FCC Updates National Broadband Map
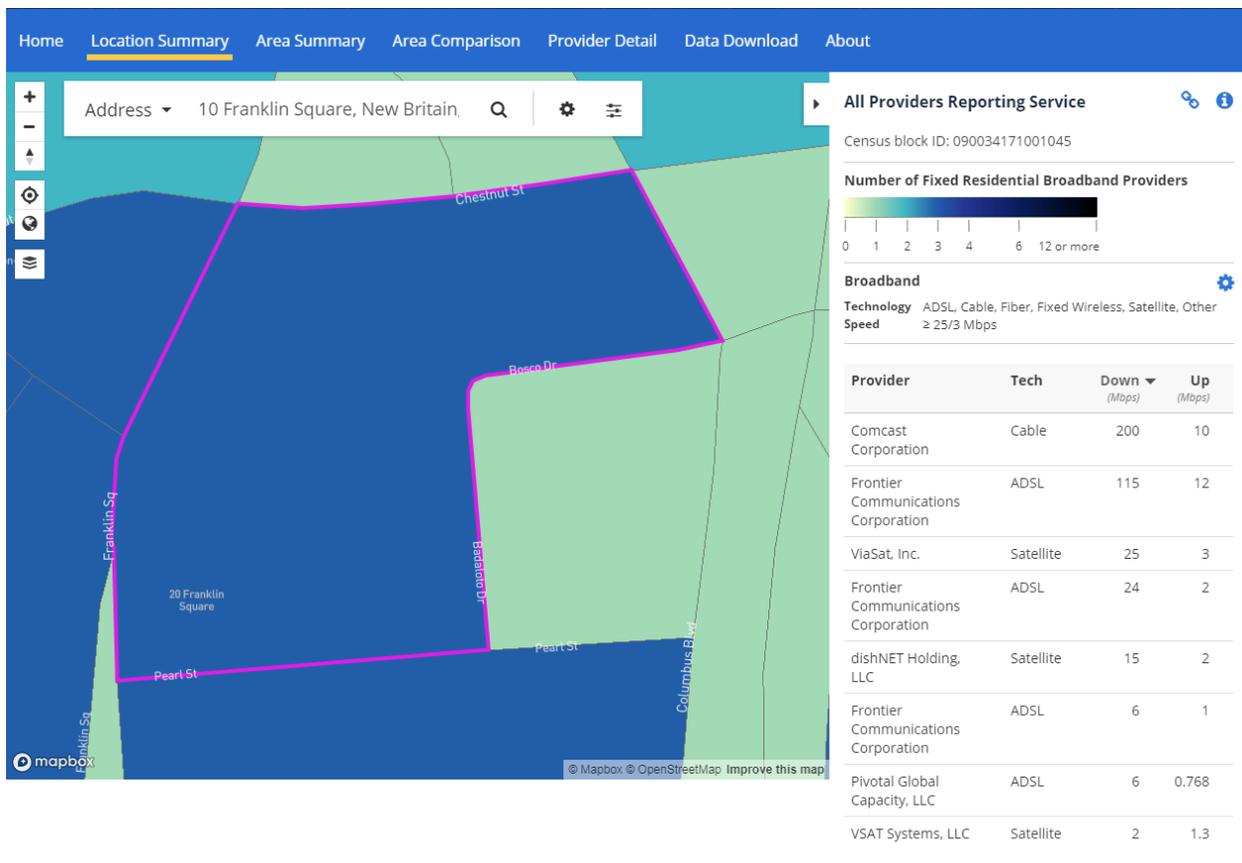
March 19, 2018

The FCC announced on February 22, 2018, an updated and modernized National Broadband Map in collaboration with commercial cloud-based vendors as a successor to the 2011 version created by the 2009 Recovery Act and the Broadband Data Improvement Act. As was learned while creating the 2011 version of the Map, internet service providers (ISPs) have had trouble reporting accurate data, and worry about municipal or competitive fiber network projects overbuilding in their current services, a possibility in the absence of correct GIS map data.

The Office of Consumer Counsel, which includes the CT State Broadband Office, is active in creating competition in the broadband market in Connecticut in order to lower prices and increase speed capacity for all demographic markets in the state. We believe that supply

information should be publicly available and verified as accurate in order for potential competitors to target needy markets, as well as alerting consumers that the services available to them in their communities or statewide are, or are not, competitive with other towns or states.

Connecticut born and raised [Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel said](#) that the map was a good step forward, but:

> To have a fair shot at 21st century success, you need access to broadband. This is true in urban areas, in rural areas, and in everything in between. But according to the data from this agency, more than 24 million Americans lack access to broadband. That is not acceptable. It consigns too many of our fellow citizens to the wrong side of the digital divide. It's a problem we need to fix.

Rosenworcel added a complaint that has plagued both GIS broadband mapping projects, namely a large number of errors. She reported that she knows there are errors because she "looked up my house and can tell you with good authority it lists services that are not available at my location." The Commissioner suggested that:

> [I]t's time for a public project. It's time to use the wisdom of crowds to fix deficiencies in our data. It's time to use crowdsourcing to improve this new National Broadband Map. No matter who you are or where you live you probably have a story to tell—about how service stops short of your street, about how speeds are not what are commercially reported, about how you're waiting for deployment that was promised long ago.

She concluded with a call to "build the first Citizens Broadband Map." And to get this effort started, she "set up an e-mail box at the FCC: broadbandfail@fcc.gov for those who want to relay to this agency their facts, their stories, and the difficulties they have had securing broadband. It is a way for this agency to learn what is wrong with our map—and how we can make it right."

As the state's project manager for the federal State Broadband Initiative (SBI) with federal grant funding from 2009-15 by the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA), a unit of the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), the OCC had a pivotal role in the initial National Broadband Map, the first public, searchable nationwide map of broadband availability, which launched February 17, 2011, but the map was unfunded on December 31, 2014 when the FCC allowed the map to cease providing current information. Connecticut was awarded $4 million as one of 56 grantees, one each from the 50 states, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia, to initiate the creation (and 2014 revision) of a state broadband strategic plan, and to support the creation of the state's first broadband policy coordinator to facilitate the integration of broadband and information technology into state and local economies.

The OCC managed the collection of accurate GIS mapping data collection from the incumbent providers operating in Connecticut, a critical element for establishing the initial broadband strategic planning needed to make the state a competitive player in the rapidly evolving Information Age. The OCC facilitated the gathering data twice a year on the availability, speed, and location of broadband services, as well as the broadband services used by community anchor institutions, such as schools, libraries, and hospitals. This massive amount of Connecticut GIS data was then forwarded, via the internet which was a new process at the time, semi-annually by the OCC to the NTIA, where the data from the 56 US entities was aggregated to power the original National Broadband Map.

The new map uses data collected in December 2016 based on information is available for 1,782 providers, and released late last year. That data is based on the Form 477 filings that broadband providers must make with the FCC. Newer data is expected to be available in late spring. The FCC said while data on mobile service is not yet available on the new map, it is available on separate maps. The FCC posted a demonstration of the new map on YouTube.

Please visit   OCC's website.