

A National Broadband Plan by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that would provide faster internet speeds to at least 100 million Americans by the year 2020 sounds like a pretty good thing. The speed of the internet would increase to 100 megabits per second (Meg) in the proposed plan.

However, there is concern that urban areas would benefit far more than rural areas. The plan proposes speeds 25 times slower in rural areas than in urban areas, according to the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA). They also state that rural areas will pay more for services that are slower than urban consumers.

The NTCA offers some talking points regarding rural concerns:

—Many studies show broadband in previously unserved/underserved communities equals increased commerce, education, telemedicine and entertainment opportunities.

—Broadband connections help consumers and communities too (access attracts industry, creates jobs, etc.).

—The “100 squared” proposal promises internet speeds of 100 Meg to at least 100 million Americans by the year 2020—but establishes a dangerously low threshold of just 4 Meg for rural/high cost areas.

—This threatens the FCC’s own goal of advancing broadband deployment.

—It also threatens the economic viability of rural America—it will be difficult for rural towns to attract businesses if they cannot assure high quality, sustainable broadband access.

## FCC's National Broadband Plan could bring slower internet speeds here

Written by Chris Lee

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—Rural consumers, businesses, farms, hospitals, schools, libraries, etc. will have substandard service while urban areas get speeds 25 times faster.

—The FCC plan makes rural Americans second class citizens in the broadband world.

—Rural areas lack population density and economic foundations found in cities/suburbs.

—The FCC plan also proposes to erode the time-tested mechanisms that rural providers have used to help build the widely successful telephone network.

—Rural providers need assurance they can recover costs now more than ever so they can achieve broadband penetration success.

—4 Meg and 100 Meg are not “reasonably comparable.”

—Rather than support the goal of universally available service, the FCC plan promises faster speeds for some while essentially guaranteeing substandard, lesser service for others.

The internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Slower broadband speeds would cripple schools, hospitals and businesses in rural areas, according to the NTCA.

PC Telcom and the NTCA urge the public to reach out to policy makers to support regulatory action that provides the same quality broadband services in rural America as provided in urban America.

Rep. Betsy Markey has opposed the FCC broadband plan as it stands today. She can be reached at 202-225-4676 or <http://betsymarkey.house.gov/Contact/>.

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Additionally, Rep. John Salazar and Senator Mark Udall have sent letters to the FCC expressing concern with the plan.

PC Telcom urges the public to contact additional senators and representatives to voice their concern. Send letters by Aug. 10 so voices can be heard. Letters must reach senators and representatives by Aug. 15 so they will have time to take concerns back to Washington.

For more information on the broadband plan and NTCA, visit [http://www.ntca.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3854&Itemid=1480](http://www.ntca.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3854&Itemid=1480)