

BROADBAND ELEMENT

In 2018, Georgia passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act which supports broadband service planning, deployment, and incentives. This Act then required the inclusion of a **broadband element** in comprehensive plans thereafter; therefore, it is also required for inclusion in the 2026 update for Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta. Shortly after the passage of ACE, the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered the world, highlighting gaps in broadband deployment and access for every community nationwide. Such gaps in access and quality increase in rural areas and sparsely populated areas. Not only that, it revealed that without access to broadband, some people become disconnected socially, politically, economically, and professionally.

Informally, broadband refers to “wifi,” “internet [connection]”, and/or “data” on cellphones, laptops, desktop computers, and other devices that can access the internet; however, the state of Georgia defines broadband as “a wireless or wired service capable of speeds of 25 megabits per second (mbps) downstream and 3 mbps upstream to provide access to the internet or computer processing and storage.”²



The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) provides all the information about broadband access and deployment in the state of Georgia. GTA publishes a broadband availability map based on state and federal data. According to the Broadband Mapping webpage, when 20% of residential and commercial properties in a census block cannot access broadband, the entire block is labelled “unserved”. This metric may contribute to higher unserved numbers. The web map shows data for the grants used as well as broadband speeds by location.



² This definition can be found in O.C.G.A. §50-40-1. Definitions for **broadband service**