Checking the Connection

Whether it's for business, education, or personal use, high-speed internet service, or broadband, is increasingly must-have infrastructure for communities and residents. The Gulf Coast Economic Development District's (GCEDD) *Regional Gaps in High-Speed Internet Services Report* outlines the challenges the 13-county Houston-Galveston region faces in closing current gaps in broadband service, as well as potential solutions.

Challenges & Solutions

Cost

Challenge - Service providers have little economic incentive to provide broadband infrastructure in less profitable locations.

Solution - Communities can install broadband infrastructure, or fiber, using *dig once* policies; develop public-private partnerships; and consider streamlining policies.

Difficult to Pinpoint Data Gaps

Challenge - Data is available, but it is innaccurate, dated, and imprecise.

Solution - The GCEDD will conduct two studies of broadband access and needs in select communities and create a template for communities to use for local surveys and assessments.

Lack of Competition

Challenge - Broadband service is typically provided only by large, private telecommunications companies.

Solution - Communities may engage in public-private partnerships, such as building a localized network and giving a private provider maintenance and operation access.
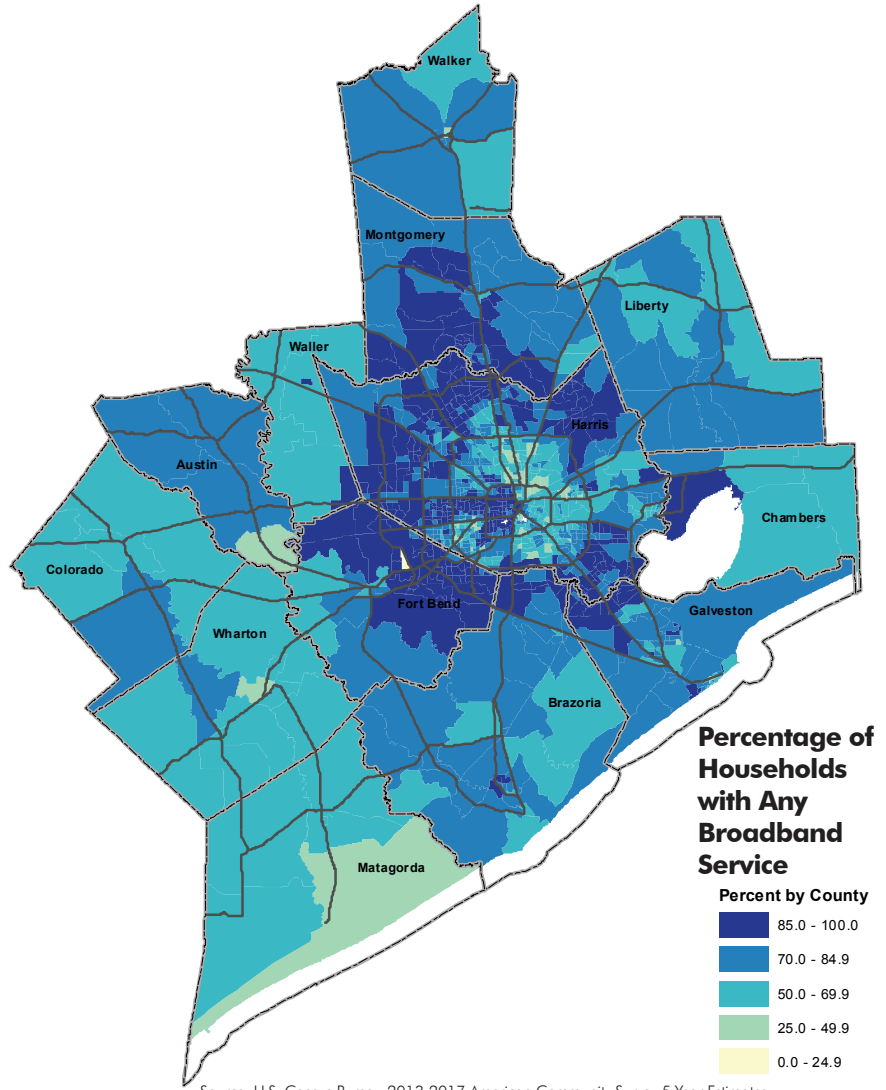
Limited Local Capacity

Challenge - Some communities do not have the expertise to develop an effective local broadband program or access available grants.

Solution - The GCEDD provides information and resources for local communities interested in expanding broadband services for businesses and residents.

Next Steps

The GCEDD is developing a regional plan to determine the best strategies for expanding broadband in the region, including:

- Local broadband assessments
- Recommendations and strategies for expanding broadband.
- Case studies of broadband expansion in the region
- Resources and grant information
- Model ordinances, policies, and regulations

Percentage of Households with Any Broadband Service

Percent by County

- 85.0 - 100.0
- 70.0 - 84.9
- 50.0 - 69.9
- 25.0 - 49.9
- 0.0 - 24.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Key Themes

- Broadband access is typically lower in rural areas.
- Broadband adoption is reduced in areas with lower per-capita incomes.
- Broadband network quality is inconsistent across the region.

Visit www.gcedd.org to view the
Regional Gaps in High-Speed Internet Service Report.

GULF COAST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

HGAC
Houston-Galveston Area Council

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