

# BROADBANDCENSUS.COM'S weekly report

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Nearly 1,700 comments and questions were filed with the NTIA in the broadband grant program: hundreds were substantive documents. The NTIA, RUS and the FCC now enter an extensive evaluation phase, with rules for the stimulus funds expected to emerge within the next two months.

## THE WEEK'S LINKS

### Aneesh Chopra First-Ever Federal Chief Technology Officer

President Obama announced Virginia Secretary of Technology **Aneesh Chopra** as the chief technology officer, complementing the efforts of the current chief information officer, **Vivek Kundra**, and the newly-appointed chief innovation officer, **Jeffrey Zients**. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Weekly-Address-President-Obama-Discusses-Efforts-to-Reform-Spending-Government-Waste-Names-Chief-Performance-Officer-and-Chief-Technology-Officer/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Weekly-Address-President-Obama-Discusses-Efforts-to-Reform-Spending-Government-Waste-Names-Chief-Performance-Officer-and-Chief-Technology-Officer/) According to the announcements, Kundra "is responsible for setting technology policy across the government, and using technology to improve security, ensure transparency, and lower costs," and Chopra "will promote technological innovation to help the country meet its goals from job creation, to reducing health care costs, to protecting the homeland." According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Chopra's tasks will also "include expanded use of technology to boost broadband access." <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2009/04/18/tech-industry-cheers-as-obama-taps-aneesh-chopra-for-cto/>

### The e-NC Authority Faces Drastic Budget Cuts in North Carolina

At the very moment that states are seeking to ramp up their efforts to capture broadband stimulus dollars from the federal government, the **e-NC Authority** faces drastic budget cuts, according to **WRAL Local Tech Wire**. [http://localtechwire.com/business/local\\_tech\\_wire/opinion/blogpost/4928710/](http://localtechwire.com/business/local_tech_wire/opinion/blogpost/4928710/) Victims of state-wide budget-cutting, the non-profit, state-funded e-NC – one of the pioneers of the effort to understand and incent broadband deployment – faces more than a 50 percent cut in funding under the current budget recommended by the governor and the state Senate. In other North Carolina news, the **Fiber to the Home Council** last week sent a letter to **Gov. Bev. Perdue**, opposing recently-introduced legislation that would block municipalities from becoming network providers in competition with private companies. A link to the letter is posted on the blog of **Brian Bowman**, public affairs manager for the city of Wilson, N.C. <http://savencbb.wordpress.com/>

### THE BROADBAND CENSUS LIST OF NTIA COMMENTS

Building on previously-published lists of comments filed with the Commerce Department's NTIA, BroadbandCensus.com published a collective list of 222 substantive comments regarding the \$7.2 billion federal broadband stimulus program. All told, nearly 1,700 individuals and organizations submitted questions or comments in the rule-making, which were published on the NTIA web page, at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/comments.cfm>.

The BroadbandCensus.com list separates the wheat from the chaff and organizes the comments alphabetically. For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/04/the-broadbandcensuscom-list-of-ntia-comments/>

### VIRGINIA AND PENNSYLVANIA SEEK BROADBAND MAPS

The head of the **Virginia Office of Telework Promotion** and the program manager for the **Pennsylvania Broadband Initiative**, together with the former mayor of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Chairman of the **D.C. Public Service**, last week discussed the need for broadband mapping, and the efforts that their states have undertaken to begin the process of broadband data collection and display. For more, see <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/04/graham-richard-former-mayor-of-fort-wayne-at-april-broadband-breakfast-club/>

CONTINUES ON BACK

**COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, April 20, 2009** - How should community and economic development officials think about broadband? Comprehensively! What does it mean for education, worker-training and quality of life? Everything!

At least those were the answers emanating from the "Broadband in Cities and Towns" Conference here at **Benedict College**, a small, private, historically black college. Experts from all over the country, and particularly from the Southeast, gathered here on Thursday in an effort to ask and answer these questions about broadband.

The conference, the third of five such annual gatherings, came at an auspicious moment. With the federal broadband stimulus package offering \$7.2 billion for fresh broadband deployments and applications, the crowd in Columbia was eager to find ways to seize the moment for broadband in South Carolina.

After a kick-off in which the mayor, the chief information officer for the state Department of Education, and the president of Benedict College welcomed guests, **Jabari Simama**, vice president of community development at Benedict, and the conference director, framed the conference question this way: "Why do we do this?"

"We believe that broadband is a utility, just like water, electricity, and the telephone," he said. "We wouldn't think about denying power and water to someone who has trouble paying for it. Everyone needs water, electricity, a telephone - we believe that broadband is an essential utility, just like sanitation."

What does that say for universal coverage of broadband? Simama, a powerhouse emerging on the public stage at the intersection of political and technological life, is the author of the forthcoming *Civil Rights to Cyber Rights: Broadband and Digital Equality in the Age of Obama*. He answered his own question as follows: "You don't skip houses when you are picking up garbage. And the same should be with broadband." <http://www.thestate.com/education/story/751461.html>

Interspersed at the conference between marketing pitches from **Google** and **Clearwire** came substantive ruminations about technology from **Jim Pepin**, chief technology officer of **Clemson University**; **Andrew Cohill**, president of the consulting firm **Design Nine**; and **John Barber**, author of *Black Digital Elite: African American Leaders of the Information Revolution*.

Cohill is based in Blacksburg, Va., and has done extensive work in the way broadband affects the economic and social lives of community. He recalled historical precedents of "community infrastructure that began as private infrastructure: canals, railroads, roads, airports, water, sewers and electricity."

New York City had 18 different private water companies in the late 1800s, until the state saw economic, social and health benefits to consolidating them and "invest[ing] in a water system." He also showed a photograph of a public clock tower, and called it "the first community technology," from Venice in the 1400s.

"Broadband is the road, not one of the trucks," he said. Cities should not neglect their road-building responsibilities, he said. Citing developments in Norton, Va., and Galax, Va., Cohill said that broadband determines the economic success of public projects. "Retail will not lead downtown revivals. It has to be technology, fiber and class A office space, but fiber is going to lead," he said.

Coming from the perspective of a major research university, Pepin described the role that university-built fiber-optic wires can play in linking to the communities of the future: such an infrastructure "exists today, and has people on it today from the research [community]. This can be used as a backbone to build" new connectivity, he said.

Some debated fiber versus wireless broadband. **Bruce Lincoln**, chief design scientist at the **Urban Cyberspace Company**, touted the efforts of Jackson, Mississippi, to provide low-costs broadband "through the deployment of a hybrid fiber optical network." **Bill Byrd**, of the **South Carolina Educational Broadband Service Commission**, emphasized the role that 2.5 MegaHertz spectrum - available to state-owned broadcaster **ETV** - could play in getting better broadband out sooner.

For Simama, now is the time to push on broadband. His reasons for hope? **Rep. Jim Clyburn**, D-S.C., House Majority Whip, and whose district includes Benedict College; **Rick Wade**, a prominent South Carolinian now chief of staff at the **Commerce Department**. <http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/03/ntia-announces-series-of-public-meetings-on-broadband-stimulus-introduces-rick-wade/> Most of all, though, Simama's hope comes from the man in the oval office: "Barack Obama is the president of the United States and is a president who understands broadband."

**-Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com**

NEW YORK CITY HAD 18 DIFFERENT PRIVATE WATER COMPANIES, UNTIL THE STATE SAW ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HEALTH BENEFITS TO CONSOLIDATING THEM.

**COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, April 20, 2009** – States need to think, quickly, about how they are going to package their efforts to obtain broadband stimulus funding for projects within their states.

Stimulus rules governing the \$7.2 billion pool of money are likely to be out within the next two months, pushing states to act fast or cease their vanguard role in the process. Comments were due on April 13. Both the **Commerce Department** and the **Agriculture Department** are expected to issue their first “notice of funds availability” by June.

Of the nearly 1,700 comments and questions that poured into the **National Telecommunications and Information Association** at Commerce, and the **Rural Utilities Service** at USDA, at least 20 states weighed in with their observations.

<http://broadbandcensus.com/2009/04/the-broadbandcensuscom-list-of-ntia-comments/>

Among the commenting states were major population centers, like California, New York and Pennsylvania; states that have established themselves as leaders of the efforts to monitor and deploy broadband infrastructure, including Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont; and heavily rural states that have struggled with broadband deployment, including Alaska, Arizona, Iowa and North Dakota.

Associations like the **National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners** have been seeking to relieve NTIA and RUS of some of the burden of sifting through pending broadband applications. NARUC proposed that the federal agencies allocate, for the first of three rounds of funding, a “use or lose” minimum standard allocation for each state.

Whether NARUC’s pitch gains or loses traction at the NTIA and RUS, states are also looking to play another role in the process: becoming an aggregator and a match-maker among the various broadband grant applicants.

And in spite of the time pressure under which the states are operating, there is considerable variation in their 50-plus coordinative efforts.

Part of that has to do with the preparation of the various states, and whether, for example, they have established a state broadband authority – a new breed of entity that has become a highly prized asset in this broadband process. Among the states that have put such initiatives in place, for example, are Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.

**STIMULUS RULES ARE LIKELY TO BE OUT WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, PUSHING STATES TO ACT FAST OR CEASE THEIR VANGUARD ROLE IN THE PROCESS.**

The **Massachusetts Broadband Initiative** <http://masstech.org/broadband>, which was officially funded by August 2008

legislation authorizing up to \$40 million, anticipated the movement toward a federal broadband stimulus. <http://broadbandcensus.com/2008/08/in-massachusetts-governor-to-sign-40-broadband-bill-aimed-at-spurring-investment/>

Massachusetts has already undertaken its own “call for solutions,” effectively engaging all major stakeholders seeking to tap into state resources for broadband deployment. <http://www.masstech.org/broadband/callforsolutions.html>

Additionally is the attitude of the state’s political leadership. Both Massachusetts and Vermont have hired state-wide “stimulus czars.”

At the “Broadband in Cities and Towns” conference here, and at a Wednesday pre-conference planning session, officials lamented the different situation with which they were faced.

In South Carolina, Republican “Governor [Mark Sanford] has threatened on more than one occasion to send the money back to Washington,” said **Jabari Simama**, vice president of community development and conference director of the event at **Benedict College**.

**-Drew Clark, Editor, BroadbandCensus.com**

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**MAY: SPENDING THE STIMULUS: HOW SHOULD ‘UNSERVED’ AND ‘UNDERSERVED’ AREAS BEST BE DEFINED?**

BROADBANDCENSUS.COM PRESENTS THE BROADBAND BREAKFAST CLUB AT OLD EBBITT GRILL, TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009, AT 8 A.M.

- RANDOLPH J. MAY, PRESIDENT, FREE STATE FOUNDATION
- JEAN PLYMALE, VIRGINIA TECH eCORRIDORS PROGRAM
- JAMES BRADFORD RAMSEY, GENERAL COUNSEL, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGULATORY UTILITY COMMISSIONERS
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

## THE WEEK'S LINKS...

### Fiber Envy in Palo Alto, Calif., and in France

Leaders of the college town of Palo Alto, Calif., are hoping that federal stimulus dollars for high-speed broadband could be what's necessary to reverse last month's fate for its fiber network, according to **KLIV Radio Station**.

<http://kliv.com/pages/4191742.php>? A new staff report <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=15341> by the city council outline a plan to keep the possibility of a network rollout alive, but in a phased fashion, according to **Palo Alto Online**. [http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/show\\_story.php?id=11913](http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/show_story.php?id=11913) The **Mercury News** also reports on the developments. [http://www.mercurynews.com/breakingnews/ci\\_12138071](http://www.mercurynews.com/breakingnews/ci_12138071) Meanwhile, the recently appointed French minister for new technologies last week said that that the county has "entered the first step to bring fiber to the home in France to everybody. This first phase focuses on fiber deployments in the most populated zones.... The second phase, starting in July, will be to facilitate the deployments in areas with lower population density." <http://www.muniwireless.com/2009/04/09/stimulating-ftth-investments-in-france/>

### Changing the Stimulus to Require Broadband Mapping First

Two Republican representatives have written to the NTIA, the RUS and the FCC to urge them to make broadband stimulus grants contingent upon the state having completed broadband mapping. <http://www.govtech.com/gt/articles/638776> In the letter, **Rep. Joe Barton**, R-Texas, and **Cliff Stearns**, R-Fla., said that "prioritizing funding for projects in states where mapping is complete will also help ensure requests are well thought out and provide a valuable incentive to complete maps in the remaining states as thoroughly and quickly as possible." Barton was formerly head of the **Energy and Commerce Committee**, and remains the committee's ranking Republican. Stearns is ranking member of the **Communications Subcommittee**, which is chaired by **Rep. Rick Boucher**, D-Va. Also, **Ars Technica** reports on how the FCC's role in the national broadband plan is taking shape. <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/04/broadband-stimulus-and-the-fccs-internet-policy-statement.ars>

## ABOUT BROADBANDCENSUS.COM

BroadbandCensus.com is a premium provider of news, information and events about broadband technology and internet policy. BroadbandCensus.com is at the forefront of understanding and explaining the implementation of the \$7.2 billion broadband stimulus package on the federal, state and local level. Since January 2008, BroadbandCensus.com has been building a public, transparent and freely accessible database about local broadband speeds, prices, availability, reliability and competition.

BroadbandCensus.com is also host of the Broadband Breakfast Club, an on-the-record discussion forum that meets at the Old Ebbitt Grill on the second Tuesday of each month, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Registration is available [here](#). Webcasts of previous Broadband Breakfast Club events are available for purchase [here](#).

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