



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

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GOVERNOR PRITZKER ANNOUNCES NEW INTERACTIVE BROADBAND MAPPING AND SPEED TEST TOOLS TO HELP EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE

New "Illinois Broadband Lab" to Host Maps, Drive Research and Evaluation, and Promote Ongoing Regional Engagement and Program Integration

CHICAGO – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Office of Broadband today announced a new interactive *Connect Illinois Broadband Map* and creation of the *Illinois Broadband Lab*, a collaborative effort by the State of Illinois, university partners including the University of Illinois System and Illinois Innovation Network, and key stakeholders including the Illinois-based Benton Institute for Broadband & Society. Together, these efforts will provide Illinois residents and communities with new data on broadband connectivity in their area, as well as an online speed test, to identify gaps and tailor broadband planning efforts to boost access to high-speed internet service. A new interactive state broadband mapping tool, county-level PDF maps, and other resources are now available to the public via the Illinois Broadband Lab website: <http://ibl.illinois.edu> – which was developed by and will be housed at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Technology Services unit.

These resources complement and enhance Gov. Pritzker's historic \$420 million Connect Illinois broadband infrastructure plan, a part of Rebuild Illinois, charged with delivering upgrades to bring 21st century capability to every community in the state.

"Access to high speed, reliable internet is not a luxury – it's a necessity for healthcare, success in school, and to compete in a 21st century economy," **said Gov. Pritzker.** "Keeping our communities connected has never been more important than it is today. The Illinois Broadband Lab will empower communities with the data, mapping, and related resources necessary for them to take full advantage of historic state and federal investment in broadband access and adoption. Through our first of its kind statewide digital equity plan, we are committed to working alongside Illinois communities to eliminate the digital divide – together, once and for all."

Designed to guide investment and programming, to inform policy making, and to engage communities in broadband planning and all Illinoisans in broadband speed measurement, the new mapping tool combines data from local broadband providers, Illinois households, and field testing of available bandwidth. In addition, the Illinois Broadband Lab will house hundreds of PDF maps, providing various perspectives, and integrating complementary data sets, related to broadband access today. Illinois residents can enter their home address and access basic information about broadband providers, service levels, and technology availability in their area.

“We are proud to introduce the Illinois Broadband Lab, a collaboration with Illinois universities and key stakeholders, to provide Illinois communities yet another tool as we strive to bring affordable, reliable broadband connectivity for every household, community and business across the state,” **said Sylvia Garcia, Acting Director of DCEO.** “Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership – we are investing to bring historic levels of capital and tools like these that will help make our Illinois communities more connected and competitive in the global economy.”

For community planners and other stakeholders, the new mapping and speed test tools will provide service level information as well as socioeconomic data and jurisdictional boundaries - information helpful for submitting grant applications, leveraging new federal funding, and developing local plans to improve broadband access and adoption. Unlike other maps before it, the new mapping tool will provide more timely, granular, and accurate data on broadband service, with an ongoing ability for residents to run speed tests that will continue to fuel the accuracy of the maps over time.

“The new Illinois Broadband Lab equips Illinois’ students, workers, businesses, and communities to tackle the digital divide proactively,” **said University of Illinois System President Tim Killeen.** “This is yet another example of how the U of I System – and specifically the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Illinois Innovation Network – are contributing deep expertise and knowledge to help lift all corners of our state. We are proud to share these 21st century economic tools with the people of Illinois and work alongside them in promoting inclusive, lifechanging economic growth.”

The DCEO Office of Broadband will use the interactive mapping to guide its investment of state and federal funds in pursuit of its ambitious goal of achieving universal broadband access throughout Illinois. Integrating broadband speed test results from the general public will help identify areas where the existing maps may overstate available broadband service. In addition, the mapping resources and Illinois Broadband Lab collaboration will support existing programming focused on community planning, capacity building, and regional engagement.

“Sound data fuels smart investments. The Benton Institute is proud to play a role in disseminating Illinois Broadband Lab research and information to a nationwide audience who are eager for best practices and who can learn from Illinois’s comprehensive, integrated approach to broadband infrastructure and digital equity planning and implementation,” **said Adrienne Furniss, Executive Director of the Benton Institute for Broadband & Society.**

The interactive *Connect Illinois Broadband Map* and *Illinois Broadband Lab* builds on concerted efforts by the Pritzker administration to increase broadband connectivity throughout the state, a critical component for economic growth among Illinois communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, Governor Pritzker launched *Connect Illinois*, an historic \$420 million investment in broadband infrastructure. The investment is part of the Governor’s plan to bring universal access to communities across Illinois.

Complementing the historic capital investment, the DCEO Office of Broadband has introduced digital equity programming focused on building local broadband capacity and leadership, providing underserved Illinois homes with refurbished computers, building digital literacy skills, and integrating these efforts through regional collaboration focused on resource integration, digital indicator measurement, and best practice replication. Together, this comprehensive approach is summarized in the *Connect Illinois Digital Equity Plan* – a nation-leading approach to eliminate the digital divide.

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