



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

As Wisconsin moves forward toward its goal of broadband access for all of its citizens and communities, I appreciate the opportunity to support USDA initiatives that will bring additional federal funding into our state. I am pleased to provide this letter to document ReConnect Program scoring criteria for applications proposing to expand broadband service in Wisconsin. Specifically, the following scoring criteria apply to our state:

- Wisconsin's Broadband Plan is up-to-date and published on the Internet at:
<https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/WBO.aspx> (10 points)
- There are no restrictions on non-broadband utilities from providing broadband service in rural areas. (5 points)
- Procedures are in place to expedite administrative activities if necessary, for completing rights-of-way and environmental permitting requirements for the project, in order to meet USDA's project build-out timelines. (5 points)

2015 Wisconsin Act 278 imposed additional duties on the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) related to the expansion of broadband access in Wisconsin. The Commission must:

- Encourage the development of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas of the state;
- Make comprehensive information about permits for broadband network projects and related business activities available to any person;
- Work with other government offices, at the state and local levels, to encourage the timely and efficient issuance of permits and the resolution of related issues; and
- Encourage local and federal agencies to coordinate activities relating to the application, approval, and issuance of permits for broadband network projects.



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2017 Budget Act 59 added new requirements for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation¹ and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources² to waive permitting fees for broadband infrastructure projects in underserved areas of the state.

The Commission will also work with ReConnect Program applicants to provide certification, if warranted, that their proposed project area does not duplicate service in geographic areas that have been awarded State Broadband Expansion Grant funds for broadband infrastructure in the past 5 years.

I appreciate your work in expanding rural infrastructure to close the digital divide for all Americans. It is one of my top priorities to expand access to reliable and affordable broadband service throughout Wisconsin, as you will see reflected in the Wisconsin Broadband Plan. If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Wisconsin's State Broadband Director, Angie Dickison, of the Wisconsin Broadband Office at Angie.Dickison@wisconsin.gov or reach out to my office through our Policy Advisor for broadband, Sam Munger, at sam.munger1@wisconsin.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers".

Governor Tony Evers
State of Wisconsin

¹ SECTION 1227. 86.16 (6) If the department consents under sub. (1) to the construction of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas, as designated under s. 196.504 (2) (d), the department may not charge any fee for the initial issuance of any permit necessary to construct broadband infrastructure along, across, or within the limits of a highway.

² SECTION 527. 24.40 (3) Notwithstanding s. 28.02 (5) or any contrary rule promulgated by the department, if the department grants an easement under sub. (1) for the construction of broadband infrastructure in underserved areas, as designated under s. 196.504 (2) (d), the department may not require any appraisal or the payment of any fee to grant the easement.