



An official website of the United States government

Here's how you know




Official websites use .gov

A **.gov** website belongs to an official government organization in the United States.



Secure .gov websites use HTTPS

A **lock** () or **https://** means you've safely connected to the .gov website. Share sensitive information only on official, secure websites.



Federal
Communications
Commission

Search



[Home](#) / [Consumer](#) / [Consumer Guides](#)

'Drive Tests' and Other 'Speed Tests' Conducted to Validate Mobile Broadband Availability Data

[Español](#)

Mobile wireless broadband network providers are conducting **on-the-ground tests** to measure network performance and broadband speeds in various parts of the United States. You may notice **slow-moving vehicles with external antennas in your neighborhood or testers walking and holding cell phones or**

Get the FCC Speed
Test App

other devices performing these tests. These tests are an integral part of normal business operations that mobile broadband network providers conduct to optimize their coverage and maintain wireless service quality.

What are speed tests and drive tests?

Speed tests collect information about the speed of data delivered to a phone or other device (often called [download speed](#)), the data speed from the device to its destination (often called [upload speed](#)), and related measures that affect speed such as [delays](#) in the transmission of data to or from the device and [signal strength](#) available to the device.

Drive tests are a subset of speed tests, and involve [testing speed while in a vehicle, either performed in motion or standing still](#). Typically, drive tests are performed during daytime hours. This timing ensures that speed tests are made when the broadband network is under the greatest demand. Vehicles performing drive testing are often equipped with external roof top antennas to take speed-related measurements. These vehicles may move slowly, or stop and start frequently in neighborhoods, commercial districts, and other areas.

To verify a mobile provider's network coverage, the FCC may require providers to perform drive tests and will specify:

- where the tests should occur;
- how many tests should be performed while in motion and how many should be stationary; and
- when the tests should take place (e.g., timeframes and times of day)

Not all on-the-ground tests are taken in a vehicle. You may see testers who are holding cell phones while standing or walking slowly to conduct speed tests.

What kind of FCC-required drive tests are underway?

Drive Tests Performed by T-Mobile and DISH to Verify Their Network Buildout Requirements

T-Mobile Drive Testing: T-Mobile is required to perform drive testing of its 5G network as part of the FCC's approval of T-Mobile's merger with Sprint in 2019. The FCC required T-Mobile to build a 5G network and to reach certain speeds in both urban and rural areas. The FCC required T-Mobile to perform drive testing to verify to the FCC that it met its obligations. The drive testing process is funded and managed by T-Mobile and does not involve FCC personnel or equipment. Learn more about [T-Mobile's drive test methodology](#) and the [T-Mobile and Sprint transaction](#).

DISH Drive Testing: As part of the T-Mobile/Sprint merger, T-Mobile sold DISH some of its licenses and DISH promised to use those and its other licenses to build a 5G network. As it did with T-Mobile, the FCC required DISH's network to serve both urban and rural areas at certain speeds, and required DISH to perform drive testing of its network to verify to the FCC that it met its obligations. This drive testing process does not involve FCC personnel or equipment.

Drive tests as part of the Broadband Data Collection (BDC) to help verify mobile providers' broadband availability data

- [Download the App for Android Devices](#)
- [Download the App for iOS Devices](#)

Downloading the App and taking speed tests, will contribute to a more accurate view of mobile broadband internet coverage across America, as measured from mobile devices.

[FCC Speed Test App User Guide](#)

[Speed Test App FAQs](#)

The FCC also will require drive tests to help verify mobile providers' broadband availability data. The FCC implemented the BDC in response to Congress's requirement that the FCC develop [detailed maps describing broadband availability and quality across the United States](#). To ensure the accuracy of the data that providers submit, the FCC has developed detailed [broadband data challenge and verification processes](#). For more information about the FCC's BDC, visit <https://www.fcc.gov/BroadbandData>.

The following drive tests may take place as part of the BDC's challenge and verification processes:

[Third party drive testing challenges](#): Third parties, such as state, local and Tribal governments and other organizations, who wish to challenge the data submitted by a mobile broadband provider may perform and submit their own drive tests to the FCC. This drive testing process does not involve FCC personnel or equipment. Learn more about [third party drive testing challenges](#).

[Provider drive testing to respond to challenges and verification inquiries](#): Mobile providers that receive challenges of their broadband availability data may respond to such challenges with drive test data. Providers may also respond to verification inquiries from the FCC with drive test data. In the context of either the challenge or verification process, FCC staff may compel providers to submit drive test data in attempt to successfully rebut a challenge or satisfy a verification inquiry if staff deems other provider-submitted data insufficient. This drive testing process does not involve FCC personnel or equipment.

In addition, FCC staff will conduct regular audits of information submitted by providers to ensure compliance with FCC rules; these audits may include field surveys, investigations, and drive tests under the FCC's supervision.

Drive testing as part of the Alaska Plan

Mobile providers receiving more than \$5 million in Alaska Plan support are required to provide drive test data showing that they have met their commitments as of the 5-year and 10-year mark of the plan. Equipment used to conduct the testing may be transported by off-road vehicles, such as snow-mobiles or other vehicles appropriate to local conditions. This drive testing process does not involve FCC personnel or equipment. The drive testing requirements are detailed in the [Alaska Plan Drive Test Order](#).

Drive Testing as part of the Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund and the Connect USVI Fund

Stage 2 mobile support recipients under the Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund and the Connect USVI Fund are required to submit test results ("drive, drone, or scattered site tests") as evidence of their network coverage. Recipients must include test results verifying their coverage along with their required certifications. This drive testing process does not involve FCC personnel or equipment. Get [more information about the Stage 2 requirements of the Bringing Puerto Rico Together Fund and the Connect USVI Fund](#).

Date Last Updated/Reviewed: Tuesday, February 14, 2023

Bureau/Office:

Consumer and Governmental Affairs

Tags:

Consumers - Wireless Consumer Issues - Wireless Equipment - Wireless Networks



Alternate Format Requests

People with print disabilities may request braille, large print, or screen-reader friendly versions of this article via the email form at fcc504@fcc.gov. For audio and other access, use the "Explore Accessibility Options" link.

Consumer Help Center

Learn about consumer issues - visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at fcc.gov/consumers

File a Complaint with the FCC

[File Your Complaint](#)

Visit our Consumer Complaint Center at consumercomplaints.fcc.gov to file a complaint or tell us your story.

Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Phone: 1-888-225-5322

ASL Video Call: 1-844-432-2275

Fax: 1-866-418-0232

Contact Us

[Visiting FCC Facilities](#)

