



## Enhancing Broadband Infrastructure in Communities Across Colorado

In order to compete in today's economy, communities across the state are dependent on broad bandwidth Internet access (aka "Broadband") for basic business development and operation. The availability of broadband also enhances the quality of life and desirability of a community by providing residents access to online education and distance learning opportunities, telemedicine, online government services and vast entertainment content (movies, music, etc.). In fact, broadband has become so critical to our communities that many now refer to it as a basic infrastructure need, placing it on par with roads, water systems and power grids.

Unfortunately, numerous communities in Colorado are still without adequate broadband service. The reasons vary, but more often than not these communities are too sparsely populated, too remote or in regions where the topography (mountains, valleys, etc.) makes expanding service difficult and expensive. These communities are "upside down" from a business model standpoint, and telecom providers are unable or unwilling to connect these areas without assistance.

During the upcoming legislative session, CCI will be pursuing a package of bills to address improving broadband service in communities throughout the state. This package of legislative priorities contains the following three policy goals:

### **1.) Restore Local Government Authority to Acquire or Construct Broadband Infrastructure by Repealing SB05-152**

By authorizing counties to use public dollars to acquire, construct or finance broadband infrastructure through a repeal of SB05-152, local governments will be better situated to help provide improved broadband services to citizens and businesses. This is especially true in more rural areas, where broadband access is extremely limited and local businesses, healthcare providers, and schools are dependent on affordable and reliable internet access for remote service delivery. To date, voters in 28 of the state's 64 counties have passed ballot measures to repeal SB05-152, hoping to position their communities to invest in public broadband infrastructure and attract private providers to these areas. For many of our more rural and poorer counties, however, the challenge still remains.

## **2.) Modify Local Improvement District Requirements for Telecommunications Infrastructure**

Under current law, if a local improvement district (LID) is formed by voters to help fund local broadband infrastructure, a telecom service provider must own, operate and maintain the infrastructure. This statutory language is outdated and no longer reflects the array of public and private stakeholders working in the broadband arena. Rather, a LID should be authorized to own, operate and maintain its own voter-approved infrastructure.

## **3.) Perfecting Easements for Broadband Infrastructure**

While broadband has quickly become recognized as an essential utility, many counties are still having trouble obtaining adequate access to broadband infrastructure. Many counties already have access to existing easements with broadband fiber in place, but lack the statutory authority to utilize the dark fiber.

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