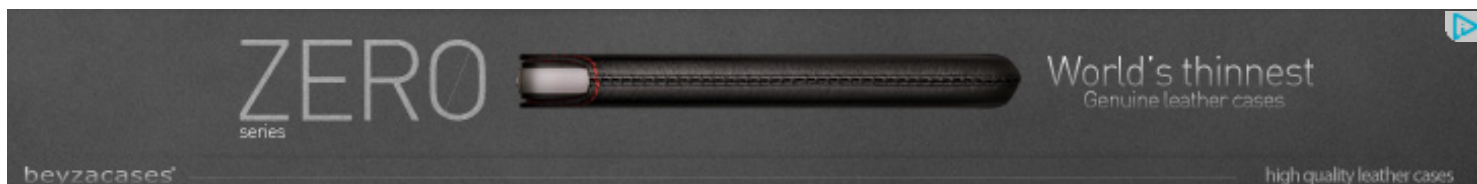




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FCC: Rural areas still lag in broadband speeds

by [Grant Gross](#), IDG News Service Jun 23, 2011 12:41 am

More than 28 percent of the rural population in the U.S. lack access to midrange 3Mbps broadband service, according to a new report from two U.S. agencies.

The [rural broadband report](#), released Tuesday by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, shows large gaps in broadband service between rural areas and urban and suburban areas.

The gaps appear to be closing, but many rural residents “still lack access to the kind of broadband that most Americans take for granted,” FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said in a statement. “That is not acceptable, and it’s why the FCC has launched major initiatives to overhaul our universal service system, free more spectrum, and reduce barriers to broadband deployment. These efforts will help ensure that high-speed Internet can connect rural communities to global markets, jobs, and world-class education and health care.”

About 26.2 million U.S. residents don’t have access to 3Mbps service, with nearly 73 percent of them living in rural areas, the report said.

Broadband is important to rural businesses and residents, Genachowski said. “In America’s small towns, just as in its large cities, broadband is vital to economic growth, to job creation, to entrepreneurship and the success of small businesses, and to education and healthcare,” he said.

The report shows the need for rural broadband programs to continue, added Jonathan Adelstein, administrator of the USDA’s Rural Utilities Service.

In Indiana, nearly 28 percent of the state’s 4.6 million urban and suburban residents have no access to 6Mbps service, according to the report. But nearly 63 percent of the state’s 1.8 million residents lack access to the same service.

In Minnesota, just 2 percent of the state’s 3.7 million urban and suburban residents don’t have access to 6Mbps service, while nearly 57 percent of its 1.6 million rural residents lack access to those speeds.

The FCC’s [national broadband plan](#), released in March 2010, [sets a goal of delivering 100Mbps service](#) to 100 million U.S. homes by 2020.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, passed by Congress in early 2009, included more than \$7 billion for broadband deployment across the U.S. Many of those projects are in development.