



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

May 13, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick, Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick and Nominated Administrator Roth:

Access to affordable high-speed internet is no longer a luxury in the 21st Century—it is a necessity. Here in Wisconsin, we have been working diligently to close the digital divide that has long held our workers, families, and communities back. Already, no administration in state history has done more to expand access to high-speed internet than we have. We have helped more than 410,000 homes and businesses access new or improved broadband since 2019. Nevertheless, Wisconsin was already behind when I took office, so our work is far from finished. Thousands of Wisconsinites still need access to reliable, affordable, and efficient high-speed internet.

I write today to underscore the importance of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to Wisconsin. Our state has already spent tremendous time and effort to achieve the shared goals of the BEAD Program. I urge NTIA not to delay our states' efforts at this final, critical stage, but to use the program review to create efficiencies that will accelerate broadband deployment to unserved Wisconsin residents. Importantly, these investments are critical for Wisconsin, most especially as the Wisconsin State Legislature during the last biennial budget process approved zero new state dollars to expand high-speed internet in our state. The Legislature declined to approve my proposed \$750 million state investment, citing federal investments Wisconsin expected to receive, BEAD investments primary among them. Failing to receive these investments in a timely fashion will slow my administration's efforts toward getting Wisconsinites connected to high-speed internet. We cannot afford to stall our progress.

In Wisconsin, we have worked closely with industry leaders, engaged local governments and economic development organizations in planning and design, and completed the state challenge processes and the first round of BEAD subgranting. Wisconsin had robust participation, with over 95 percent of Wisconsin's 206,000 BEAD eligible locations receiving at least one application in the first round. NTIA has already approved our initial proposals, project budget, and our challenge results. Wisconsin is not alone: across the country, 40 states and territories are already reviewing and accepting applications for BEAD projects.

NTIA should not make any changes that will slow down our states' already-approved program plans and the tremendous progress we have made in implementing those plans. In BEAD, Congress created a program that gave states the power to create state-specific programs to suit our needs. NTIA must continue to allow states to make the choices that will best allow Wisconsin's homes and businesses to get online quickly. Any changes to the BEAD program should be options, not mandates, and any waivers granted by NTIA should be available to every State. New mandates to drastically alter our state's BEAD plan will likely slow down our progress, harming the households and businesses that are still awaiting connection.

Wisconsin have already done the work. Internet Service Providers have planned their projects and are ready to put shovels in the ground. NTIA must not require any program changes that will delay Wisconsin's plans—Wisconsinites in rural and unserved areas have waited long enough. We are ready to award these funds and build the networks and 21st Century infrastructure needed to support a 21st Century economy and workforce.

Wisconsinites are counting on these investments. We are hopeful that our federal partners will help us in keeping the BEAD program flexible and prevent unnecessary delays in getting all Wisconsinites connected to affordable, reliable high-speed internet.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor