



*State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor*

*Roy Cooper
Governor*

*20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N. C. 27699 0301*

April 26, 2019

Mr. Sonny Perdue, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Thank you for your March 29, 2019, letter providing important details about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ReConnect Program. I particularly appreciate your recognition of the role governors play in closing the digital divide.

Providing high-speed internet connections to households across North Carolina is one of my top priorities. I recently issued Executive Order 91 directing my Cabinet to make every effort to facilitate the deployment of broadband infrastructure and creating a broadband task force that is responsible for supporting North Carolina residents, businesses, and governments seeking federal grant resources in support of broadband infrastructure projects. My administration will wholeheartedly support ReConnect applications from North Carolina.

I am pleased to report that North Carolina is well positioned to facilitate ReConnect investment across the state. I am enclosing responses to the criteria outlined in your letter and will make this letter available to all ReConnect applicants from North Carolina.

First, our state's 2016 broadband plan, *Connecting North Carolina* is available at <https://ncbroadband.gov/sbp>. This plan provides a comprehensive strategy along with more than 80 recommendations for improving broadband service in unserved areas and for closing the digital divide through adoption initiatives. Executive Order 91 directs North Carolina's Cabinet agencies to fulfill many of the plan's outstanding recommendations, including a statewide "dig once" policy to support further infrastructure deployment.

Secretary Sonny Perdue
April 26, 2019
Page 2

Second, there are no restrictions on non-broadband utilities providing broadband service in rural areas. Currently four electric membership cooperatives provide broadband services to their electric customers. The state-wide association representing our 26 electric membership cooperatives has recently announced a partnership with a telephone cooperative to conduct three pilot projects that will deliver broadband service to rural areas.

Third, the state has procedures in place for expeditiously completing rights-of-way and environmental permitting requirements for this project. Since 2016, the N.C. Department of Transportation, which maintains approximately 80 percent of the road rights-of-way in the state, has been authorized to allow utilization of the state right-of-way for non-utility owned or operated communications or data transmission infrastructure. (N.C.G.S. §136-18(2) c.2.) NCDOT has further streamlined its permitting process using online applications found at:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/Utilities/Pages/Encroachment-Agreements.aspx>.

Finally, the state is prepared to certify that state grant funds have not been allotted to support broadband service in areas proposed in ReConnect applications. The N.C. Department of Information Technology's Broadband Infrastructure Office has created a mapping tool to assist with this certification.

Thank you again for your leadership and I look forward to the successful implementation of the ReConnect Program in North Carolina.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Roy Cooper