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The Senate Infrastructure Bill's Four Interconnected Broadband Components.

In 1934, Congress mandated the newly created Federal Communications Commission (FCC) “to make available, so far as possible, to all the people of the United States a rapid, efficient, Nation-wide, and world-wide wire and radio communication service”—but left it largely up to the FCC and the states to figure out how to do so. In 1996, Congress expanded that universal service goal to include access to “advanced services,” meaning high-speed internet, and explicitly established a goal of “affordable” services, including to “low-income consumers.” There, too, Congress declined to provide appropriations to achieve those goals.

Now in 2021, Congress has done a lot more than just set goals for access to these services—it finally provided the funding to do so.

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