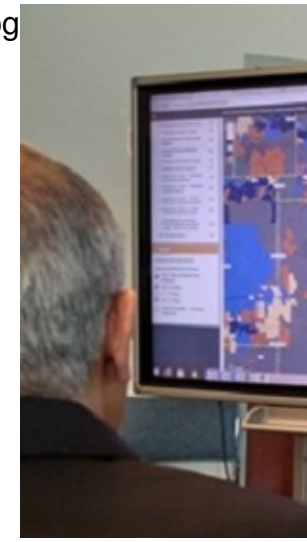
http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/broadband-map-northwoods-s459.jpg



Senator Smith writes about the new broadband expansion maps recently released by the FCC showing levels of internet connectivity throughout the state.

MADISON - January 13th is an important date for the growth of our state's future. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is asking for consumer feedback on their new preliminary internet connectivity maps, and the second Friday in January is the deadline for the public to submit their input.

These maps will determine the amount Wisconsin is awarded in the next round of funding through Congress's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. Depending on how we do in this survey, anywhere from $700 million to $1.1 billion may come our way to expand high-speed internet in Wisconsin.

It's pivotal for the FCC to have accurate information. Mapping will determine where and when we invest money. The BEAD program prioritizes households and businesses that are completely "unserved" by high speed internet at a speed of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) while downloading and 3 Mbps while uploading. The project also prioritizes projects that lack high-speed internet, defined as speed of at least 100 Mbps while downloading and 20 Mbps while uploading. It should also be noted that latency speeds in excess of 100 milliseconds are also considered unserved – this is oftentimes the case with satellite internet users.



In the days when telephone and electricity lines were being strung throughout rural America, the saying was that nobody is connected until everyone is connected.

This holds true today when it comes to internet access. We are doing an increasing amount of our shopping online. Healthcare providers are using the Internet to reach patients through telehealth. Educators are finding new ways to engage students using online tools, and students are relying on internet access for their studies and conducting online research. Our world is becoming smaller thanks to the Internet, with family and friends never too far away.

Connecting every household and business with fiber is the goal, and will require a combination of public and private investment. However, maps showing areas of need in the past have been terribly flawed.

These maps group homes and businesses into census blocks, which are generally based on landmarks such as roads, rivers and sometimes property lines. If one property in that area could have access to high speed service, the map will show that everyone in that census block is covered.

This faulty information caused serious issues when money was allocated and distributed for broadband projects. Bringing connectivity to these internet deserts depends on our ability to know where they are.

By submitting a challenge to the preliminary internet maps, you can help the FCC better

understand levels of internet connectivity. It'll help them determine where infrastructure funding can be best utilized. The broadband maps are online at BroadbandMap.FCC.gov . There, you can look up your address and help the FCC know what type of internet is available at your location.

If your home or business is not listed or if there are other inaccuracies about the location, you can report this by clicking "Location Challenge" in the top right corner.

You can find more information about how to submit a location challenge here: https://help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/10475216120475-How-to-Submit-a-Location-Challenge-

You also want to make sure that the speeds you are receiving match the speeds reported by your internet service provider. It is easy to check your internet speeds. If you do an internet search for "Run Speed Test," the top result will be a 30-second speed test, where you will be able to click a button and test your upload and download speeds.



If they don't match what is listed for your location, make sure you have your building selected on the map. To the right you will see the provider(s), the type of internet service provided to the location, and the reported upload and download speeds offered at that location. If they differ from the speeds you have measured, click "Availability Challenge" in the top right corner.

You can find more information about submitting an availability challenge here: https://help.bdc.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/10476040597787-How-to-Submit-an-Availability-Challenge

Check your internet speeds today, and if they differ from what is reported on these preliminary maps, send in a challenge. Better mapping will guide better distribution of funds and lead to increased access to high-speed internet for everyone.