

Misleading coverage maps from T-Mobile, Verizon could result in lost rural broadband funds

Article

The news: Wireless providers are overstating the coverage and quality of their services, complicating efforts to identify underserved communities. **Those areas could lose out on \$42.5 billion in federal funds** as a result, per Bloomberg.

The problem: Inaccuracies block competitors from obtaining subsidies and competing in certain markets because maps show they are already being served.

- Many network carriers boast that they have the best and fastest coverage and provide broadband maps to demonstrate their dominance.
- “They’re reporting hypothetical service, not actual service,” said **Christopher Ali**, a telecommunications professor at **Pennsylvania State University**.

Verizon said it can reach 19 million addresses, while **T-Mobile** claims that it can serve 50 million households, but this doesn’t mean they actually do.

- Gerlach, Nevada, already has coverage, according to T-Mobile’s map, but county officials are complaining that is inaccurate.
- “There is no reliable broadband up there,” says Washoe County manager **Eric Brown**, whose jurisdiction includes Gerlach.

Coverage conundrum: With billions in federal funds ready to be distributed to help provide internet in underserved communities, inaccurate coverage maps could overlook areas that appear to have access.

Nevada US Sens. **Jacky Rosen** and **Catherine Cortez Masto** have found over 20,000 inaccuracies in the **Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC)** [Broadband Coverage Map](#).

What’s next? A bipartisan group of 26 senators is pushing the FCC to fix broadband mapping.

- The FCC is ordering carriers to submit estimates of their coverage backed by engineering data.
- “The maps will only get better over time as the FCC gets input from stakeholders across the country,” said **Paloma Perez**, an FCC spokesperson. “The maps are not perfect.”

Time is running out: The **National Telecommunications and Information Administration**, which has been tasked with administering the funds, will issue grants by June 30.



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