



About Broadband in Douglas County

If you've waited for a website to load, or been kicked out of a virtual meeting due to connectivity issues, you know what it's like to have a bad connection. But what does that mean from a technical perspective?

The Federal Communications Commission defines **basic broadband** as transmission speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

Download speed is how quickly information travels from the Internet to your device and appears on the screen. For example, Netflix uses about 5 Mbps to stream a movie, so if your speeds are less than 5 Mbps, the movie will likely stop and buffer.

Upload speed is how quickly information travels from your device to the Internet. For example, if you have a 5 Mbps upload connection, it would take about 3 minutes to upload 20 pictures. A 1.5 Mbps upload connection would increase that time to over 8 minutes.

Mbps stands for "Megabits per second." This is the standard measure of speed or bandwidth on home Internet connections. It measures how many bits (units of digital information) can be transferred each second. Internet services are most often listed in Mbps, but you will also hear about Kbps or Gbps.

- Kilobit: One kilobit is equal to 1,000 bits per second (Kbps)
- Megabit: One megabit is equal to 1,000 Kbps or one million bits per second (Mbps)
- Gigabit: One gigabit is equal to 1,000 Mbps, one million Kbps or one billion bits per second (Gbps)

Why does upload and download speed matter?

If your service is not fast enough for the type of activity you are trying to do on the internet, you may experience dropped connections, buffering or the inability to complete your tasks.

According to the County's Broadband Study, there are 5,000 households without wired internet, and 2,200 more underserved with low connectivity.

About Senate Bill-152 and Proposed Opt-out

History

In 2005, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 05-152, excluding cities and counties from entering into the broadband market and prohibiting most uses of municipal or county money for infrastructure to improve local broadband service. The bill's intention was to limit governments from competing with the private sector.

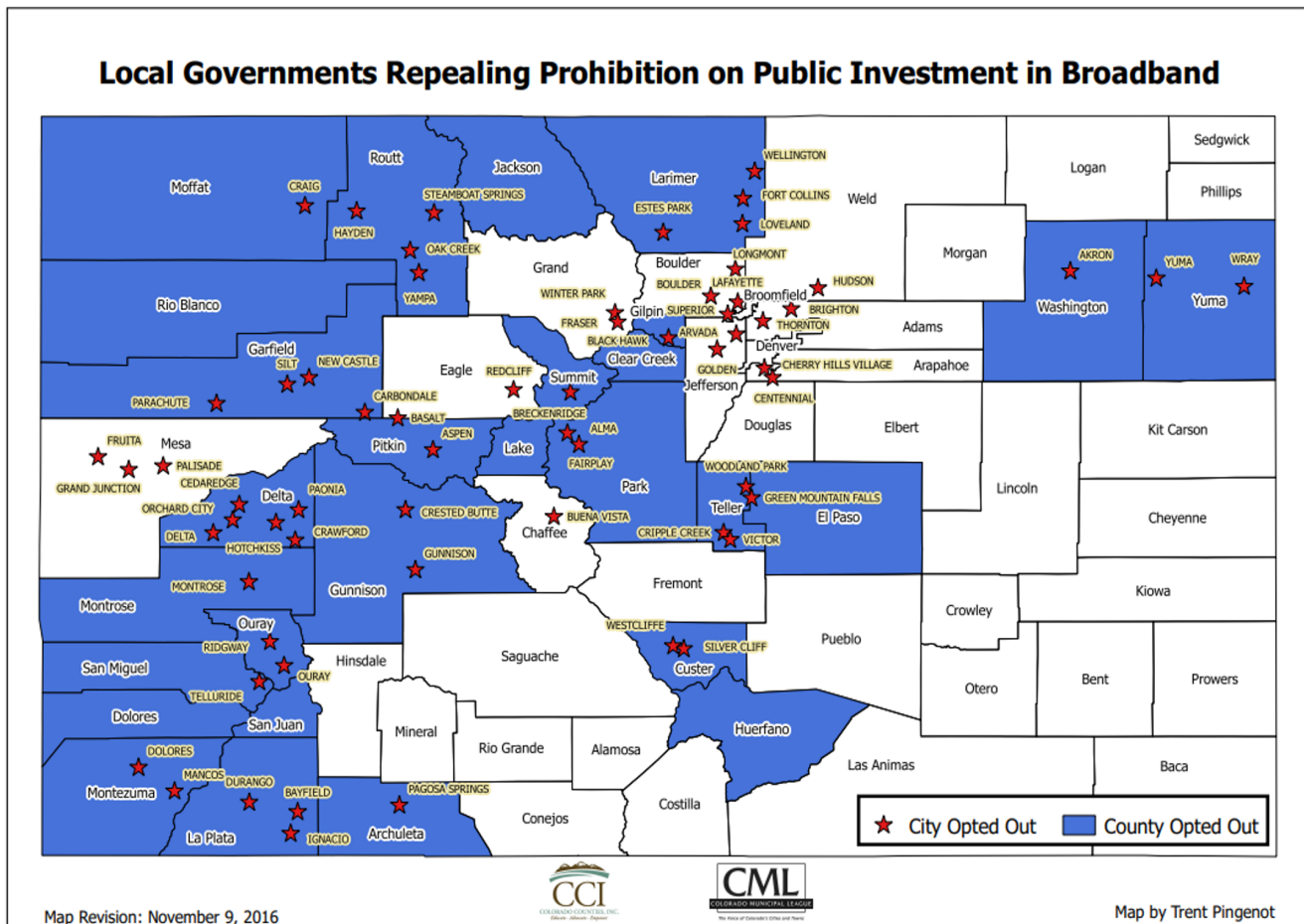
More than 100 municipalities and 40 counties have successfully passed ballot initiatives to opt out; only one effort did not pass (2009). The vast majority are not interested in providing broadband services themselves. By and large, these jurisdictions are working to enhance local broadband infrastructure to attract private sector service providers who would otherwise be unwilling or unable to serve their communities.

Proposal

Why does Douglas County wish to explore opting out of SB-152?

The vast majority of local broadband initiatives in the jurisdictions passing SB-152 initiatives have involved some form of public-private partnerships among local governments, economic development agencies and the industry. Douglas County's intent to opt out is to allow the County to apply for and access potential future grant awards and facilitate improvements for citizens in partnership with private service providers. Without voter approval, the County cannot pursue these opportunities.

Douglas County has no plans to create a public broadband utility.



County role in Broadband?

What is Douglas County's role in broadband?

Right now, the County is prohibited from having a role. A Colorado law prohibits public expenditures on Internet services. However, Douglas County does recognize the importance of this utility and commissioned a Broadband Study in 2021. Now, the County is considering asking voters to lift the state ban in Douglas County and open the door to opportunities to facilitate public-private partnerships.

Does a voter-approved opt out of SB-152 bind tax dollars to funding improvements?

No. Voter approval simply removes the local prohibition on the investment of public funds to improve broadband service and allows jurisdictions to explore grant funding opportunities. Voter approval does not require nor guarantee that funds will be expended.

If voters approve an opt out of the SB-152 requirements, will it raise taxes?

No. Taxes will not be affected by removing the constraints of SB-152.

Does voter approval of this proposed measure apply to all municipalities within the County?

No. Each local jurisdiction must receive voter approval individually. The Town of Parker successfully passed an opt-out measure in 2019. The Cities of Castle Pines and Lone Tree intend to place a question on the ballot this November.

If I have good broadband service, why should I vote in favor of this measure?

Removing funding constraints can provide a countywide benefit. Projects previously considered too costly for implementation can be investigated for feasibility when leveraging grant awards and partnerships.

Community-wide improved access to broadband service could:

- Enhance safety and emergency communications
- Lessen traffic and road maintenance
- Decrease wait times for some healthcare services
- Attract new employers and economic development opportunities
- Streamline the delivery of public services

