



WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Chairwoman Lynn and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 2701. In 2015, Wichita State University collaborated with the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Wichita Chamber and Sedgwick County Medical Society to establish a plan to grow the economy of Kansas by focusing on vital needs of industry and leveraging our strengths as ten county region while acknowledging that strategic investments that reach across industry need to be made. This plan was called the Blueprint for Regional Economy Growth (BREG).

As the manufacturing hub for the state of Kansas, Wichita is able to claim that we are number one in STEM jobs and third per capita in engineers. Given our history with aviation manufacturing, this isn't surprising; however, it shouldn't be taken for granted.

The economy of Kansas continues to struggle to rebound from the Great Recession and we are 98 out of 100 metro areas for economic growth. As a state, Kansas is losing high paying jobs and replacing them with lower paying jobs, and we are number five in states with the highest amount of people leaving. In order to reverse this trend, we have to think differently about how we engage business.

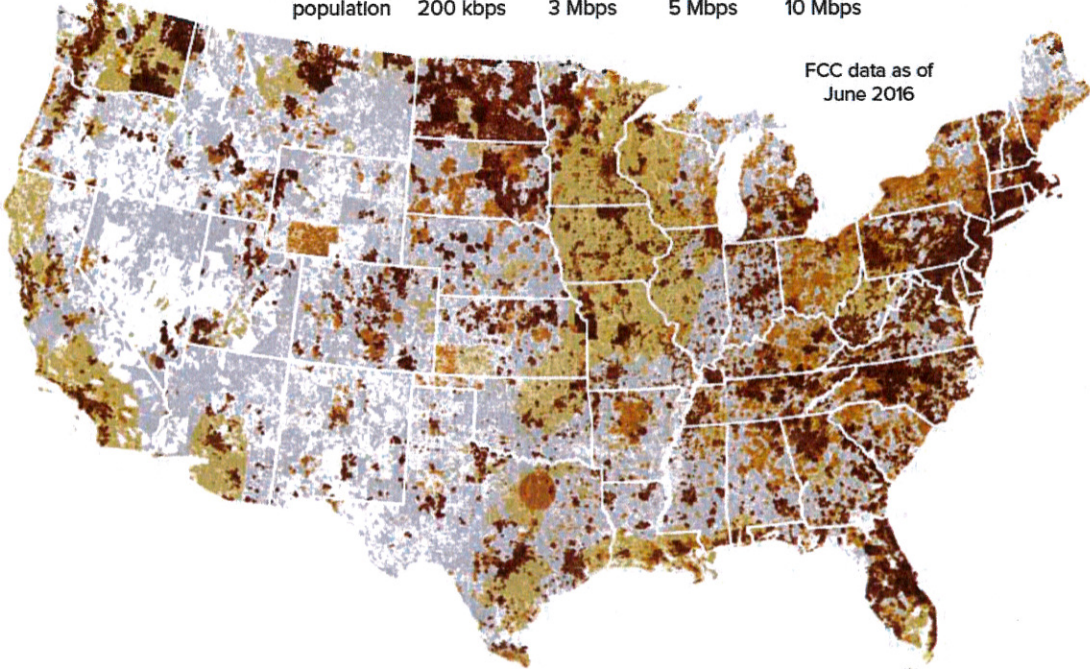
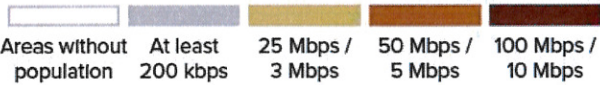
BREG is unique in that it asks the major wealth generators and industry leaders in our region what their needs are rather than asking service providers or government. The wealth generators representing the largest sectors of our economy including Health Care, Agriculture, Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Materials, Aviation, IT, Transportation and Oil and Gas provided input and data identifying those needs. One of the items addressed across every sector was the increasing need for investment in technology and specifically broadband.

As the needs of industry change in the 21st century, Kansas has to position itself as a state that is capable of meeting those needs so it can truly be a place for business to locate and grow. This means adapting new meanings for words whose meaning hasn't changed in decades. Most important of these is infrastructure. Infrastructure used to be limited to simply talking about roads and highways as a means of moving goods for business and growing communities; however, the new model of doing business has to account for increased pressure on broadband across the state and across all sectors of the economy. Now business and industry are more interested in how much data can they move, how fast they can move it and how securely is it stored. These are the new fundamental questions when discussing infrastructure. Kansas has lead in roads and highways for a long time and has gone from nationally ranked 5th in 2014, 3rd in 2016 to 2nd in best roads today while simultaneously lagging most every state in broadband. Please see the attached map.

It is time for Kansas to change its thinking and prioritization of technology and broadband and engage industry leaders that are relevant to this conversation. Until Kansas starts making these types of infrastructure investments, we will continue to lose high paying jobs and wealth creators will continue to look elsewhere to invest their businesses.

How fast is America's broadband?

Speed of fixed residential broadband



FCC data as of June 2016

For additional information, please go to:

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/fcc-gets-ready-kick-off-214111848.html>

<https://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2018/02/07/digital-divide-in-america-graphic-000639>

https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/#/area-summary?type=nation&geoid=0&tech=acfosw&speed=25_3&vlat=38.81999999999999&vlon=-94.95999999999998&vzoom=3

Sincerely,

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