

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2015**

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SENATE BILL 615

Short Title: Rural Broadband/Infrastructure. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Smith-Ingram, D. Davis (Primary Sponsors); and Van Duyn.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

March 30, 2015

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TRANSPORTATION
3 INFRASTRUCTURE AND BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY BY REQUIRING THE
4 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO STUDY PROVIDING FOR THE
5 CREATION OF A STATE BROADBAND PLAN BY THE OFFICE OF THE STATE
6 CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER AND BY SPECIFYING THAT BROADBAND
7 SERVICE PROVIDERS MAY OFFER COMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND
8 SERVICES IN AREAS WHERE THE INCUMBENT SERVICE PROVIDER IS NOT
9 PROVIDING BROADBAND SERVICE.

10 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

11 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly finds that the availability of adequate
12 transportation corridors and community broadband connectivity through the expansion of
13 readily accessible Internet to all of North Carolina's counties is vital for the continued economic
14 prosperity of all the State's citizens. A plan for better transportation access in rural areas and to
15 meet the need for high-quality digital broadband access is necessary to achieve this end in the
16 quickest and most efficient manner.

17 **SECTION 2.(a)** The Department of Transportation shall study the economic
18 impact of transportation connectivity between rural low-wealth counties and job creation
19 centers (including deepwater ports, major industrial facilities, and other job creation hubs). In
20 particular, the Department shall focus on the US 158 and US 13/17 corridors, and the extension
21 of I-495 through northeastern North Carolina.

22 **SECTION 2.(b)** The Department shall report on the results of its study no later
23 than May 1, 2016, to the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee and include
24 recommendations for necessary legislative action and cost estimates for achieving the
25 objectives set forth in subsection (a) of this section.

26 **SECTION 3.(a)** The Office of the State Chief Information Officer, through its
27 Office of Digital Infrastructure, and with the assistance of the Department of Transportation,
28 the Department of Administration, the Department of Commerce, North Carolina State
29 University, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, shall develop a State broadband plan
30 to ensure that all citizens of North Carolina have access to broadband capability. The plan shall
31 include the following components:

- 32 (1) An analysis of the most effective and efficient mechanisms for ensuring
33 broadband access by all citizens of the State.
34 (2) A detailed strategy for achieving affordability of such service and maximum
35 utilization of broadband infrastructure and service by the citizens of the
36 State.



1 (3) An evaluation of the status of deployment of broadband service, including a
2 survey of projects and programs undertaken across the State by commercial
3 broadband providers, local governments, and nongovernmental
4 organizations.

5 (4) A plan for use of broadband infrastructure and services in advancing
6 consumer welfare, civic participation, public safety and homeland security,
7 community development, health care delivery, energy independence and
8 efficiency, education, worker training, private sector investment,
9 entrepreneurial activity, job creation, and economic growth.

10 **SECTION 3.(b)** The Office shall report no later than May 1, 2016, to the Joint
11 Legislative Committee on Information Technology on the State broadband plan and include
12 recommendations for necessary legislative action and cost estimates for achieving the
13 objectives set forth in the plan.

14 **SECTION 4.** Funding for the implementation of Section 3 of this act shall be
15 provided by the Office of the State Chief Information Officer, using funds available from the
16 Information Technology Fund. Funding from the implementation of Section 2 of this act shall
17 be provided by the Department of Transportation from funds available to it.

18 **SECTION 5.** This act is effective when it becomes law.