

5th District Footprint

MAY 2011

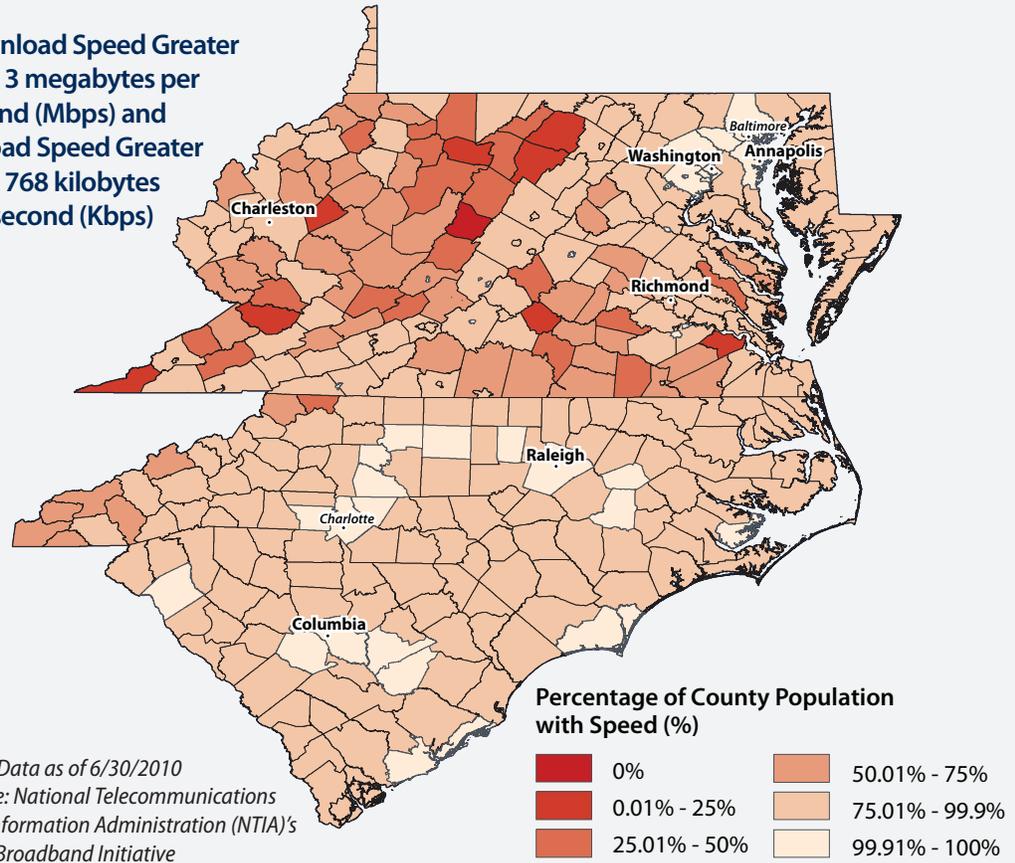


Broadband Speed in the Fifth District

In the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Congress directed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to develop a plan to ensure that everyone who desires broadband Internet could have access to it. They cited the role that broadband infrastructure and its services could play in furthering national purposes like consumer welfare, community development, private sector investment, job creation and economic growth. According to the October 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS), 68.2 percent of households in the U.S. have broadband Internet.

Broadband is a high-speed "always on" Internet connection. FCC's National Broadband Plan calls for a minimum of 4 megabytes per second (Mbps) for downloading and 1 Mbps for uploading. The map shows the percentage of population in Fifth District counties who live in an area where, if they want or have Internet access, download speeds are greater than 3 Mbps and upload speeds are greater than 768 kilobytes per second (Kbps). In Maryland, South Carolina and the District of Columbia, at least 75 percent of the population have the opportunity to meet this standard. In North Carolina, all but Alleghany County (31.5 percent) have at least 50 percent of their population meeting the standard. It is a different story in Virginia and West Virginia where there are concentrations of counties with less than half of the population having Internet

Download Speed Greater than 3 megabytes per second (Mbps) and Upload Speed Greater than 768 kilobytes per second (Kbps)



access at suggested speeds. In Highland County, Virginia, none of its population have access to Internet connections at these speeds.

Inadequate Internet access speeds have implications for the well-being of households. For the past several years, local governments have transitioned certain transactions online. If an individual's Internet connection cannot reach the higher speeds necessary to access forms, for example, their ability to receive local government services may be compromised. Furthermore, in rural areas, students may not have the opportunity to take more advanced or specialized courses because of a lack of qualified instructors or too few students. Access to online courses fills this gap. For example, the Virginia Department of Education offers Virtual Virginia, a program for middle and high school students who do not have access to Advanced Placement, world language, core academic and

elective courses for a variety of reasons. A high-speed Internet connection enables students to fully participate in such programs. The Internet also can be used to bridge isolation for rural residents, in general. Finally, in the current economic climate of high unemployment, job seekers are more likely to look on the Internet for job postings than in a newspaper's classified section. Access to a high-speed Internet connection could positively impact the employment search.

The availability of high-speed Internet can be an important factor in attracting businesses and individuals. Putting into place the infrastructure to support the expansion of broadband technology, into areas where it is currently lacking or limited, can be a tool for economic growth.

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