

Connected Nation Develops Maps of Rural and Remote Areas to Help States Maximize Broadband Stimulus



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 24, 2009

Newly Released Maps of Federally Defined Rural and Remote Areas Will Augment Broadband Stimulus Applications in Tennessee, Ohio, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, Kansas, and Kentucky; Census Block-Level Broadband Data Is Now Available Online for the State of Minnesota.

Washington, DC: At 4 p.m. EDT, Connected Nation, using ArcGIS technology in partnership with ESRI, will release statewide maps of rural and remote areas in seven states to support applications for broadband infrastructure funds now available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Connected Nation will also release Census Block-level broadband data, both in downloadable form and through an interactive online mapping tool, for the state of Minnesota.

The maps of rural and remote areas are currently available for Tennessee, Ohio, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, Kansas, and Kentucky. Connected Nation is in the process of developing similar maps for other states where the organization is partnering with the state to obtain federal stimulus funds. Colorado, which has partnered with Connected Nation to build a broadband inventory map, has already developed a map of rural and remote areas through its Office of Information Technology.

For the states in which Connected Nation hosts interactive broadband maps, such as Tennessee, Ohio, and Minnesota, additional interactive mapping tools will be available next week, allowing users to zoom in on the map for a better understanding of rural and remote boundaries in association with factors such as broadband availability, roads, Census Blocks, household density, and wireless towers. A nationwide PDF map of rural and remote areas is also available on the Connected Nation website.

The rural maps illustrate which geographic areas are considered rural, remote, and non-rural, according to definitions in the broadband stimulus rules released on July 1 by the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Applications for broadband infrastructure grants and loans will be measured, in part, based on what percent of the proposed broadband service area is rural and what percent is remote.

Currently, approximately \$7 billion in stimulus funds have been designated to help expand broadband access to unserved and underserved communities across the United States. These funds are available through the NTIA's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) and the RUS's Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP).

“These maps and data tools will give state leaders, community advocates, and broadband providers a better understanding of areas eligible for broadband stimulus funds,” said Connected Nation’s chief analyst Laura Taylor. “States that are working cooperatively with broadband providers to create maps of broadband availability are at the greatest advantage for maximizing stimulus dollars.”

The maps are currently available for download at each of the states’ websites: www.connectedtennessee.org; www.connectohio.org; www.connectmn.org; www.connectnorthcarolina.org; www.connectkansas.org; www.connectkentucky.org; and www.connectednation.org.

To learn more about how Connected Nation can help states, visit www.connectednation.org/policy or email broadbandstimulus@connectednation.org.

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About Connected Nation: Connected Nation is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that expands access to and use of broadband Internet and the related technologies that are enabled when individuals and communities have the opportunity and desire to connect. Connected Nation effectively raises the awareness of the value of broadband and related technologies by developing coalitions of influencers and enablers for technology deployment and adoption. Connected Nation works with community stakeholders, states, and technology providers to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered around a mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked. For more information about Connected Nation, Inc., visit www.connectednation.org.