

# Cable Co-op Inc. Updates Oberlin Infrastructure with Fiber Optic Technology Ahead of State-Wide Initiative

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This Week Editor

In a 2018 Pew Research study, almost a quarter of rural households said that access to broadband internet was a “major problem” in their community.

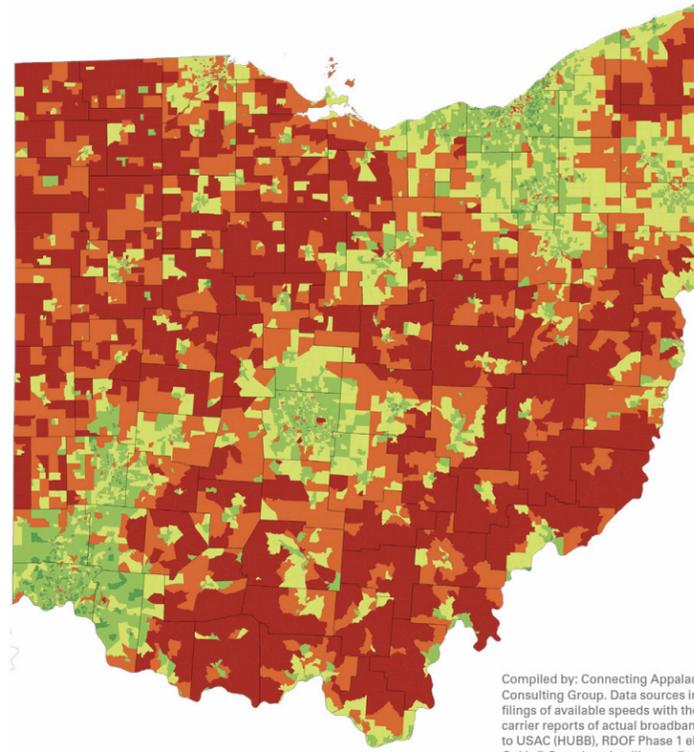
The Federal Communications Commission defines broadband internet as a service having a minimum download speed of 25 megabytes per second and an upload speed of three megabytes per second. This minimum speed allows households to browse the internet, use email, and stream to a single device.

According to the FCC 32.5 percent of the rural population in Ohio has access to broadband internet, while Ohio’s statewide coverage is 76.7 percent. This disparity is known as the digital divide.

The state of Ohio set goals in August 2022 to close the digital divide by providing access to high-speed internet service for low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, and inhabitants of rural communities. This is part of President Biden’s allocated \$2.5 billion for three federal grant programs within the Digital Equity Act which will allow states to develop and implement plans to close the digital divide over five years, starting in 2024.

In addition to Ohio’s plans for grants received from the Digital Equity Act, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed a bill in May 2021 to begin awarding grants to internet service providers for the expansion of broadband internet to rural areas. The construction of broadband projects by Internet Service Providers that receive funding is projected to finish in 2024.

## Ohio Broadband Speed Throughout the State, in Megabytes Per Second



Compiled by: Connecting Appalachia 2021, Reid Consulting Group. Data sources include carrier filings of available speeds with the FCC (Form 477), carrier reports of actual broadband deployments to USAC (HUBB), RDOF Phase 1 eligibility, and Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® data for February 2020 through August 2021. Ookla trademarks used under license and reprinted with permission.

### Key: Internet Speeds

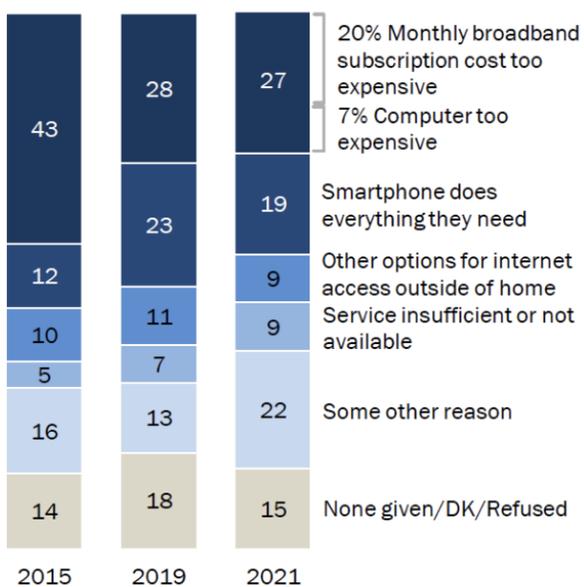


For more information, visit [Broadband.Ohio.gov/maps](https://Broadband.Ohio.gov/maps)

Map Courtesy of InnovateOhio

## Cost and smartphone capabilities remain the most important reasons non-broadband users do not subscribe

% of non-broadband users in the U.S. who cite the following as the **most important** reason for not having broadband service



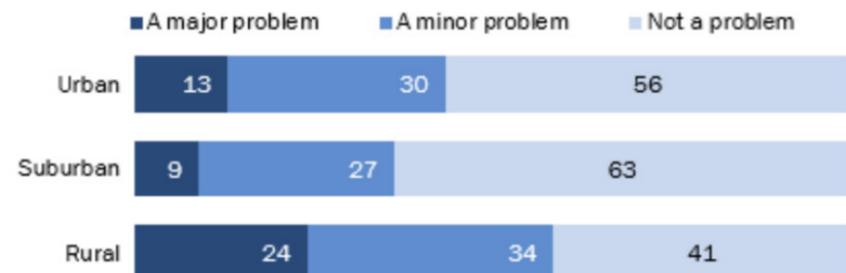
Note: Figures may not add up to the NET value due to rounding. The 2019 report calculated the NET values by adding the two rounded values together.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 25-Feb. 8, 2021. “Mobile Technology and Home Broadband 2021”

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Chart Courtesy of Pew Research Center

## Roughly one-in-four rural residents say access to high-speed internet is a major problem in their area

% of U.S. adults, by community type, who say access to high-speed internet is \_\_\_ in their local community

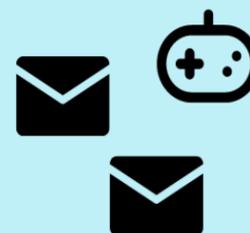


Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.  
Source: Survey conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.

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Chart Courtesy of Pew Research Center

### <10Mbps download speeds



Up to two users using email, with one app running HD video, on-line gaming, or video conferencing.\*

### 10-25 Mbps download speeds



3 or more devices or users streaming HD videos, online gaming, and basic functions.\*

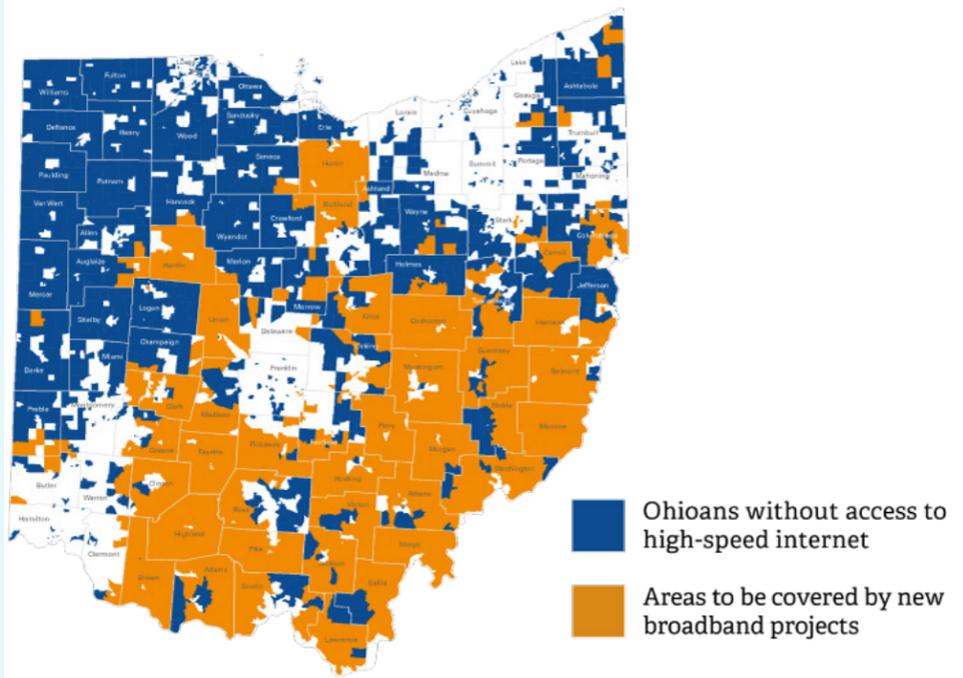
\*based on FCC recommendations

Rural communities have historically relied on electric co-ops for service. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration with the goal of expanding electricity access beyond metropolitan centers. The Administration created Ohio's first electric cooperatives in 1936, which successfully built infrastructure to bring electricity to farms and rural households across the state.



Photo Courtesy of New Deal Network

## Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant Program Map of Coverage



Map Courtesy of InnovateOhio

Oberlin's Cable Co-op Inc. operates in the tradition of historic electric co-ops, building internet infrastructure in Oberlin. Many rural communities won't see high-speed internet projects begin before 2023 due to how recently funds were allocated. Cable Co-op Inc., which serves about 80 percent of households and 85 percent of businesses in Oberlin, will provide access to high-speed internet by expanding fiber optic cable in Oberlin by 2024 thanks to its unique business model.

"We are a non-profit cooperative, which doesn't mean we don't make a profit, but means that I am able to use that money to do projects that better the community, like the fiber optic project," Jay Shrewsbury, general manager of Cable Co-op Inc., said.

Fiber optic cables transmit information using light passed through fibers made of glass or plastic, meaning that information can travel long distances at nearly the speed of light.

"Fiber optic is really expensive — it's a huge investment, so big companies who are going into cities and putting in fiber aren't putting [it] into rural areas because they're not gonna get [their investment] back, so there's a huge discrepancy between rural and urban areas, furthering the gap of the digital divide," fourth-year Computer Science major Adrien Koritz, who is a tech intern at an internet service provider in northeast Ohio, said.

Shrewsbury said bringing more fiber optic cables into Oberlin will make the internet services they provide faster and more reliable while reducing costs. According to Shrewsbury, Oberlin began offering the minimum 25/3 speed to meet the threshold of broadband close to 20 years ago, outpacing other rural communities in Ohio.



Photo by Abe Frato, Photo Editor



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