

Opening Statement for Chairman Richard Hudson
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
“Examining Solutions to Expedite Broadband Permitting”
Thursday, September 18, 2025, at 2:00pm

Closing the digital divide has long been a bipartisan priority for this subcommittee. Under both Republican and Democratic majorities, we have discussed and found ways to ensure that every American has access to high-speed broadband. Today, we have the opportunity to achieve this goal with the \$42 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

I think members of both parties would agree that BEAD has not gone as we had hoped. After almost four years, not a single home has been connected. Some in my party want to completely scrap BEAD and start over because of how the previous Administration ran the program. But that is not my view. My goal has been to fix the program so that we can deploy broadband quickly. The name of my bill, the SPEED for BEAD Act, reflects this.

I am pleased that many of my proposed reforms have been adopted by the Trump Administration and that they are working quickly to review and approve state proposals.

Still, money alone will not close the digital divide. Burdensome, opaque, and expensive permitting reviews that exist at every level of government continue to prevent or delay deployment. I have heard this from broadband providers across the country.

In my home state of North Carolina, one provider has waited over a year for the Department of the Interior to review its application to build on federal land—even though the agency is required to provide a response within 270 days.

Another North Carolina provider's project was delayed because it has to do a historic preservation review despite the fact that it was on previously disturbed terrain that likely already had a review. And this is in addition to lengthy state and local application reviews that can include excessive costs unrelated to approving the permit.

Unless we streamline the permitting process, all of the money we have dedicated to deployment will be tied up in burdensome reviews

resulting in more unnecessary delays, forcing millions of Americans to continue to wait for connectivity.

Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans are committed to reforming this process. For the past three Congresses, we have introduced a package of bills to address this problem. Each of these bills tackles an obstacle that has either prevented, delayed, or complicated deployment, with the goal of instilling certainty, predictability, and savings into this process.

For example, my RAPID Act would exempt small cell wireless antennas from burdensome and expensive environmental and historic preservation reviews, as well as reform the Tribal notification process to expedite wireless broadband deployment. I look forward to the discussion today to find the best path forward together.

Some of these bills passed the House last Congress with bipartisan support. I hope we can pass those bills, as well as the others, into law this Congress. Enacting this package will make deploying broadband

cheaper, more predictable, and less burdensome, ultimately connecting more Americans.

I want to acknowledge our partners at the Federal Communications Commission for their work on this issue. Under then-Chairman Ajit Pai, the FCC used its authorities to remove state and local obstacles to deployment, implement shot clocks, and cap fees where they can. That work is continuing under Chairman Brendan Carr, as they will seek comment later this month on additional proposals. We are grateful for this work and, through these bills, hope to codify and build on what they have done.

I hope that instead of playing the blame game today, we can focus on making sure every American has access to the broadband service that is essential to life in the 21st Century. We have an esteemed panel of witnesses with us today, all of whom have experience with the challenges of deploying broadband. I look forward to hearing from them and I look forward to this discussion.

I now yield five minutes to my colleague, Ranking Member Matsui, for her opening statement.