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# News Release

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## **USDA Invests \$152 Million to Improve Broadband Service in 14 States**

*Projects in Rural Middle, Upper Cumberland, and East Tennessee will Provide High-Speed Communications Technology to Support Economic and Educational Opportunities*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.**, Oct. 7, 2019 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Donald “DJ” LaVoy today announced that [USDA is investing \\$152 million in 20 projects to provide or improve rural broadband service in 14 states](#). Tennessee Rural Development State Director Jim Tracy is pleased to announce 11 rural Tennessee counties will benefit from improved broadband services.

“We are pleased to be able to provide funding to the Ben Lomand Rural Telephone Cooperative,” Tracy said. “Expanding access to educational, and social and business opportunities by bringing modern communications infrastructure to rural communities is a priority for our agency.”

USDA is making the investments through the [Community Connect Grant Program](#), the [Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program](#) and the [Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee Program](#). Investing in telecommunications infrastructure connects people to each other: businesses to customers, farmers to markets, and students to a world of knowledge. Below is the Tennessee project that will receive USDA funding.

- Ben Lomand Rural Telephone Cooperative will receive a \$24,879,000 loan to convert the borrower's remaining exchanges of Monteagle, Laager, Tracy City, Doyle, Viola, half of Dibrell and the remainder of Beech Grove from copper to a Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) network. The deployment of this project will provide enhanced internet speeds and bandwidth to subscribers. This will substantially improve the quality of life for subscribers as it will allow for enhanced telehealth, educational, telecommuting, and home-based business services.

The projects USDA is investing in today will help improve the quality of life in rural communities in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could

promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force's findings to President Trump. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a cornerstone recommendation of the task force.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov/tn](http://www.rd.usda.gov/tn).

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