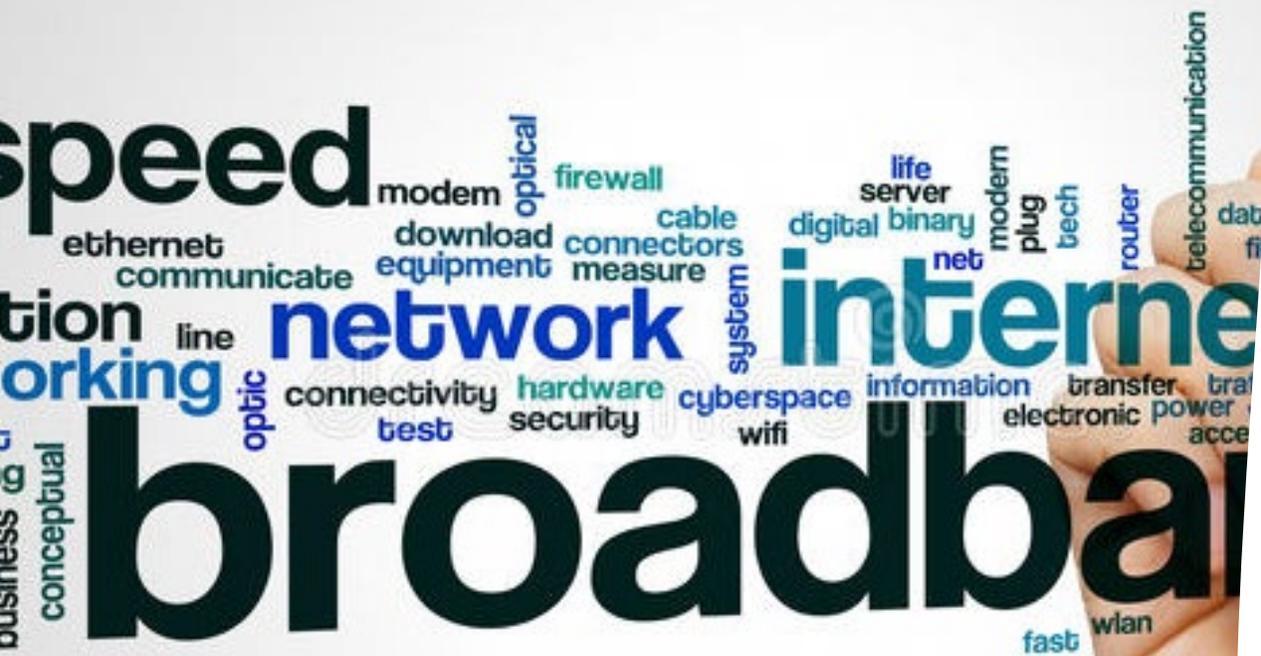




Impacting Broadband Utilization

John Bayalis, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager
Steve Williams, Chief Information Technology Officer

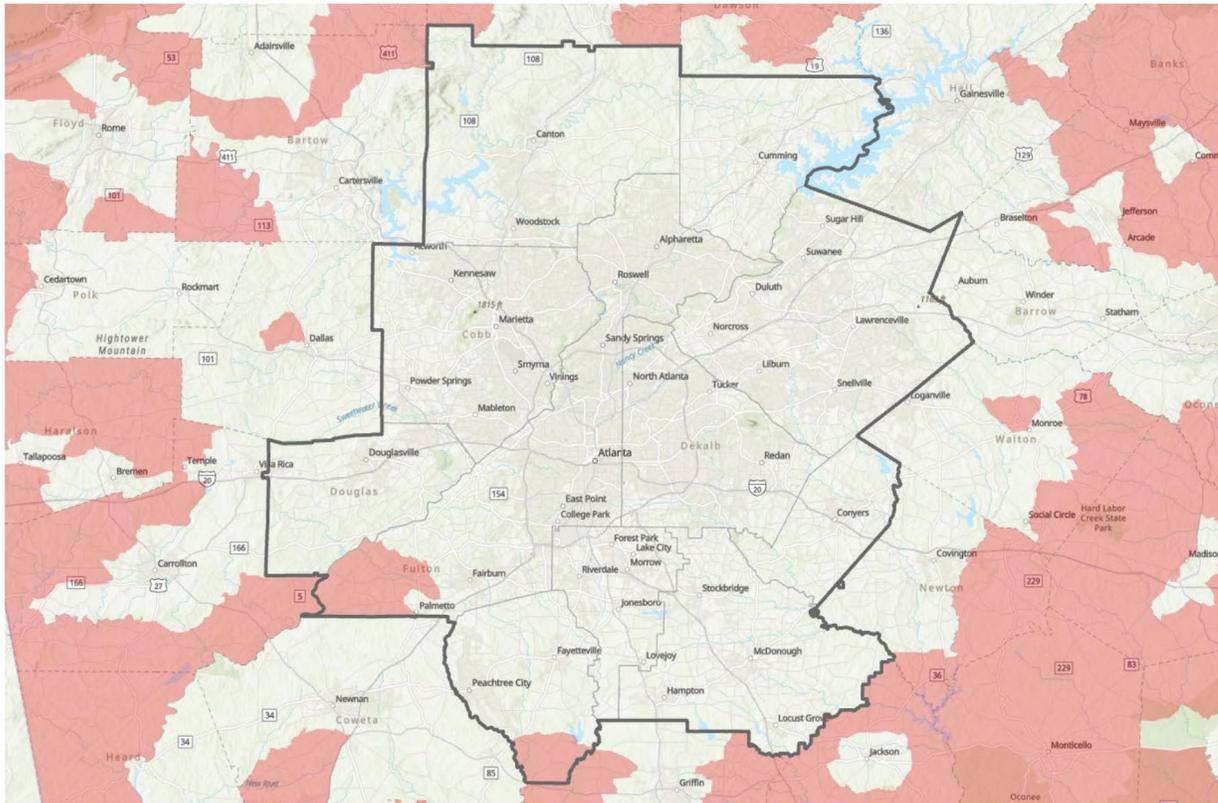


What is broadband internet?

- Any type of connection that can meet the FCC guidelines of 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed can be classified as broadband. This includes DSL, cable, fiber, wireless and satellite connections.
- A broadband connection gives the ability to do most common online activities without any problems (i.e. shop and bank online, stream video, use social media).
- There is also enough upload speed with broadband to use video chat, which makes activities like training and telehealth possible to conduct online.

Broadband Access and Utilization

Census tracts in which fewer than 80% of households have access to broadband internet

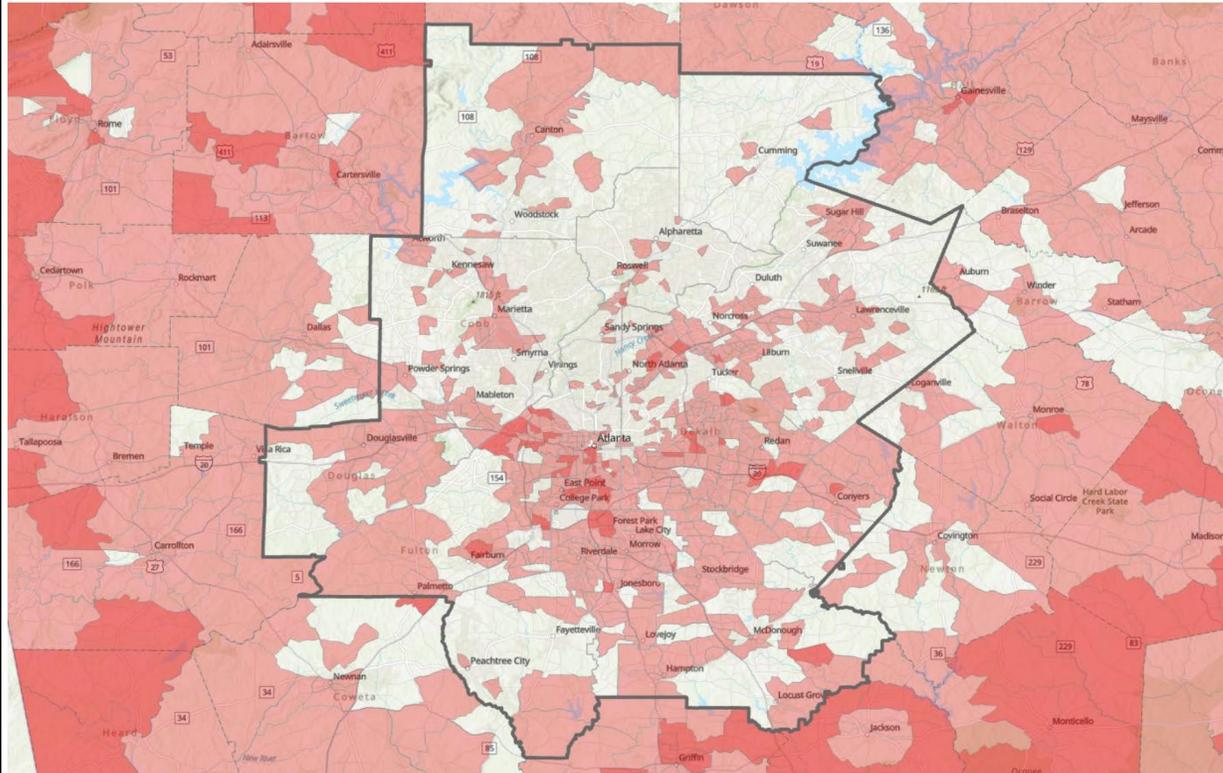


Source: Georgia Broadband Map, <https://broadband.georgia.gov/maps/map-data>

- The state of Georgia has devoted considerable financial resources in recent years (e.g., \$400M in grant funding in 2022) to support expansion of broadband to underserved communities.
- This is in addition to federal monies that are flowing into the state through various programming, most notably the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program (BEAD).
 - \$42B program that was contained within the IIJA and created to expand high-speed internet access in all 50 states.
 - Scheduled to go live in 2025.

Broadband Access and Utilization

Census tracts in which fewer than 80% of households (pink) and 50% of households (red) have a broadband internet subscription



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (S2801)

- Much of the emphasis in Georgia has been on “accessibility” (e.g., access to high-speed networks).
- Both “accessibility” and “utilization” are vital components to ensuring broadband reaches underserved communities.
- ARC is best positioned to focus on the “utilization” category to effect change.
- There are utilization gaps across the region (and state).

Why should we care about low utilization?

- Boosting utilization across the region (and state) has long-term benefits on issues/topics with which ARC has historically been involved:
 - Better access to jobs (**Workforce Development**)
 - Better access to education (**Workforce Development**)
 - Better access to telehealth (especially for those most vulnerable) (**Aging**)
 - Bringing more communities together in meaningful ways (**Livable Communities**)
 - Fostering thriving communities for all residents to better strive toward One Great Region
- What are the tools out there to close the utilization gap?
 - Program promotion through ARC's ability to convene and communicate to wide groups
 - Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)
 - Lifeline Program
 - ▶ [Help for Consumers | Georgia Technology Authority](#)

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a federal benefit program that helps ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more.
 - The benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.
 - Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet, from participating providers if they contribute between \$10 and \$50 toward the purchase price
 - [Home - ACP - Universal Service Administrative Company \(affordableconnectivity.gov\)](https://affordableconnectivity.gov)



The need across the region

▮ Data prepared below by our in-house team is grouped by county within the ARC footprint and reflects the percentage of household still eligible for ACP funding that have **not yet** enrolled:

- Cherokee: 77%
- Clayton: 37%
- Cobb: 64%
- DeKalb: 37%
- Douglas: 45%
- Fayette: 73%
- Forsyth: 80%
- Fulton: 44%
- Gwinnett: 69%
- Henry: 24%
- Rockdale: 39%

Lifeline Program

- Lifeline is an FCC program that helps make communications services more affordable for low-income consumers.
 - Lifeline provides subscribers a discount on qualifying monthly telephone service, broadband Internet service, or bundled voice-broadband packages purchased from participating wireline or wireless providers. The discount helps ensure that low-income consumers can afford 21st century broadband and the access it provides to jobs, healthcare, and educational resources.
 - [Lifeline Support for Affordable Communications | Federal Communications Commission \(fcc.gov\)](https://www.fcc.gov/lifeline)



Education and Awareness Recommendations – Part 1

- ▮ Where applicable, partner with local jurisdictions for any available broadband deployment financial support (e.g., IIJA)
- ▮ Include representatives of the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) to present at an ARC Board meeting to market ACP and Lifeline and answer questions directly.
 - GTA is launching a statewide marketing campaign to boost enrollment. This would be a great way to support their work, support the state and help our member jurisdictions simultaneously.
- ▮ Create an email blast to ARC-footprint legislators (aka: ARC Caucus) to support statewide work GTA is about to launch to bring more awareness of the program.
- ▮ Educate local Chambers of Commerce as we become more closely involved with area Chamber Public Policy Committees on a monthly basis

Education and Awareness Recommendations – Part 2

- Utilize ARC's website and social media presence to push messaging out around ACP.
- Distribute GTA branded literature about the program through our work with Area Agencies on Aging, Workforce Development Boards and other programming (e.g., as we've done with water conservation efforts in the past).
- Leverage the ARC Regional Communicators Alliance and encourage our partners, stakeholders and sponsors to get the word out.
- Explore private sector collaborations and partnerships to take advantage of existing promotions companies already working in this space may be engaged in.

Future Considerations

- Coordinate with our county and municipal governments across the region, as well as private sector stakeholders, to push for federal reauthorization of money currently made available through ACP.
- Given the many budget variables, this would be either
 - a) to advocate for the inclusion of funds in future Federal budgets and/or
 - b) support a continuing resolution that safeguards it beyond the expiration of the FY23 federal budget on September 30th (current funding is projected to run out sometime in 2024).



For more information

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