

ARPA Funds to Help Wisconsin Expand Access to High-Speed Internet

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/internet-in-rural-areas-s450.jpg>



Feds approve governor's plan to spend \$40 million to expedite connecting homes and businesses with high-quality, high-speed internet.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers announced that the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) has approved the governor's plans to allocate \$40 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds through the Capital Projects Fund to expedite Wisconsin's efforts to expand access to high-speed internet across the state.



"Whether it's finding work, running a business, going to school, or just staying connected to friends and family, high-speed internet is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity," said Gov. Evers. "I've been proud to use our investments since 2019 to provide more than 387,000 homes and businesses with high-quality, high-speed internet, and we're not slowing down anytime soon. The digital divide is holding our families, communities, economy, and our state back, so I'm glad to direct this funding that will help ensure we can continue building on the progress we've made over the last three years."

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Part of the [Capital Projects Fund](#), a program offered by Treasury, the funding will be invested in grants and planning resources awarded by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) to internet service providers to bring high-speed broadband infrastructure to unserved and underserved locations throughout the state. Treasury has indicated that the goal of funding is to expand the availability of reliable, affordable broadband infrastructure and other digital connectivity technology through critical capital projects.

Since Gov. Evers took office in 2019, Wisconsin has disbursed or committed nearly \$300 million towards expanding broadband, including \$105 million in federal funding directed by the governor, supporting 94 projects in more than 42 counties and three tribal communities. State and federal funds allocated under Gov. Evers for broadband grants have provided or will provide more than 387,000 homes and businesses access to new or improved services. The PSC recently introduced the [Broadband Grant Footprint](#), an interactive tool to track broadband expansion progress in Wisconsin to show the impact of broadband grant projects statewide.

“I want to thank Gov. Evers for his continued leadership and commitment to broadband connectivity and for allocating this funding that will make a significant impact in the lives of those who don’t have access to broadband internet,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “We are committed to efficiently administering this funding while continuing to be good stewards of public dollars.”



The Wisconsin Broadband Office at the PSC coordinates broadband investment, develops broadband coverage maps, facilitates statewide digital access and equity efforts, and administers Wisconsin’s Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The broadband expansion grants invest in construction projects for internet service in areas of the state that are challenging to connect due to population density or geography.

In August 2022, the Broadband Expansion Grant Program was rated “Best in Class” for “clear documentation of their application and award processes” by the United States Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Additional funding for Wisconsin under the Capital Projects Fund is expected to be authorized by Treasury and announced at a later date. More than \$140 million in additional funding will be available to carry out device deployment and digital navigator projects and to improve community access to essential equipment. A diverse group of stakeholders will be eligible to

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participate in these initiatives, including public libraries, community centers for aging and older adults, and facilities owned by school districts and local and Tribal governments. An announcement from the PSC that includes application information for the \$40 million in funding announced today is forthcoming.