

January 27, 2021



FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey



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**Mississippi Needs Accurate,
Comprehensive Broadband Mapping**

As we have come to learn, the availability of high-quality, high-speed broadband is vital to Mississippi's future, but much of the state suffers from a severe lack of access. This lack of access is especially serious now, as many Mississippians desire access to entertainment and critical services - education, healthcare, business, etc. - through the internet.

A 2019 [study by Microsoft](#) showed the significant disparity between reported broadband availability in Mississippi and actual usage. The study, which looked at real-life download speeds of connected devices, found that many Mississippi counties, particularly rural counties and those with low per capita incomes, often have single-digit percentages of individuals connected at the FCC standard of 25/3 Mbps. The numbers are clear. Mississippi's poorest and most rural counties today lack meaningful access to broadband services at the 25/3 Mbps level. Unfortunately, FCC data overstates the scope of broadband availability across the U.S., including Mississippi.

Broadband in the Central District: Reported Access vs Actual Usage (25/3 Mbps)						
County	Population	Reported Access (FCC) ¹	Actual Usage ²	Pop. w/o Broadband	Per Cap Income ³	Percent Rural ⁴
Bolivar	34,145	80%	19%	27,623	\$17,713	54%
Claiborne	9,604	52%	7%	8,903	\$13,503	100%
Copiah	29,449	53%	4%	28,418	\$19,434	65.6%
Hinds	245,285	93%	24%	186,662	\$23,114	15.3%
Holmes	19,198	67%	3%	18,584	\$13,924	86.8%
Humphreys	9,375	86%	6%	8,813	\$16,604	49.8%
Issaquena	1,406	2%	5%	1,340	\$18,942	100%
Jefferson	7,726	55%	4%	7,394	\$13,374	100%
Kemper	10,456	12%	12%	10,372	\$15,518	100%
Lauderdale	75,317	90%	90%	59,350	\$23,741	48.3%
Leake	22,762	48%	3%	22,125	\$17,960	81.2%

¹ FCC's 2019 Broadband Deployment Report
² Microsoft Data Science and Analytics (November 2019 Data)
³ FCC 2020 Broadband Deployment Report
⁴ U.S. Census Data (2010)



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Broadband in the Central District: Reported Access vs Actual Usage (25/3 Mbps)						
County	Population	Reported Access (FCC) ¹	Actual Usage ²	Pop. w/o Broadband	Per Cap Income ³	Percent Rural ⁴
Madison	95,203	93%	41%	55,979	\$38,496	28%
Neshoba	29,125	62%	13%	25,251	\$19,641	73.9%
Newton	21,442	43%	3%	20,756	\$21,600	87.1%
Noxubee	11,545	44%	3%	11,199	\$17,637	74%
Rankin	141,617	93%	32%	96,016	\$29,874	33.9%
Scott	28,287	51%	3%	27,523	\$21,640	72.2%
Sharkey	4,916	43%	2%	4,832	\$17,877	100%
Sunflower	29,450	75%	10%	26,387	\$15,464	45.8%
Warren	48,773	94%	10%	43,847	\$23,793	40.9%
Washington	51,137	92%	17%	42,239	\$19,884	17.5%
Yazoo	28,065	63%	7%	26,129	\$18,866	44.6%

¹ FCC's 2019 Broadband Deployment Report

² Microsoft Data Science and Analytics (November 2019 Data)

³ FCC 2020 Broadband Deployment Report

⁴ U.S. Census Data (2010)

Accurate maps are absolutely necessary to help regulators and program administrators effectively target funding where it is most needed and understand how effectively their funding is being applied to connect those without broadband access. In 2020, Congress passed the [Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability \(DATA\) Act](#) into law. The legislation will provide \$65 million to improve the accuracy of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) broadband availability maps by strengthening the process by which broadband data is collected.

Furthermore, the MPSC is exploring the opportunity to partner with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to update its National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM). The NBAM is a powerful, flexible, and secure geographic information system (GIS) platform for the visualization and comparison of federal, state, and commercially available broadband data sets to better inform broadband projects and funding decisions. NBAM's current partners consist of 22 states, including [Georgia](#).

As reported in previous newsletters, the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction allocated \$495,725,799.60 in support to expand broadband in Mississippi to 218,990 unserved homes and businesses. Over the past couple of weeks, the winning "bidders" have been submitting their applications for designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC). Those broadband providers that will soon be bringing high-speed internet services to the **Central District** include:

- [4-County Fiber](#) to serve certain areas in [Noxubee County](#), MS.
- [Belzoni Cable LLC](#) to serve 1,481 customer locations throughout [Humphreys County](#), MS.
- [Conexon Connect LLC](#) to serve certain areas in [Claiborne, Copiah and Jefferson Counties](#), MS.
- [Connect Everyone LLC](#) to serve 4,256 locations throughout central Mississippi, including areas of [Hinds, Holmes, Madison, Rankin, Warren and Yazoo Counties](#), MS.



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- [Delta Fiber LLC](#) to serve certain areas in [Bolivar, Holmes, Humphreys, Sunflower and Washington Counties](#), MS.
- [East Mississippi Connect LLC](#) to serve certain areas in [Kemper and Lauderdale Counties](#), MS.
- [Starlink Services LLC](#) to serve certain areas of [Bolivar, Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds, Holmes, Lauderdale, Leake, Madison, Neshoba, Newton, Rankin, Scott, Warren, Washington, and Yazoo Counties](#), MS.
- [TecInfo Communications LLC](#) to serve 2,713 locations in [Bolivar, Sunflower and Washington Counties](#), MS.

While these companies are a great start, there are still significant swaths of the Central District that will continue to go unserved or underserved. We must begin moving forward with accurate mapping of broadband across the state or rural Mississippi will continue to be left behind. Thankfully, more and more people are understanding the mapping problem and the adverse impacts that it is having on efforts to provide better connectivity to Mississippians. I hope that Mississippi's actual broadband coverage and accessibility maps are ready in time for the RDOF Phase II Auction. We can't afford to let inaccurate mapping data block our access to much needed broadband funding or misdirect the funding that we do receive.

Legislation Tracker

The Commission will be watching numerous bills that could impact customers, certain utilities or the MPSC. This week we spotlight the following:

[HB 942](#): Declares that it is the policy of the State of MS to support deployment of existing and emerging technologies, including fiber-optic infrastructure and provide customer access to broadband services; Allows investor-owned electric utilities to provide broadband providers use of electric delivery system to provide broadband services; Allow the MPSC to enter into contracts for the purpose of data collection and broadband mapping.

[SB 2009](#): Provides that the owner of rental property shall not be liable for his tenant's unpaid water bill.

[SB 2532](#): Expand the Mississippi Connectivity for Education Act.

[SB 2649](#): Extends repeal date on use of energy efficiency contracts and equipment.

[SB 2798](#): Provide for the participation of investor-owned electric utilities in the expansion of broadband services; Declares that it is the policy of the State of MS to support deployment of existing and emerging technologies, including fiber-optic infrastructure and provide customer access to broadband services.

Please note that identification of a bill in this newsletter does not indicate support or opposition to a measure. Each bill is simply identified as an example of legislation that has been assigned to Energy, Public Utilities or other committees with oversight of these matters.

The Speaker announced new safety protocols that will be implemented starting this week. All House committee meetings and sessions will happen via teleconference, which will be available to the public on the Legislature website. The House is scheduled to return to in-person sessions on Wednesday, Feb. 3 after the deadline to pass bills out of committee.

[House Resolution 12](#) creates a temporary House rule determining quorums on meetings happening remotely. The resolution passed unanimously by a voice vote and makes it possible for the House to conduct business by teleconference.



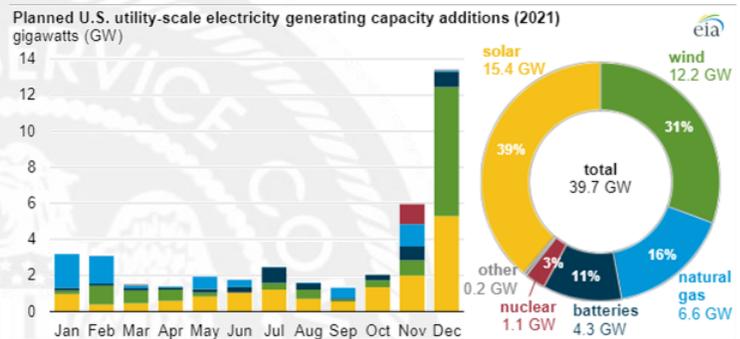
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[HCR 21](#) details the Governor's State of the State Address which was held on Tuesday, January 26 at 2:30 pm. The Governor's address can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENYmA2VxUZA>.

 **Other News**

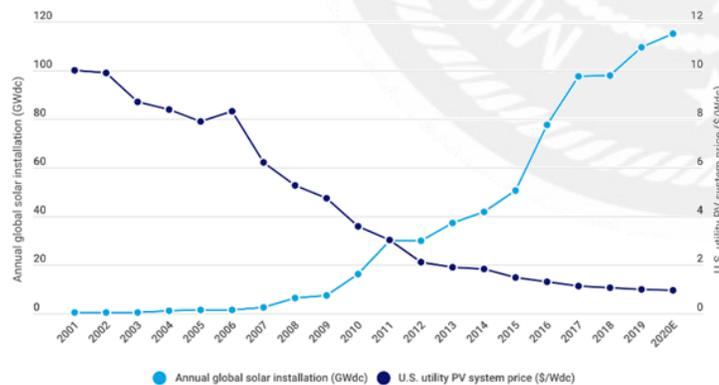
Renewables Will Account for Most New U.S. Electricity Generating Capacity in 2021

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) latest [inventory of electricity generators](#), developers and power plant owners plan for 39.7 gigawatts (GW) of new electricity generating capacity to start commercial operation in 2021. Solar will account for the largest share of new capacity at 39%, followed by wind at 31% and natural gas at 16%. About 3% of the new capacity will come from the new nuclear reactor at the Vogtle power plant in Georgia. To see a map for the locations of the planned electric generating capacity additions, visit the [EIA Today in Energy Update](#).



The cost of solar power continues to fall, making it even more competitive in generating electricity compared to fossil fuels. In the US, for example, solar is now less expensive than all other forms of new power supply in 16 states, [including Mississippi](#). By 2030, it is expected to be the lowest-cost source of new generation in all US states.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) costs have fallen by 90% over the last 20 years as solar has become a mainstream technology. Analysts expect solar PV costs to fall another 15% to 25% over the next decade due to innovations in module technology (bifacial modules, larger wafers, and high-efficiency materials) and innovations in equipment and hardware (tracker systems and inverters).



While renewables' share of power supply will continue to rise, energy efficiency is a proven least-cost clean energy resource, but many Southeastern utilities continue to underinvest compared to the rest of the nation. Yesterday, the third-annual "[Energy Efficiency in the Southeast](#)" report was released documenting trends in electric utility efficiency data and analyzing the relationship between efficiency

and the region's consistently high energy bills will be examined.

The report found that some utilities perform exceptionally well at delivering energy efficiency while others have nearly abandoned energy efficiency initiatives and deprive customers of the technical and financial assistance that would help customers reduce costs, increase household finances and improve indoor comfort.



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Net Metering Docket Motions to Intervene

The new Net Metering docket is open and inviting interveners. Parties who wish to file written comments must first file a motion to intervene within 20 days of the date of the [Order Establishing Docket](#) or before February 2, 2021. Please include docket title and number (Order Establishing Docket to Review the Efficacy and Fairness of the Net Metering and Interconnection Rules; Docket No. 2021-AD-19) in the subject line. You can electronically submit a motion to efile.psc@psc.state.ms.us or mail your motion via USPS to:

Katherine Collier
Executive Secretary
MS Public Service Commission
P.O. Box 1174
Jackson, MS 39215-1174

Last week at the MPSC

-  The following stakeholders filed to intervene in Docket 2021-AD-19 to “Review the Efficacy and Fairness of the Net Metering and Interconnection Rules”: [Attorney General](#); [Cooperative Energy](#); [Sierra Club](#); [Entegriy](#); [East MS Electric Power Association](#); [2 Mississippi](#).
-  **Cellular South** and **Telepak** filed motions to intervene in the following Application for ETC Designation dockets: [Starlink Services, LLC](#); [4-County Fiber, LLC](#); [Tecinfo Communications, LLC](#); [DE Fastlink, LLC](#); [Tishimonigo Connect, LLC](#); [Connect Everyone, LLC](#); [First Light Fiber, LLC](#); [Pearl River Valley Communications, LLC](#).
-  **Entergy Mississippi, LLC** filed its [Response](#) to the Liberty Consulting Group's and Horne CPAs Business Advisors Fuel Audit Reports.
-  In the matter of **City of Clinton's** Formal Billing and Services Complaint against **Entergy Mississippi, LLC**, the Commission [DENIED](#) Entergy MS's Motion to Stay.



The February monthly docket meeting of the Mississippi Public Service Commission will take place on Tuesday, February 2 at 10 a.m. This meeting will take place telephonically with streaming broadcast over the MPSC YouTube channel at <https://www.psc.ms.gov/webcast>. The meeting notice is now available: <https://www.psc.ms.gov/sites/default/files/2021-01/Noticeofpublicmeeting02022021.pdf>



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **23** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	17
Telecommunications	4
Water/Sewer	2

Last week, the Central District received a total of **313** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins. The top three general issues reported by consumers are related to auto warranties, financial/loans/consolidated debt, and insurance.

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.