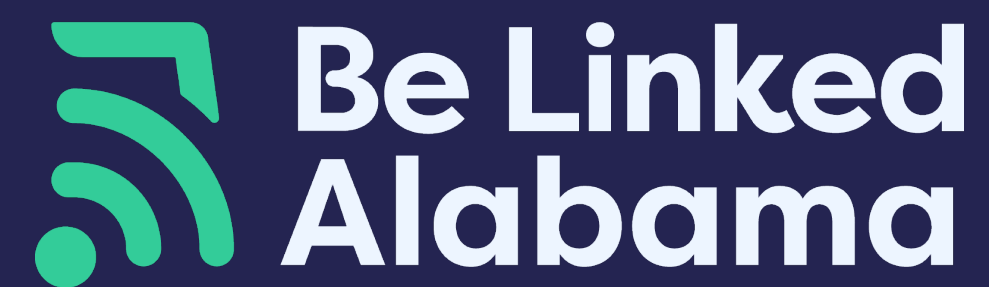


# Local Government Permitting and Facilitation of Broadband Deployment

April 24, 2025



# Welcome

**Maureen Neighbors**

Digital Expansion Division Chief, ADECA



# Agenda

1. **Scoping the permitting challenge**
2. **ARPA-funded programs**
  - **Middle Mile Grant Program**
  - **Anchor Institution/Middle Mile**
  - **Capital Projects Fund**
3. **BEAD program**
4. **Next steps**
5. **Questions and answers**

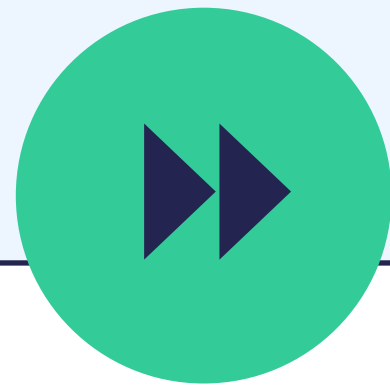


01

# Scoping the permitting challenge

# The scale of upcoming broadband permitting is unprecedented

State and private spending on broadband in Alabama will far exceed \$2 billion in the next two to six years



ARPA-funded infrastructure must be substantially constructed by the end of 2026



IIJA-funded infrastructure will have more time – until 2030 – but will exceed \$1.4 billion, inclusive of private sector match investments



We anticipate that Alabama permitting authorities will see a greater volume of telecommunications permitting requests than has ever been experienced before



# Broadband challenges facing permitting entities

- **Local governments will see permit applications for projects funded by many concurrent programs:**
  - Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund (ABAF)
  - Statewide Middle-Mile Network Grant program
  - Capital Projects Fund Phase 1 (CPF 1)
  - Capital Projects Fund Phase 2 (CPF2)
  - Anchor Institution/Middle-Mile Program Phase 1 (AIMM 1)
  - Anchor Institution/Middle-Mile Program Phase 2 (AIMM 2)
- **Coming soon:**
  - Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program
- All funding programs are time-bound so we can expect pressure for rapid permit approvals
- Public demand for infrastructure is high, so pressure will come from both awardees and members of the public

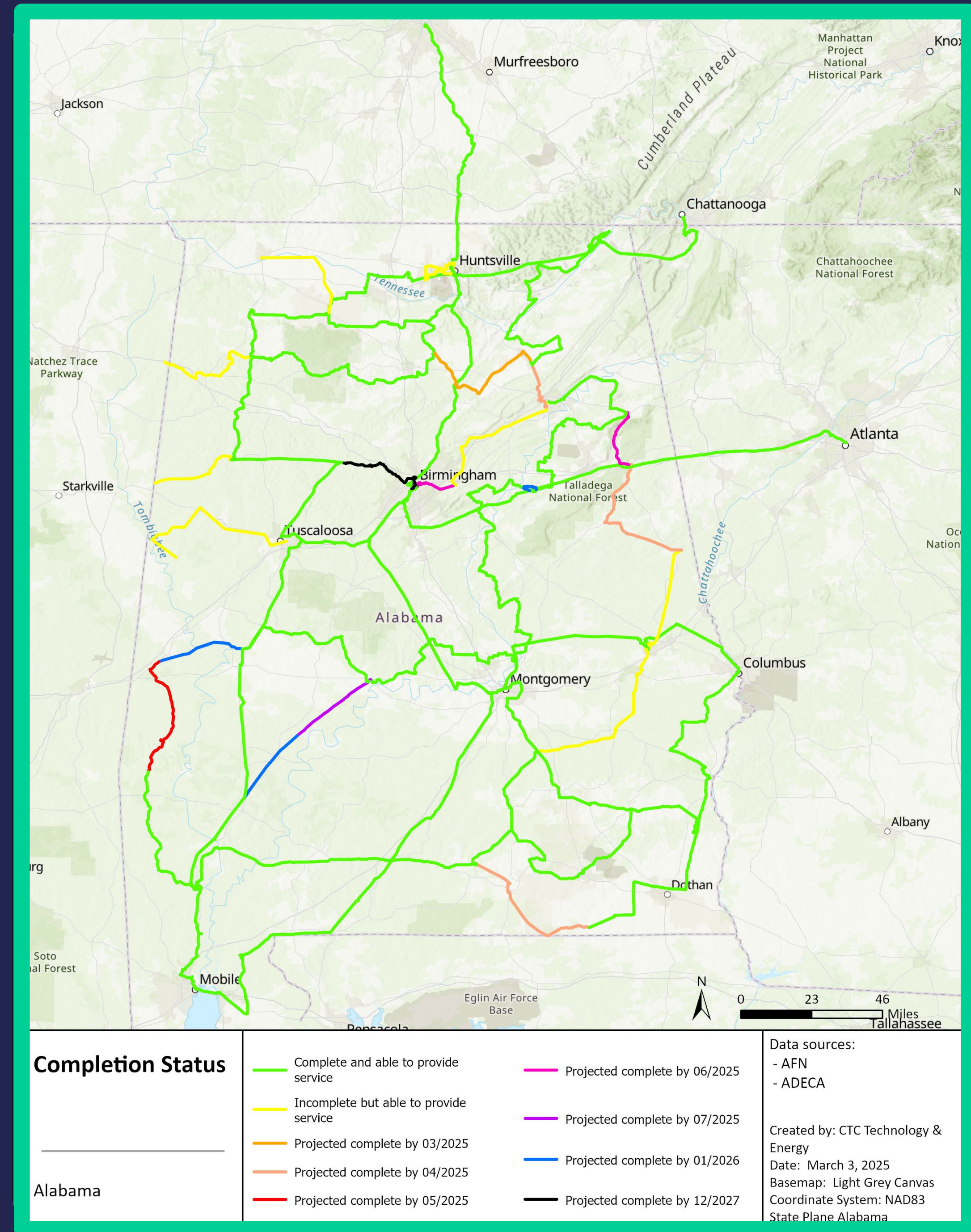


02

# ARPA-funded programs

# The Statewide Middle-Mile Network Grant Program award to Alabama Fiber Network (AFN) will deliver thousands of miles of fiber

AFN had constructed approximately 3,200 miles for service by Feb. 1, 2025, and anticipates that 3,750 miles will be in service by grant closeout



# Anchor Institution / Middle-Mile Program

AIMM provides additional middle-mile fiber and connections to anchor institutions, such as government, public safety, and educational institutions

Upon program completion, awardees will deliver:

1

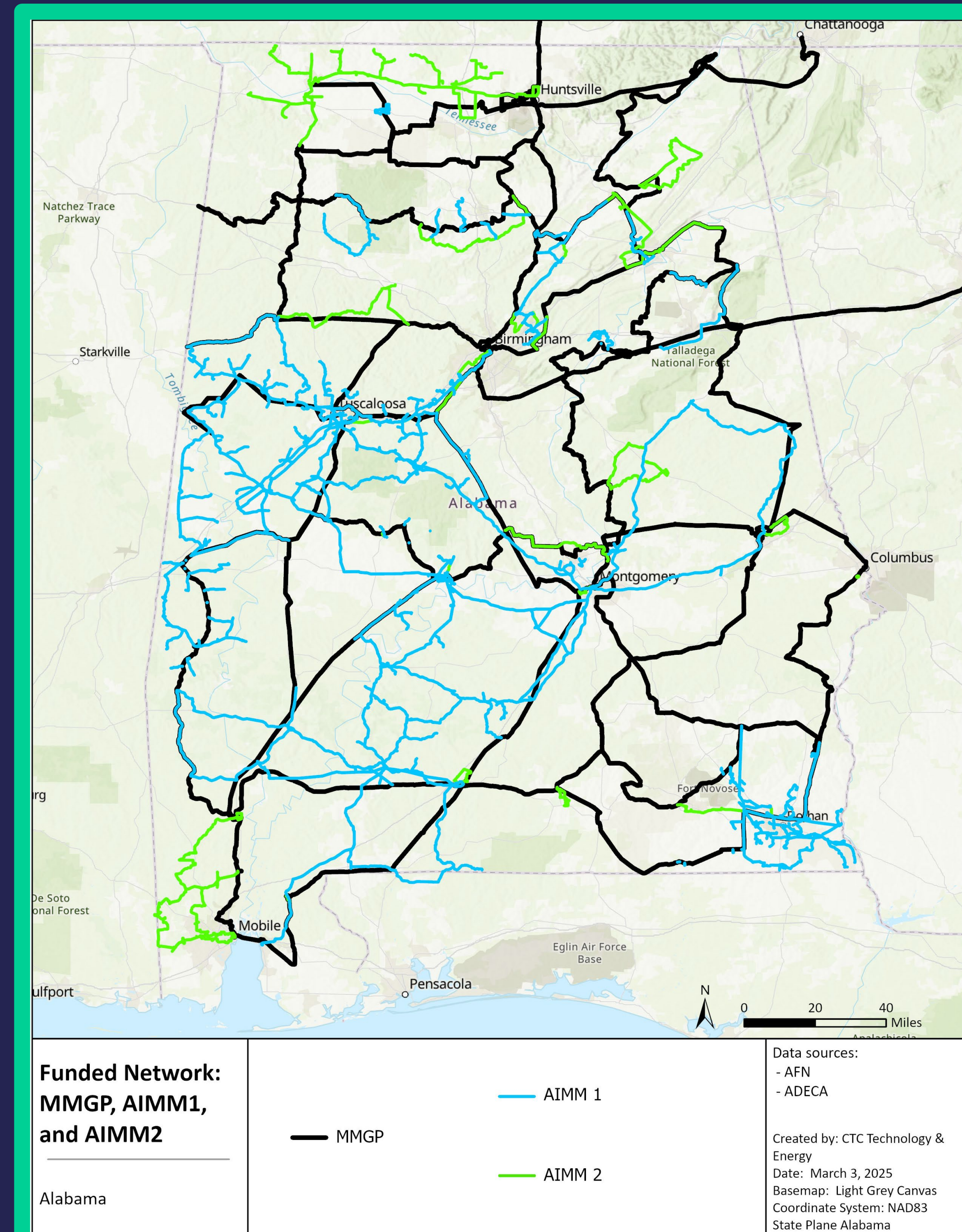
3,667 miles of AIMM1 fiber

2

1,095 miles of AIMM2 fiber

- Construction was scheduled to begin on these programs in December 2024
- AIMM projects are intended to be complete in February 2026, ahead of the federal ARPA deadline of December 2026

Permitting preparation | 9



# Capital Projects Fund

CPF funds last-mile connections to homes and businesses

Upon program completion, awardees will deliver:

1

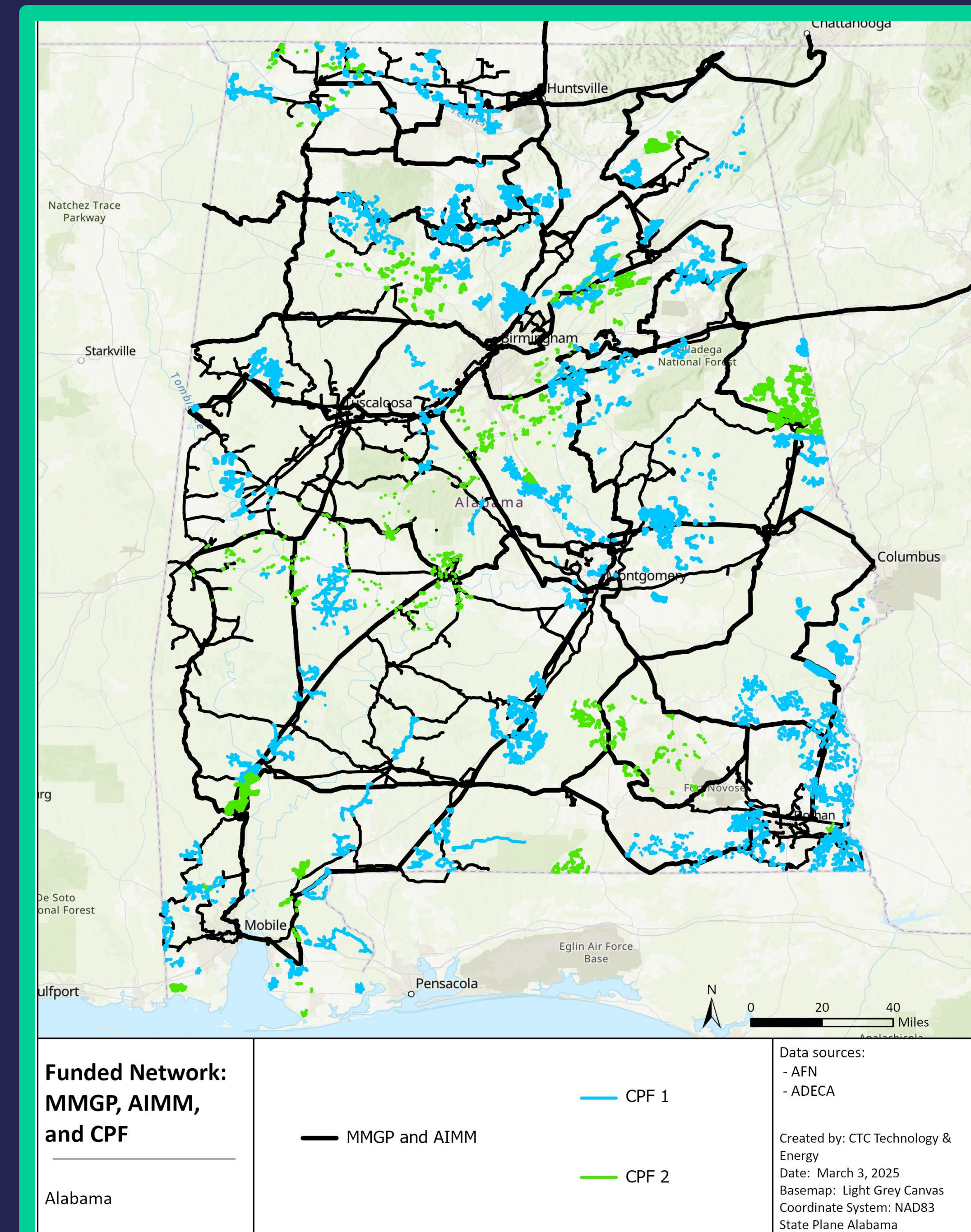
Approximately 4,500 miles of CPF1 routes, which are estimated to cover approximately 47,000 locations

2

Projected CPF2 routes that are estimated to serve 12,000 locations

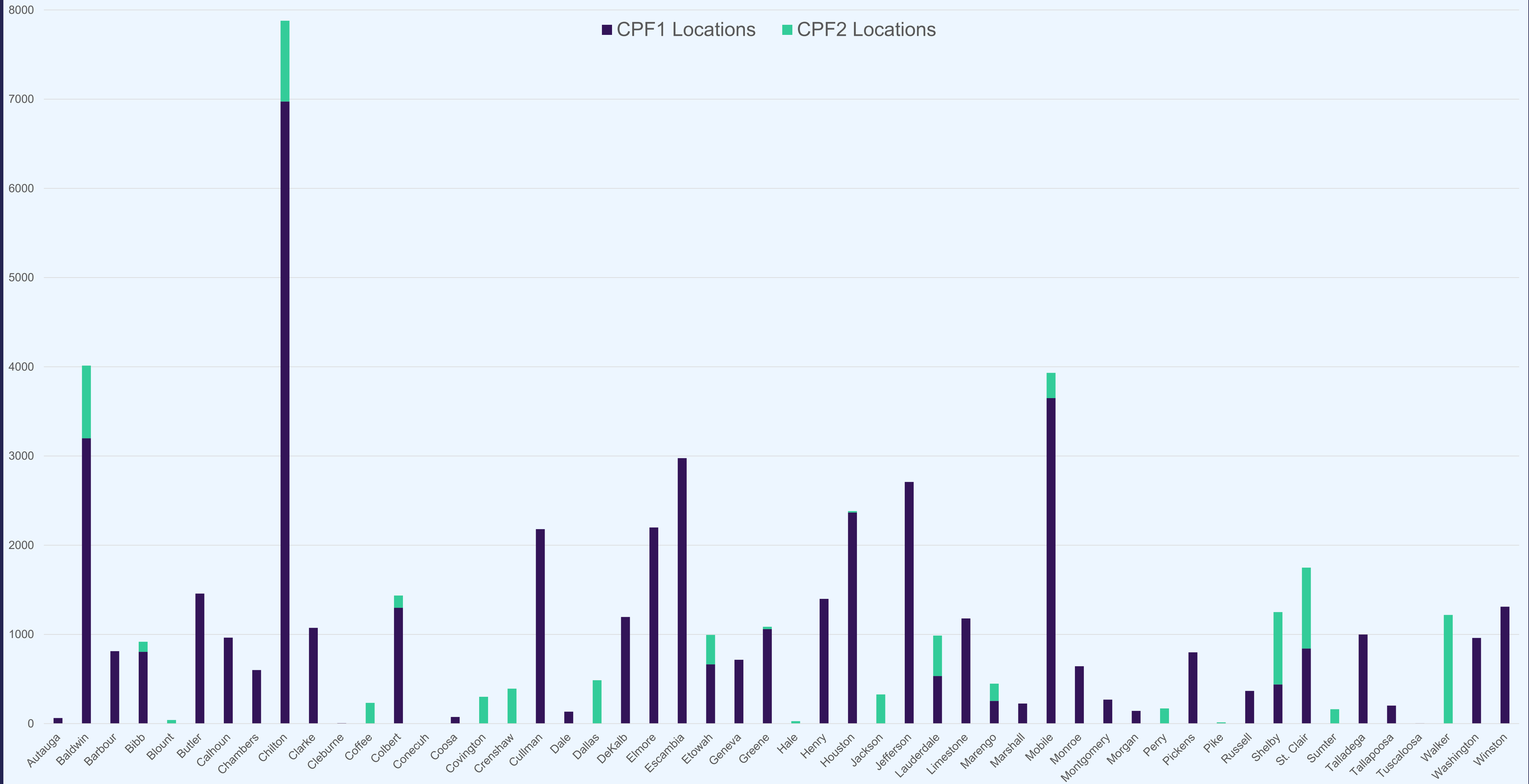
Construction on CPF routes has begun and is scheduled to be completed in Q4 2026, ahead of the federal ARPA deadline of December 2026

Permitting preparation | 10



# Estimated CPF locations per County

■ CPF1 Locations ■ CPF2 Locations



03

# BEAD program

# Overview of the Alabama BEAD program

- Alabama was allocated \$1.4 billion of federal BEAD funds that will become available after the subgrantee selection process and approval of the Final Proposal to NTIA
- Funds are prioritized for serving unserved locations first (those that cannot get internet service of 25/3 Mbps) and underserved second (those that can only get internet service between 25/3 and 100/20 Mbps)
- The federal government has approved Alabama's planning documents for the BEAD program and ADECA is now engaged in executing those plans through a robust competitive grant program

**Plan development**

**2023 - 2024**

**Grant program**

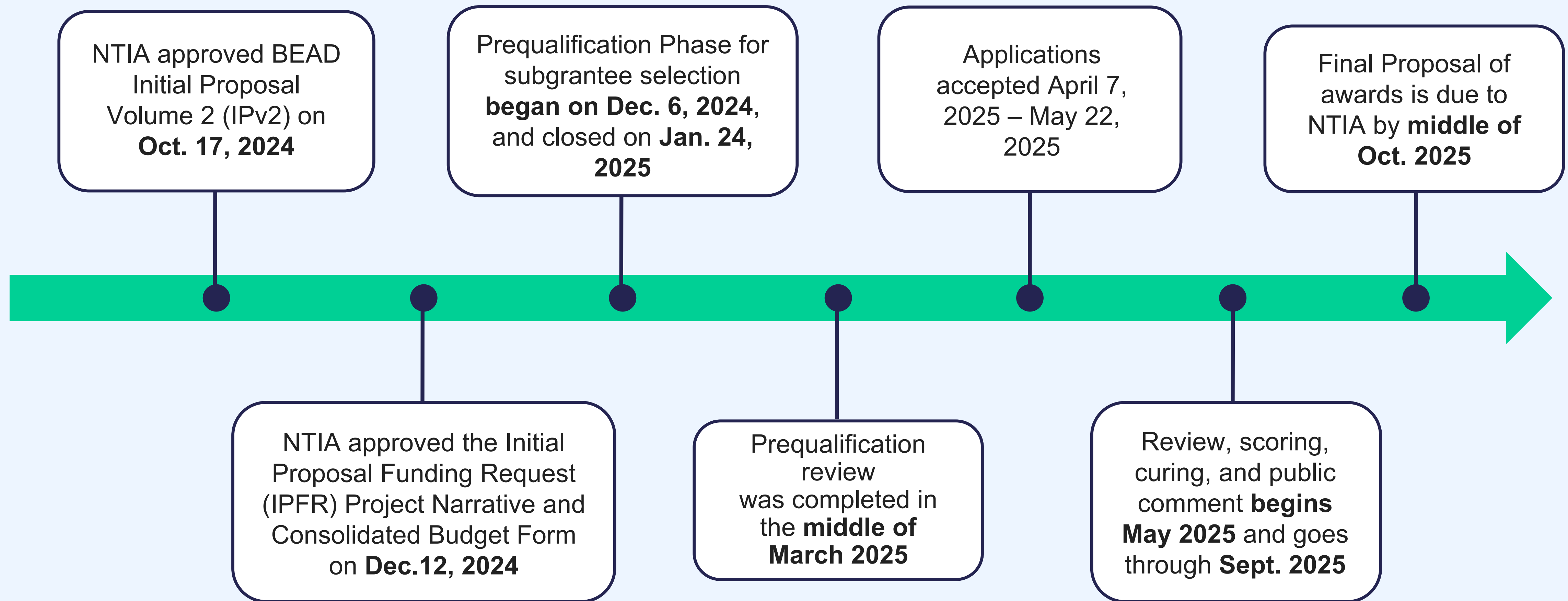
**2025**

**Deployment**

**2026**



# BEAD status update and projected timeline



# BEAD applicants will apply for some or all eligible locations in each county

Eligible locations for BEAD were identified through the BEAD Challenge and data reconciliation process to determine those eligible for BEAD funding. All eligible locations will be included in ADECA's Final Proposal

1

There are more than 100,000 BEAD-eligible locations in Alabama

2

ADECA has required that applicants submit applications at the county level, for some or all of the eligible locations in a county

3

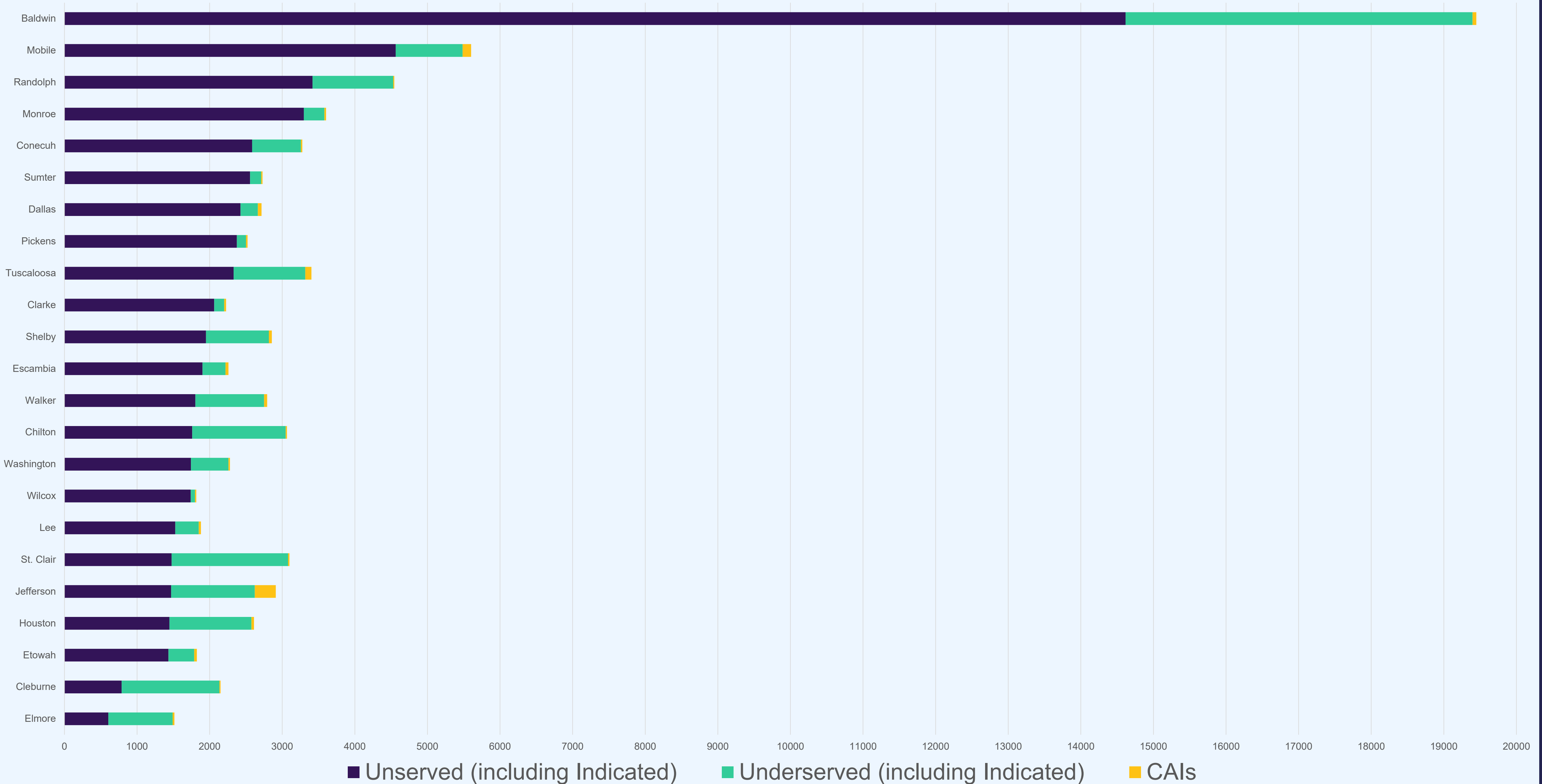
ADECA has encouraged applicants to include all eligible locations in a county. While applications for a partial county will be accepted, priority will be given to proposals that are for 100% of all eligible locations

4

ADECA is also encouraging proposals to serve anchor institutions and will determine whether these can be funded once submissions are evaluated for coverage and for available budget



# BEAD-eligible locations in top 23 counties



# All BEAD-eligible locations



04

**Next steps**

# Collaboration between ADECA and localities

## ADECA has sought and welcomes collaboration and partnership with local leaders

- In 2023 and 2024, ADECA visited every county in the state to meet with local leaders and seek input about broadband needs. In mid-2023, ADECA provided all counties with profiles of their broadband and digital opportunity status
- In fall of 2024, ADECA conducted webinars and an in-person permitting workshop to advise counties of the upcoming workload
- CPF awards have been identified and are being contracted; permitting is underway
- BEAD schedules are tentatively determined pending any new guidance from the federal government, but we anticipate that permitting requests could begin as early as December of this year
- ADECA plans to meet with the most heavily impacted counties to review the upcoming work from these programs and discuss any best practices that may help them navigate the priorities and volume



# A wide range of entities have permitting responsibilities

- Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama 811
- County and municipal leadership, administration, and engineering
- Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
- State and Tribal historic preservation agencies
- Utilities
- Railroads



# Planning for permitting workloads

ADECA encourages and seeks to support effective interaction between ISPs and permitting and approval entities to facilitate permitting

1

Provide mapping data to help permitting and approval entities forecast impacts

2

Gather best practices to share with permitting and approval entities to help them prepare for the many requests they will soon be getting

3

Gather best practices from the permitting and approval entities to share with ISPs to improve the quality of their applications to the entities

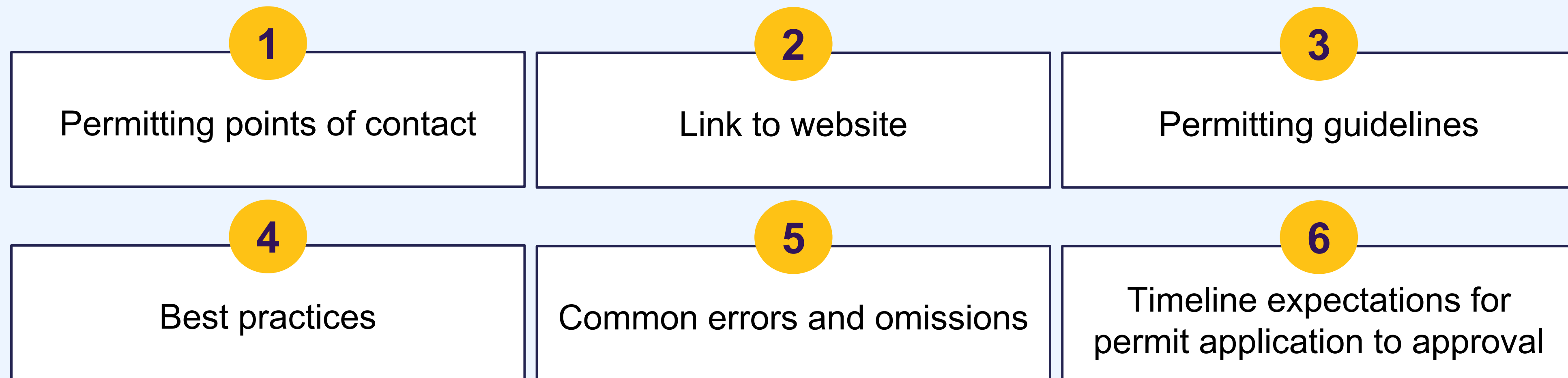
4

Provide data to entities and ISPs to facilitate early identification of permitting and approval processes needed for individual projects



# Please share your permitting requirements

ADECA invites permitting agencies to share any information that might be helpful to permit applicants so that ADECA can distribute the information to applicants and awardees



# Sharing of best practices

In 2024, ADECA published a Permitting Best Practices Guide to facilitate and simplify permitting

- Consider a simple telecommunications permitting manual that details your requirements on:
- Maps to depict exact desired path of construction
- Details on construction methods
- Pictures along the route to verify that the applicant has visited your area and driven the route to consider their permit needs
- Desired timing so that you can consider seasonality and other pending projects
- Any bonding, insurance, licensure, or other agreements needed
- Develop Build Once and/or Dig Once policies
- Require that all new developments and major renovations include oversizing of conduit to allow for future expansion without disruption
- Consider coordinating your permitting with neighboring communities to lessen the number of applications required as well as the resources to respond to them
- Consider creating a simple online portal for applying for permits and tracking their status
- Encourage your local utilities and other public asset holders to consider asset swaps, leasing of space, and ease of make ready



# Sharing of best practices

**If a picture is worth a thousand words, a map is worth millions of dollars when it comes to permitting for infrastructure**

- If possible, consider providing a map of all pending infrastructure projects in your jurisdiction to help applicants understand not only volume and timing, but also placement or location of construction efforts
- Make broadband infrastructure a required part of local government strategic planning
  - Every agency accounts for how they facilitate broadband infrastructure growth and protection in your area
  - New developers allow for open access to new conduit, poles, or other assets
- Consider how to emphasize your focus on streamlined permitting as part of your economic development plans



05

# Questions and answers

# Frequently asked questions

**When will the list of BEAD-eligible locations be published?** Alabama’s BEAD-eligible Broadband Serviceable Locations (BSL) list was released February 13, 2025: <https://adeca.alabama.gov/bead-eligible-broadband-serviceable-locations-and-subgrantee-selection-process/>

**A few counties show zero eligible locations. Is this correct?** Yes. It is not unusual for some counties to have zero eligible locations due to provider-reported information, data submitted during the Challenge Process, updated enforceable commitment data, and changes in the most recent fabric data from NTIA.

**When can a county assume all of its locations will be served?** Per the BEAD NOFO: “As established in Section 60102(h)(4)(C) of the Infrastructure Act, subgrantees that receive BEAD Program funds for network deployment must deploy the planned broadband network and begin providing services to each customer that desires broadband service within the project area not later than four years after the date on which the subgrantee receives the subgrant from the Eligible Entity.”

**What do county commissioners need to do to get broadband throughout their county?** The BEAD program requires all eligible locations to be served, so no particular action is required by the county. However, applicants will be scored on their communication with the county and local leadership. They will be asking local leadership for support on their BEAD projects. This gives locals an opportunity to talk to applicants and let them know the specific needs of the county.



# Questions?

For general questions about broadband programs in Alabama, please email the Alabama Digital Expansion team at [Broadband.Fund@adeca.alabama.gov](mailto:Broadband.Fund@adeca.alabama.gov)



# Resources

**Alabama Initial Proposal Volume 2 (IPv2):**

<https://adeca.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/Alabama-BEAD-Initial-Proposal-Volume-2.docx>

**ADECA BEAD draft application materials, FAQs, templates, and other details about the BEAD Program:**

<https://adeca.alabama.gov/bead-eligible-broadband-serviceable-locations-and-subgrantee-selection-process/>

**ADECA permitting best practices guide:**

<https://adeca.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/ADECA-Permitting-Workshop-Reference-Materials.pdf>

**Community profiles:** <https://broadband.alabama.gov/profiles/>



# Thank you!

**We appreciate your attendance and your questions.  
We hope to see you at future webinars!**





MAUREEN NEIGHBORS

Chief, Digital Expansion Division

COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

[Broadband.Fund@ADECA.alabama.gov](mailto:Broadband.Fund@ADECA.alabama.gov)

ON THE WEB

[adeca.alabama.gov/broadband](http://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband)

[broadband.alabama.gov/](http://broadband.alabama.gov/)

