



BROADBAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES POLICY PRIORITIES

The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) recognizes that: (1) Broadband telecommunications service enables people to access to basic amenities such as education, health care, public safety and government services, and to participate in commerce and work. (2) the availability, quality, and affordability of broadband telecommunications service is important to the residents of La Plata County, and (3) the availability, quality, and affordability of broadband telecommunications service is lacking in certain areas throughout La Plata County.

In 2023, the availability of quality and affordable internet is not a luxury but rather a critical component of infrastructure and crucial to the well-being of all La Plata County residents

BoCC goals and vision for Broadband in La Plata County:

- Support government investment in broadband so as to make the costs more attainable for more residents, especially those impacted by the digital divide
- Support policies and actions that open up the infrastructure and delivery mechanisms for everyone (open access policy)
- While broadband is not defined as a telecommunications service by the FCC and therefore not regulated as a utility, the Commissioners consider adequate internet as a crucial part of the social, health, economic and educational lives of our residents.
- We desire internet connectivity at standard speeds for every resident of La Plata County.
- We believe that to get there it will takes public-private partnerships, collaboration, and local, state and federal investments.
- Redundancy in our Region

La Plata County sets its broadband telecommunications service policy priorities as follows. Each of the priorities listed below are of equal importance to the County and no one priority has more import than any other:

- 1. Foster the development of and maintain affordable, reliable broadband telecommunications services infrastructure throughout unincorporated La Plata County**
 - a. Consider policies to reduce construction costs and accelerate project deployment
 - b. Participate in middle-mile installation and construction projects within a defined role and structure – i.e. as a sponsor, funder, advocate, etc.

- c. Support fiber-optic infrastructure where possible
 - d. Funding for the creation of Carrier Neutral Location (CNL) and location of same at the La Plata County-owned OMPO (Old Main Post Office)
 - e. Consider policies to support economic development
2. **Support projects designed to achieve last-mile connectivity that are capable of providing reliable connections to deliver symmetrical download and upload speeds of at least 100 Mbps where practicable based on cost, geography and topography.**
 3. **Encourage land use planning that will enable broadband telecommunications services deployment throughout unincorporated La Plata County. Possible solutions include:**
 - a. Determine strategies for more efficient use of County-owned rights of way for fiber location routes
 - b. Requiring new subdivisions to be “fiber ready”
 - c. Integrating the location of fiber into our GIS system
 4. **Foster intergovernmental cooperation on Broadband deployment strategies and implementation to expand Broadband access to unserved locations that currently lack access to the Internet and to improve service to underserved locations that lack modernization.**
 - a. Work with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Region 9, Region 10, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, La Plata Electric Association, etc.
 - a. Region 9 as the broadband driver for National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) funds (Middle Mile) and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Funds (Last Mile)
 5. **Create financial incentives to establish and expand Broadband telecommunications services**
 - a. Strategies could include using La Plata County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money as matching funds for Broadband projects
 - b. ARPA has about 1 million left in reserves that may be used for grant matching