aspect of broadband planning.

On day two of the conference, NCC's Executive Director, Francella Ochillo, moderated a panel on building partnerships with outcomes in mind. A group of experts shared their thoughts on what Tribal, state, and local leaders need to consider as they build partnerships. When prompted to share one piece of advice for broadband leaders in various phases of planning and implementation, Corey Bryndal, the **Broadband Director for Region 10** in Colorado, advised community leaders to "listen such that you can hear what your partners' goals or aspirations are." He continued, "offer or give before you ask, because every time you offer or give, doors open." The panel closed with a group activity where attendees paired off and committed to two action items aimed at building collaborative efforts when they returned to their communities.

IOther workshops focused on the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program planning process, measuring the impact of digital equity programs, engaging with philanthropy, and coordinating between levels of government. The final day was devoted to supporting broadband leaders from states and territories. Programming included briefings on funding programs from federal representatives, fostering regional collaborations, and one-on-one office hours with federal program directors and technical assistance nonprofits.

Building the #InternetForAll communities will take hard work. The Broadband Access Summit set a new bar for bringing advocates, policymakers, local leaders, and providers together in service of that goal. We look forward to working with local leaders in our member municipalities nationwide to ensure that this next phase of broadband funding will equitably bridge connectivity gaps across the country.

revisit the conversation

THE BROADBAND ACCESS SUMMIT

- Track One: **Planning and capacity building: Preparing for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and Digital Equity Act planning processes by helping communities identify and meet their needs**. Participants learned about tools for initiating planning processes and empowering local leadership.

- Track Two: **Partnering with intent: Building a shared understanding about how to work with other organizations to achieve meaningful outcomes and maximize scarce resources**. Panelists shared actionable guidance for ensuring that partnerships achieve programmatic goals and meet community needs.

- Track Three: **Equity from the ground up: Supporting public leaders and their partners in achieving the equity goals outlined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and ensuring that the benefits are shared throughout the country**. The discussion was intended to help promote understanding of how to build systems for equitable change and how to reach targeted populations.

- Track Four: **Solution sessions: Developing solutions for core challenges facing state, Tribal, and local leaders and their partners as they implement federal funds, such as measuring impact and addressing workforce shortages**. Participants left with specific solutions, clear action items, and discussion points for implementation in their own jurisdictions

- Whether you registered to attend the event in-person or online, rewatch each session by following the steps below.
  - Go to the **on-demand event page**.
  - You will be prompted to enter the name and email address used for registration, and you will then be issued a verification code via phone and/or the email address on file.
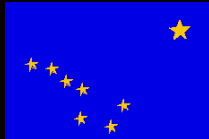 - Input the verification code, and you will be able to view Tuesday and Wednesday's sessions.

Federal funding is coming. Does your state have a plan?

The deadlines for states to submit Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment letters of intent and apply for NTIA's Digital Equity program are approaching on July 18th and July 12th. In May 2022, **NTIA announced that 34 states and territories** sent their letter of intent or indicated that they would participate in NTIA's BEAD Program. Now, that number is up to 42. Only two states have submitted Digital Equity applications.

Where is your state at in the process? Check **NTIA's sign-on map** and learn more about broadband in your state below. If we missed any updates in your state, email **corian@nextcenturycities.org** so we can share them in July's newsletter.

Alaska

- **Tribal Broadband Funding Secured by Murkowski Heading to Alaska** (May 4, 2022)
- **Governor Dunleavy Submits Federal Infrastructure Bill to Lawmakers** (April 4, 2022)
- **Senator Murkowski Raises Middle Mile and Tribal Infrastructure in Alaska to Secretary of Commerce** (Feb. 3, 2022)

Arizona

- **Governor's Press Release, Arizona Launches Critical Effort To Enhance Infrastructure** (April 14, 2022)
- **Broadband Middle-Mile Strategic Plan** (Feb. 2022)

Arkansas

- **Arkansas Broadband Master Plan** (April 2022)

California

- **Can Open Access Solve California's Rural Broadband Dilemma? | Government Technology** (May 9, 2022)
- **What's New in Digital Equity: California Drafts Map for Statewide Broadband | Government Technology** (April 28, 2022)
- **California May Require Low-Cost Broadband from Subsidized Networks | Electronic Frontier Foundation** (April 18, 2022)
- **Val Verde, California, School District Broadband Network Provides Case Study for Closing the Digital Divide | CENIC** (March 9, 2022)

Colorado

- **Governor Polis Signs Executive Order to Bring Reliable, Affordable, High-Speed Broadband Internet Access to Coloradans** (Feb. 2022)

Connecticut

- **Murphy Releases Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Resource Guide for Connecticut** (March 9, 2022)
- **Department of Energy and Environmental Protection request for broadband proposals** (Respondents must submit a proposal to DEEP.EnergyBureau@ct.gov no later than 12:00 PM EPT on July 23, 2021.)

Delaware

- **Delaware Announces Start of Universal Broadband Construction** (March 17, 2022)
- **Delaware Names Chief of Administration and Broadband Manager | Government Technology** (May 5, 2022)

Washington, D.C.

- **What's New in Digital Equity: D.C. Works to Connect All Residents | Government Technology** (May 19, 2022)
- **Mayor Bowser to Kick Off Infrastructure Week by Announcing New Initiative to Bring High-Speed, Low- or No-Cost Internet to DC Residents** (May 15, 2022)

Georgia

- **Major $408M Investment Seeks to Get Rural Georgia Online | Government Technology** (Feb. 2, 2022)

Hawaii

- **Broadband: Connecting people so no one gets left behind** (Feb. 25, 2022)

Idaho

- **Idaho Broadband Strategic Plan 2022-2027** (released June 2022)

Illinois

- **Second Cohort of Accelerate Illinois Broadband Infrastructure Program is Selected** (May 2022)

Indiana

- **State announces $189 million in broadband grants, spread across 80 counties | WFYI** (April 18, 2022)

Iowa

- **Governor Reynolds awards $210M in broadband grants** (Jan. 4, 2022)

Kansas

- **Lt. Governor Toland Announces Two New Directors** (June 1, 2022)
- **Governor Laura Kelly Announces Recipients of $10 Million Investment Expanding Broadband Access Across Rural Kansas** (May 20, 2022)

Kentucky

- **Kentucky Invests $203 Million in Building Broadband to More Than 34,000 Households and Businesses** (June 20, 2022)

Louisiana

- **Louisiana to Receive $176.7 Million through American Rescue Plan to Increase Access to Affordable, High-Speed Internet** (June 7, 2022)
- **Connect LA News Updates**

Maine

- **Why meeting Gov. Mills' broadband goals could be a challenge | News Center Maine** (Feb. 16, 2022)
- **ConnectMaine, Maine Connectivity Authority & Department of Transportation Collaborating | Maine Connectivity Authority** (Feb. 16, 2022)
- **Maine Connectivity Authority Allocates $10 Million to ConnectMaine for Spring 2022 Grant Round | Maine Connectivity Authority** (Jan. 17, 2022)
- **First president of Maine Connectivity Authority sworn in after unanimous confirmation by Senate | News Center Maine** (Jan. 4, 2022)

Maryland

- **What are the Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband's priorities for 2022? | Technical.ly** (Feb. 2, 2022)
- **Maryland Broadband Investment Advisory Workgroup | Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development** (Feb. 28, 2022)

Massachussetts

- **Mayor Wu and Sen Markey Announce $12 Million Investment in Digital Equity and Inclusion in Boston, Massachusetts | The City of Boston** (Feb. 2, 2022)

Michigan

- AARP Michigan Working with Local, State and Federal Officials to Expand Broadband Access in State | AARP (June 1, 2022)
- $3M grant awarded to expand high-speed internet in Michigan's U.P. | The Detroit News (May 4, 2022)
- Michigan on cusp of major broadband expansion to areas of state with little access | Michigan Radio (April 17, 2022)
- Whitmer to Sign Building Michigan Together Plan | Governor Gretchen Whitmer (March 28, 2022)
- Fiscal Brief: State and Federal Broadband Expansion Programs | House Fiscal Agency (Jan. 26, 2022)

Minnesota

- Legislature Passes Significant Broadband Funding and Policy Measures | League of Minnesota Cities (May 24, 2022)

Mississippi

- Dixie EPA's Accelerated Buildout Reflects a Big Connectivity Push by Mississippi Cooperatives | ILSR (April 6, 2022)

Missouri

- Missouri receives $42.2 million federal grant through the NTIA's Broadband Infrastructure Program | Department of Economic Development (March 1, 2022)

Montana

- Montana's broadband map will be 'vastly different' from FCC's | Broadband World News (Feb. 1, 2022)

Nebraska

- Broadband grant program expanded | Unicameral Update (April 13, 2022)

Nevada

- Broadband Upcoming Events | Governor's Office of Science, Innovation, and Technology
- Achieving Universal Access Through IIJA Funding | Governor's Office of Science, Innovation, and Technology

New Hampshire

- New Hampshire to Receive $50M for Rural Internet Funding | Government Technology (June 8, 2022)
- New Hampshire Electric Co-op to Expand NH Broadband Fiber-optic Network to 32 Grafton County Towns (March 1, 2022)

New Jersey

- **Gottheimer Urges State to Take Immediate Action to Release Federal Broadband Investments to Boost Connectivity in Warren & Sussex Counties** (April 25, 2022)

New Mexico

- The **New Mexico Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE)** has issued a **Request for Information (RFI)** to facilitate the deployment of a Statewide Open Access Middle Mile Network.

New York

- **Governor Hochul Announces Release of Statewide Address-Level Broadband Map** (June 16, 2022)

North Carolina

- **North Carolina Announces Plan to Join Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program** (May 16, 2022)

Ohio

- **Governor DeWine Announces BroadbandOhio Community Accelerator Cohort** (June 15, 2022)
- **Governor DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted Announce New Broadband Expansion Projects to connect ~100,000 Ohioans** (March 18, 2022)

Oklahoma

- **Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Council Accomplishments** (June 13, 2022)

Oregon

- Rural Broadband Project Updates | **Polk County, Oregon** (May 13, 2022)

Pennsylvania

- **Pennsylvania's Broadband Authority Ready to Deploy Minimum of $100 Million in Life-Changing Internet for All Funds | Governor Tom Wolf** (May 18, 2022)

Rhode Island

- **SB 2568 would establish broadband council, call for designation of state broadband coordinator** (Introduced March 2022, Senate meeting postponed April 2022)

South Carolina

- How South Carolina plans to invest money from federal government on broadband expansion | WCSC (April 18, 2022)

South Dakota

- Additional Round of Broadband Funding Announced (April 28, 2022)

Tennessee

- Too many Tennesseans lack home internet access, but here's how we can change that | The Tennessean (June 7, 2022)

Texas

- Texas Broadband Plan | The Texas Broadband Development Office (June 15, 2022)

Vermont

- VT Community Broadband Board Announces $116 Million Broadband Construction Grant Program | Department of Public Service (Jan. 20, 2022)

Virginia

- Virginia gets $219.8 million to expand broadband to rural and low-income communities | The Associated Press (June 7, 2022)
- Bedford County, Virginia, approves multi-million broadband contract | WSET (May 12, 2022)

Washington

- Washington State Community-Led Broadband Projects Get Massive Boost From New Grants | ILSR (March 18, 2022)

West Virginia

- West Virginia working to avoid past broadband mistakes | The Weirton Daily Times (June 11, 2022)
- West Virginia Receives $136 Million To Expand Broadband | West Virginia Public Broadcasting (June 7, 2022)
- Mercer County, West Virginia, Seeks to Expand Internet Access | Bluefield Daily Telegraph (May 17, 2022)

Wisconsin

- Wisconsin Announces Increased Funding for State Broadband Expansion Grants to $125 Million | Benton Institute for Broadband & Society (June 6, 2022)

NCC Joins NATOA and Allies in Outlining Public Interest Pole Attachment Principles for Policymakers

By Ryan Johnston and Corian Zacher

Next Century Cities, in conjunction with the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) and other allied organizations, filed a March 9th letter, accompanied by a list of principles, Pole Attachments and the Public Interest. The letter and principles reiterate the need for policymakers to allow municipalities, public power utilities, and cooperatives—whose purpose is to serve the public interest—flexibility and trust to manage their poles and other assets in the best interest of their communities.

Autonomy over pole attachment policy is integral to local broadband strategies.
The influx of broadband funding and the national focus on municipal networks is bringing much-needed attention to state policies that impede local autonomy over Internet infrastructure.

The Coalition for Local Internet Choice reports that 17 state laws inhibit community-owned broadband networks or public-private partnerships. In effect, state imposed restrictions that curb local self-determination over pole attachments can ultimately hinder broader efforts to expand broadband networking capabilities. Instead, state policies should complement local decision-making, which is critical for ensuring that all residents can access and adopt high-quality home broadband.

In 2021, for example, California lawmakers proposed a bill that would have severely limited local authority over street light and traffic signal poles. Despite opposition from several municipalities—including cities in NCC member Counties Sonoma and Santa Clara, such as **Sebastopol** and **Los Altos**—the legislature passed the bill, which was subsequently vetoed by Governor Gavin Newsom.

Continue reading this piece **here**.

Local Control over Pole Attachment Costs is Essential for Expediting Broadband Deployment

By Ryan Johnston

Utility poles, an essential component of broadband deployment, are controlled by a wide variety of entities. Municipalities that own their utility poles are in the best position to determine the costs and allocated time needed to deploy broadband services on those poles. Requiring municipalities to modify how they collect pole replacement or attachment costs forces them to make significant changes to their procedures and policies that may inevitably slow broadband deployment.

On June 27, 2022, Next Century Cities **filed comments** with the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") urging the agency to allow municipalities to maintain their autonomy over pole attachment and replacement policies. The comments highlighted the following points:

- Providing local governments with flexibility over pole replacement and attachment costs and timings ensures that revenue derived from those costs is reinvested into the community.
- Municipalities, cooperatives, and non-profit electrical utilities rate-set in the public interest based on community needs.
- The Commission should collaborate with local officials on pole attachment regulations, which could help to unite public and private efforts to expand broadband access.

The Commission should not interfere with municipalities' ability to use every tool available to address long-standing digital divides. Requiring significant changes to pole attachment and replacement policies will hamstring local governments. Instead, the Commission should support their efforts to effectuate universal broadband deployment plans to all their residents.

Read the FCC filing **here**.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

Join the WeLink Cities Challenge. Applications are due TOMORROW, June 30, 2022.

WeLink, a next-gen fixed wireless ISP, is offering up to $100M of their own investment and a turn-key solution to help bring affordable, high-speed internet to households in need — cities, **get your applications in NOW**!

The WeLink Cities Challenge is an initiative designed to bring future-ready broadband and digital equity to dense urban communities across the country. With WeLink, ultrafast service comes at no cost to Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)-verified households and at prices below market rate for everyone else. WeLink offers the same, uncompromising gigabit-symmetric speeds to all customers, whether they are subsidized or paying market rate. Applications are open through June 30, with households in selected cities gaining truly affordable gigabit+ connectivity beginning in Fall 2022.

1. Full application open (Now through June 30, 2022)
2. Co-design a solution for gigabit+ speeds (Summer 2022)
3. Connect initial low-income households within weeks (Fall 2022)

Visit the WeLink Cities Challenge website to **learn more** and **submit your application**.

The application for the 2022-2023 Community Resource Corps Cohort is now open!
Application details and requirements are available **here**.

Now Accepting Nominations for the NDIA Digital Inclusion Trailblazers
Applications can be submitted on the **NDIA Digital Inclusion Trailblazers webpage**, and a detailed description of the criteria, checklist items and required supporting documentation found on the Revised **NDIA Digital Inclusion Trailblazers Infosheet**. Questions should be directed to **miles@digitalinclusion.org**.

MBI is hiring an Operations Manager to support the administration of federal grant programs, including the State's Digital Equity Fund and Federal Digital Equity Act and BEAD programs. The full application can be found **here**.

Charlotte, NC

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS

The N.C. Department of Information Technology's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy is developing a website repository of digital literacy trainings and resources to equip North Carolina learners with the skills needed to function in today's digital society. If your organization or network has resources you would like to include on this new website, please complete the google form **HERE**. If you have any questions, please contact **kiya.edwards@nc.gov.**

The M-Lab team is searching for a Director to help lead and grow the Measurement Lab project. Learn more about the role and its requirements **here**.

The University of Maryland Extension is hiring a project director to manage the statewide Digital Literacy project to address the digital divide and increase broadband adoption in Maryland**. Find the role description and application materials here.**

The Arizona State Library is hiring a Digital Inclusion Library Consultant. Learn more about the requirements and application process **here.**

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A recently released report, *The tribal digital divide: Extent and Explanations* documents home Internet access, types of Internet access, connection speeds, and prices for basic home Internet in tribal areas of the United States.

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance announced the dates for their **2022 Digital Inclusion Week**, which will be held October 3-7, 2022. Additional details about the week can be found **here**.