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**BEAD**

Louisiana BEAD Winners: Let the Program Move Forward

Two fiber providers said delays were causing financial strain.

**Jake Neenan**

Apr 24, 2025 — 3 min read



Photo of Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick from Evan Vucci/AP

WASHINGTON, April 24, 2025 – Two rural fiber providers that won grants from the government's flagship broadband expansion program are urging the Trump administration to allow the effort to move forward without major changes.

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In this letter, Mr. Herring highlights ClearPath Fiber's grassroots efforts to build rural broadband in Louisiana, voices concern over BEAD delays and investor fallout, and urges federal leaders to reaffirm fiber as the national standard while empowering ready providers like ClearPath.

Published: April 29, 2025
By: David Herring, CEO ClearPath Fiber



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David Herring Letter

In this letter, Mr. Herring highlights ClearPath Fiber's grassroots efforts to build rural broadband in Louisiana, voices concern over BEAD delays and investor fallout, and urges federal leaders to reaffirm fiber as the national standard while empowering ready providers like ClearPath.

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“Here's the truth: we can't continue this work — not because we aren't ready, but because delays and uncertainty are costing us everything,” **David Herring**, founder of ClearPath Fiber, wrote in an open letter to Commerce Secretary

Howard Lutnick. “Our investors — once confident — are now backing away. The financial risk grows each day federal guidance is delayed or revised.”



The Commerce Department is planning to alter the \$42.45 billion Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program to, among other things, “take a more technology-neutral approach” – the Trump administration and GOP leadership have opposed the program’s preference for fiber. States expect that to come next month, but it’s not yet clear how sweeping the changes will be or if work will have to be redone.

“We have a sizable investment in the work that has already been done,” **Brad Warden**, CEO of SkyRider Communications wrote in a separate letter to Lutnick. “Time delays and many States being awarded at the same time will affect the price that we pay for contractors and the price we pay for materials.”

North Louisiana is Ready. Why Isn't Washington?

**A Letter from Brad Warden, Owner and
CEO of SkyRider Communications**

In this letter, Mr. Warden outlines the challenges his company faces surrounding the BEAD program, shares his continued willingness to participate in good faith, and expresses both his respect for the current administration and his growing concern about whether rural providers like SkyRider are truly being heard.

Published: April 16, 2025
By: Brad Warden, CEO SkyRider Communications



Both ClearPath and SkyRider won grants in Louisiana, one of the states given the greenlight under the Biden administration, to deploy fiber in rural areas.

ClearPath was slated to receive more than \$34 million to connect 7,300 homes and businesses, and SkyRider won more than \$5.8 million to reach 764 locations.

The companies both began doing preparatory work after being selected, designing networks, getting the necessary historical and environmental permits, and lining up contractors and equipment. They were planning on signing grant agreements with the state on March 1, according to Warden.

Herring said in an interview that the costs of ramping up capacity to do that prep work, both for his company and the contractors he and other ISPs are partnering with to do that work, have created a financial burden.

“I’m laid out millions of dollars right now in planning,” Herring said. “Every minute of delay, every week of delay, I continue to lose value on the dollars that I’ve already deployed.”



More than 40 states have begun the process of fielding grant applications under the current BEAD rules, with many into the process of evaluating those submissions. Three states chose winners and received federal approval on their final spending plans in the final days of the Biden administration, but they’ve been under a budgetary review since Trump took office.

West Virginia, which had finished its plan, was given last month an extra 90 days to conform the document to the administration’s priorities. The Commerce Department issued a blanket 90-day extension for all states earlier this week.

Commerce said in the waiver granting the extension that it was aiming to “remove unnecessary rules and mandates, to improve efficiency, take a more technology-neutral approach, cut unnecessary red tape, and streamline deployment.”

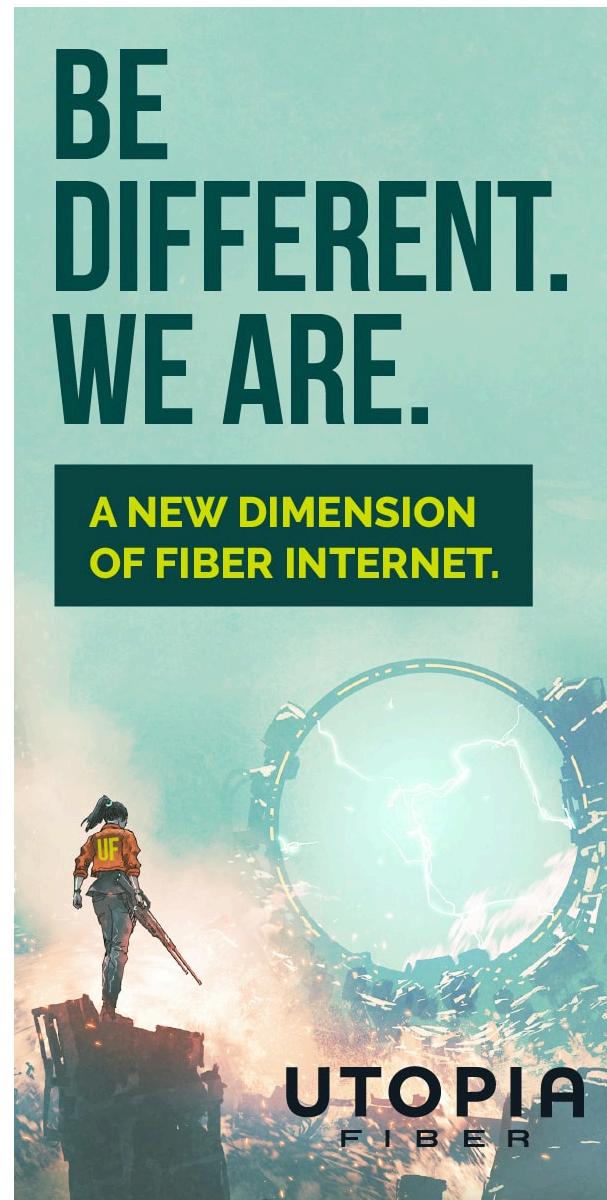
State and federal legislators have also expressed concern about further delay or disruption from the rule change. More than 100 state lawmakers wrote to Lutnick earlier this month to urge against a major change, and senators, including some Republicans, pressed Trump’s pick to head the agency within Commerce that handles BEAD on the issue. The nominee, **Arielle Roth**, has been critical of the fiber preference and has yet to be confirmed.

A key uncertainty is whether the administration will institute a per-location spending cap, above which states would be forced to fund non-fiber technologies like fixed wireless or satellite, and how high it would be. BEAD’s former director, **Evan Feinman**, told colleagues in an email he expected to see one when he left the agency.

Experts have said a sufficiently high cap could be accommodated without as much disruption, but a lower cap could force states to redo bidding processes.

“I am a Trump supporter. I love what he is doing and thank God he is in office,” Warden, the SkyRider CEO, wrote. “But BEAD, especially for Louisiana, needs to move forward.”





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