Investing in Our State's Digital Future

FY22 Broadband Planning Allocation Presentation to Senate Finance Committee

October 2021

RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE

Why Focus on Broadband?

Ubiquitous need to participate in 21st century education, workforce, and society.

EDUCATION

- **80%** of 8th graders require the internet to complete their homework (pre-pandemic stat)

- Students with in-home internet earn **$2M** more over their lifetime than those without

WORKFORCE

- **90%** of job applications are online

- An unemployed person with internet in-home gets a new job **7 weeks faster** than one without internet

- **2/3** of the 13M+ jobs created in the US since 2000 require "advanced digital skills"

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

- Government services increasingly online

  - Municipal building permits

  - Health Source RI enrollment

  - SNAP benefits
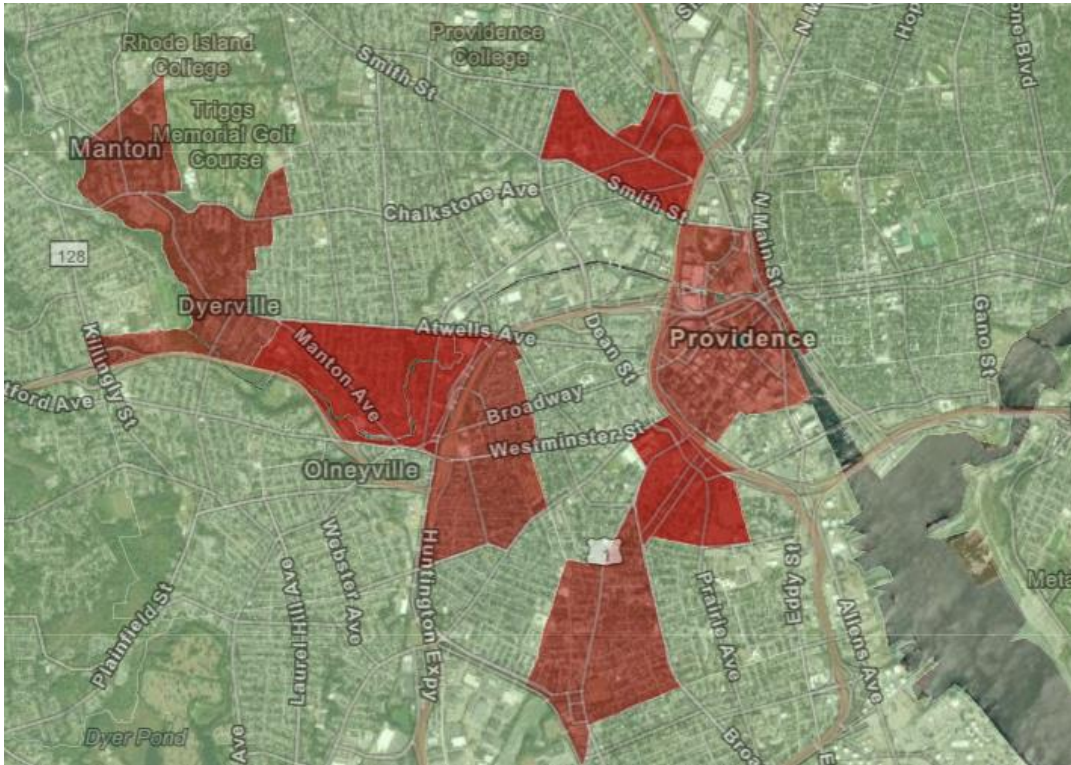
  - License & vehicle registration

BUSINESS OPERATION

- **500mbps** is needed for a business with 20-30 connected devices

Access in Rhode Island: The Bad

20% of Rhode Islanders lack in-home internet (often due to affordability issues)

45% of Rhode Islanders live in Census Blocks receiving speeds UNDER the new federal minimum threshold

Combined Findings Statewide

	Unified Speed Rating	Populated Square Miles	Households
1	< 10/1	2%	3,391
2	>=10/1 < 25/3	3%	7,753
3	>=25/3 < 50/10	9%	38,240
4	>=50/10 <100/20	36%	141,633
5	>= 100/20 < 200/50	28%	178,326
6	>= 200/50 < 200/200	4%	40,985
7	>= 200/200	2%	12,289

Unserved by FCC standard (ratings 1–2)

Underserved by new Federal standards (ratings 3–4)

OOKLA

Based on Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® data from consumer-initiated tests for the period of January 2020 through August 2021

30 September 2021

REID
CONSULTING GROUP

FY22 $500k Request: Necessary First Step

Foundational work needed to best understand nuanced needs & smartly deploy solutions

Drawing from previous RI efforts & 50-state scan of broadband initiatives

Staffing ($100k)

- ✓ Oversee & manage efforts, coordinate stakeholders

- ✓ RI only state in the nation without a designated broadband coordinator/coordinating body

Detailed Mapping ($200k)

- ✓ Build off preliminary mapping supported by vBCF

- ✓ Provide data needed to inform smart, targeted, nuanced state plan

- ✓ Needed to maximize efficiency in any future spending (target projects & track results)

Action Plan ($200k)

- ✓ Required to unlock potential $100M+ from federal IIJA

- ✓ Determine state priorities, strategic interventions, funding required

- ✓ Understand how to work with all partners

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Federal Funding

Potential for over $100M in dedicated broadband funding to Rhode Island if we produce a plan and provide matching funds.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act:

- $100M minimum allocation to states

  - **Must have a state broadband plan to access**

  - **Requires 25% local match**

  - To be used for local grant program

- Additional funds for competitive "middle mile" projects, digital literacy, continuation (with mod.) of the Emergency Broadband Benefit

APPENDIX

Additional information for reference – to be printed and shared with committee?

Requested Funding Aligned to Best Practice

Broadband RI and State Legislative Commission on Broadband recommended these steps in 2015

Benton Institute for Broadband & Society policy research recommend these steps

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON BROADBAND: 2015 RECOMMMENDATIONS

- Establish a "Broadband Coordinating Council" or a "Statewide Broadband Coordinator"

- Develop a Broadband Strategic Plan

- Continue BBRI's broadband data collection efforts

- Increase broadband adoption for underserved communities

- Encourage e-government expansion

- Embrace spectrum-wide broadband educational opportunities

PUTTING STATE BROADBAND FUNDS TO WORK: BEST PRACTICES IN STATE RURAL BROADBAND GRANT PROGRAMS

Overall RI Broadband Ranking: 37

Infrastructure ⌃

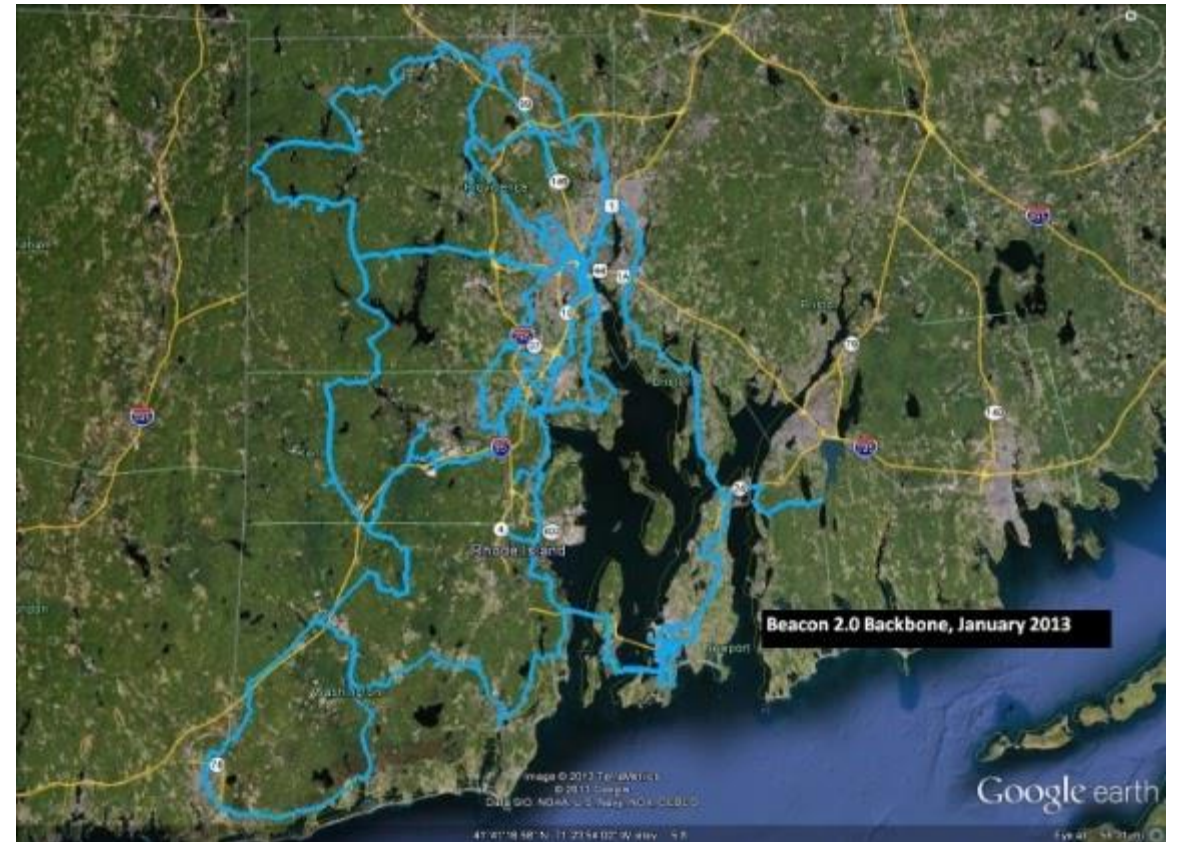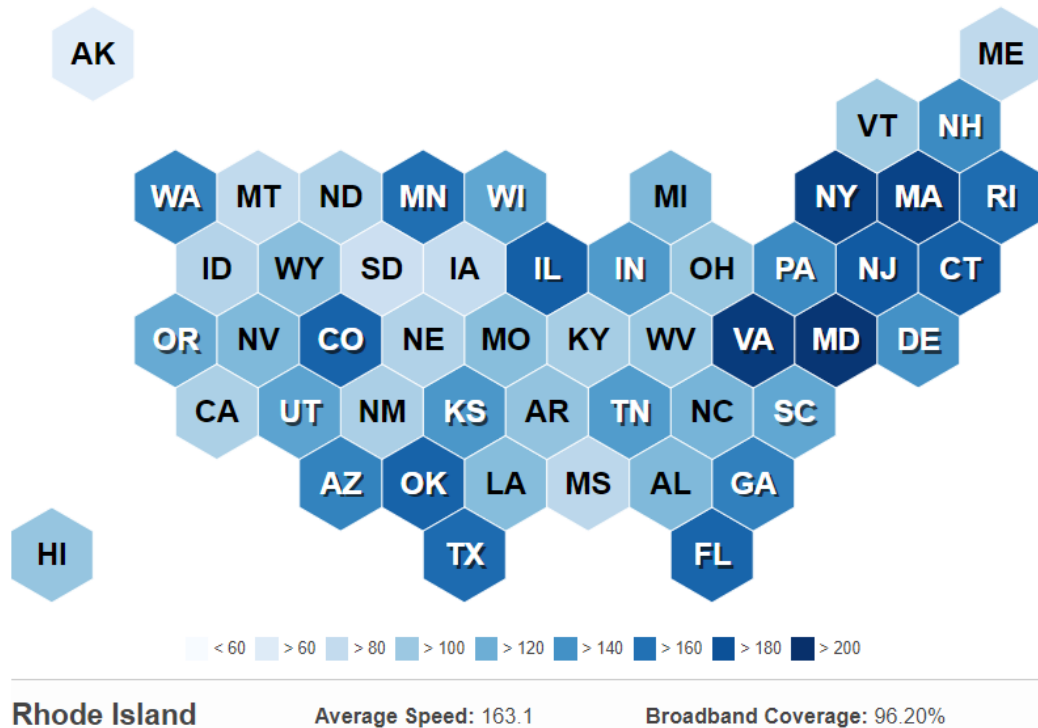| RANKING	ATTRIBUTES	
	Energy	#45
#49	Internet Access	#37
Rank	Transportation	#50

SEE FULL INFRASTRUCTURE RANKINGS »

Access in Rhode Island: The Good

Robust "middle mile": 96% of Rhode Islanders live near high-speed broadband

RI ranks 11th in Average Internet Download Speeds – well over federal minimum threshold

Average Internet Speed By State 2021

Legend: < 60 | > 60 | > 80 | > 100 | > 120 | > 140 | > 160 | > 180 | > 200

Rhode Island   Average Speed: 163.1   Broadband Coverage: 96.20%

Beacon 2.0 Backbone, January 2013

NE Established Broadband Efforts (Pre-Pandemic)

Even before the pandemic, Rhode Island was the only state in New England with neither 1) a broadband director or coordinating office nor 2) an active mapping effort nor 3) a local grant program.

	Connecticut	Maine	Massachusetts	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Vermont
Agency	Connecticut Broadband Policy Coordinator serves in the Office of Consumer Council, an independent state agency.	ConnectMe Authority, a separate public instrumentality created to facilitate the universal availability of broadband.	Massachusetts Broadband Institute is housed under Mass Tech Collective, part of MA Economic Development Commission.	NH Div. of Business and Economic Affairs has administrator specializing in broadband.	No coordinator, authority, commission, or oversight entity.	Division for Telecommunications and Connectivity is a division within Department of Public Service created by VT legislature in 2015.
Mapping	UConn, the Connecticut Technology Council and the CTgig Project, conducting survey on residential internet speed and usage. Last info on this project, 2015.	*FTC BB Maps Pilot State: ConnectMe crowdsourcing BB data on website.	*FTC BB Maps Pilot State: Broadband Institute working with providers to update maps at street and building level.	UNH Broadband Center for Excellence works with state for broadband mapping.	No Broadband Mapping* Commerce site's Utility Data Sets 5 years old.	State statute mandated reporting of BB availability by providers and requires updating regularly. 2018 maps available.
Funding	No funding since BTOP prior to COVID.	A 0.25% surcharge on all communications, video and internet service bills generates approximately $1.1 million per year, awarded $12.33 million since BTOP.	State bond has funded 62 million in grants to municipalities since BTOP funds.	No funding since BTOP prior to COVID.	No funding since BTOP funding.	Universal Service Fund includes wireless service providers, 2% charge used to award over $2 million since 2015.

Statewide Broadband Plan: Elements

Based on review of other state broadband plans

Supported by Pew BETI project

Strategy

- ✓ Goals
- ✓ Target areas
- ✓ Approach & risk mitigation
- ✓ Management & governance

Action Plan

- ✓ Mapping
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Technical Builds
- ✓ Programs
  - ✓ Device access
  - ✓ Digital literacy
- ✓ Partnerships
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement

Funding

- ✓ Key design elements for funding
- ✓ Priorities (geographies, demographics, types of technology)
- ✓ Opportunities
- ✓ Cost estimates