PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS
COMMISSIONER DONNA NELSON

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER TODD STAPLES

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR MIKE SIMPSON

May 3, 2010

Mr. Lawrence Strickling
Assistant Secretary
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
United States Department of Commerce
1400 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments regarding grant applications submitted to your agency under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). Increasing access to broadband services is a priority for the State of Texas, and as you know, Governor Rick Perry has designated the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), in consultation with the Texas Public Safety Commission (PSC) and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC), to lead the state's broadband deployment initiatives and specifically represent the interest of all Texans to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Enclosed with this letter, you will find BTOP application recommendations based upon an extensive review process utilizing a diverse group of broadband and community experts, as well as a Texas broadband inventory map. Given our extensive review process, we are confident in the projects we have recommended, and we hope to see increased BTOP funding for Texas in this second application cycle. Due to the short timeframe allowed for this review, we ask NTIA to thoroughly consider all applications proposing Texas service for funding, in addition to those referenced in the enclosed document.

Texas is a vast state with an expansive geography and a diverse and dispersed population. These factors present significant challenges to our state's broadband deployment efforts, and they demand significant levels of investment to extend broadband service to unserved and underserved areas. The grants NTIA approves for Texas projects should be commensurate with the state's size and the broadband needs of its unserved and underserved residents.

In the second BTOP funding cycle, just as in the first, TDA, PSC and PUC have taken seriously the responsibility of providing recommendations to NTIA, developing a rigorous process for reviewing each grant application in an effort to make the most informed comments to NTIA. Our agencies collected copies of applications from grant applicants, established review teams and relied on NTIA-established criteria, as well as state priorities, in developing the enclosed recommendations. We recruited approximately 30 experts, who were screened for qualifications and conflicts of interest, to serve on the review teams.

States have faced a monumental task in reviewing the large number of complex BTOP applications. Texas solicited approximately 80 applications, and we reviewed 49 applications during this second round of funding. Proposed projects were considered for the ability to extend broadband service to unserved or underserved areas; increase economic development; expand educational and public safety services; and meet the policy goals of BTOP and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Additionally, Texas utilized a preliminary map developed through the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program. The map, which is substantially but not wholly complete, demonstrates a significant need for service in certain regions of the state. We would prefer a large number of projects be funded in these areas of the state, even if it means some proposals would need to be scaled down. Enclosed is a copy of the broadband inventory map, and we urge you to consider this preference for geographic diversity in evaluating projects that would provide broadband access across our state.

Given the short timeframe allowed for the application review process, Texas was unable to conduct an in-depth analysis of some critical components of the proposals, including a review of applicant financial stability; the technical and financial feasibility and sustainability of the project; and the administrative eligibility of the applications. We recognize that these reviews will be conducted by NTIA, and we share your interest in ensuring the projects receiving grants are technically feasible and will be carried out and sustained.

In the following recommendations, you will find a list of applications proposing service solely in Texas or in Texas and bordering states. While we include multi-state proposals in our list of recommended projects, our greatest concern is for projects that benefit unserved and underserved Texans. TDA, PSC and PUC would like to note that there are likely many projects not included within the attached lists which would provide great benefit to our state, so please feel free to contact us as you move forward with reviews and begin identifying fundable projects if you would like to have our views on projects that we have not listed.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on Texas-related BTOP applications. Given the significant resources invested in this review process, including the NTIA sponsored broadband service inventory map, Texas believes many projects demonstrate a benefit to our residents; therefore, we know BTOP funding levels for our state should far exceed the awards received in the first application cycle. We are available to answer any questions and provide all possible feedback to ensure the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program brings opportunity to all Texans.

Sincerely,

Todd Staples
Commissioner of Agriculture
Texas Department of Agriculture

Donna L. Nelson
Commissioner
Public Utility Commission of Texas

Mike Simpson
Assistant Director – Law Enforcement Support
Texas Department of Public Safety

Enclosures (4)

cc: The Honorable Rick Perry, Governor of Texas

The following Comprehensive Community Infrastructure projects were determined to potentially have a positive impact on the people of the Texas:

* Coalition of Health Services, Inc., Grant Number 7235
* City of El Paso, Grant Number 5998
* City of Houston, Grant Number 7085
* Peoples Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Grant Number 6261
* Region 18 Education Service Center, Grant Number 5637
* Texas A&M University, Grant Number 7487
* University of Texas at Austin, Grant Number 7545
* Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Grant Number 5732

Multistate
* County Executives Telecommunications Network, Grant Number 7108
* Skyport International, Inc. Grant Number 5012
* University Corporation for Advanced Internet Development, Grant Number 4589

The following Public Computer Center projects were determined to potentially have a positive impact on the people of the Texas:
* Boat People SOS, Inc., Grant Number 7118
* City of Brownsville, Grant Number 6526
* Del Mar College District, Grant Number 4644
* City of El Paso, Grant Number 6545
* Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Development Board, Grant Number 7082
* Middle Rio Grande Development, Grant Number 5787
* San Marcos Housing Authority, Grant Number 6642
* Technology for All, Inc., Grant Number 4923
* Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Grant Number 6260

The following Sustainable Broadband Adoption projects were determined to potentially have a positive impact on the people of the Texas:
* City of Houston, Grant Number 7083
* Connected Nation, Inc., Grant Number 6694
* Greater Harris County 911 Emergency Network, Grant Number 4961
* Memorial Herman Hospital System, Grant Number 6806
* Mexican Institute of Greater Houston, Grant Number 6842
* Neighborhood Centers, Inc., Grant Number 5703
* North Central Texas Council of Governments, Grant Number 5900
* Technology for All, Inc., Grant Number 4924

Multistate:
* County Executives Telecommunications Network, Grant Number 7027
* Network Foundation Technologies, Grant Number 4458
* Portland State University, Grant Number 6651
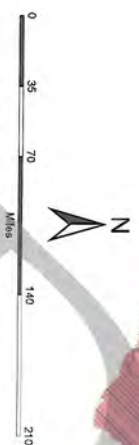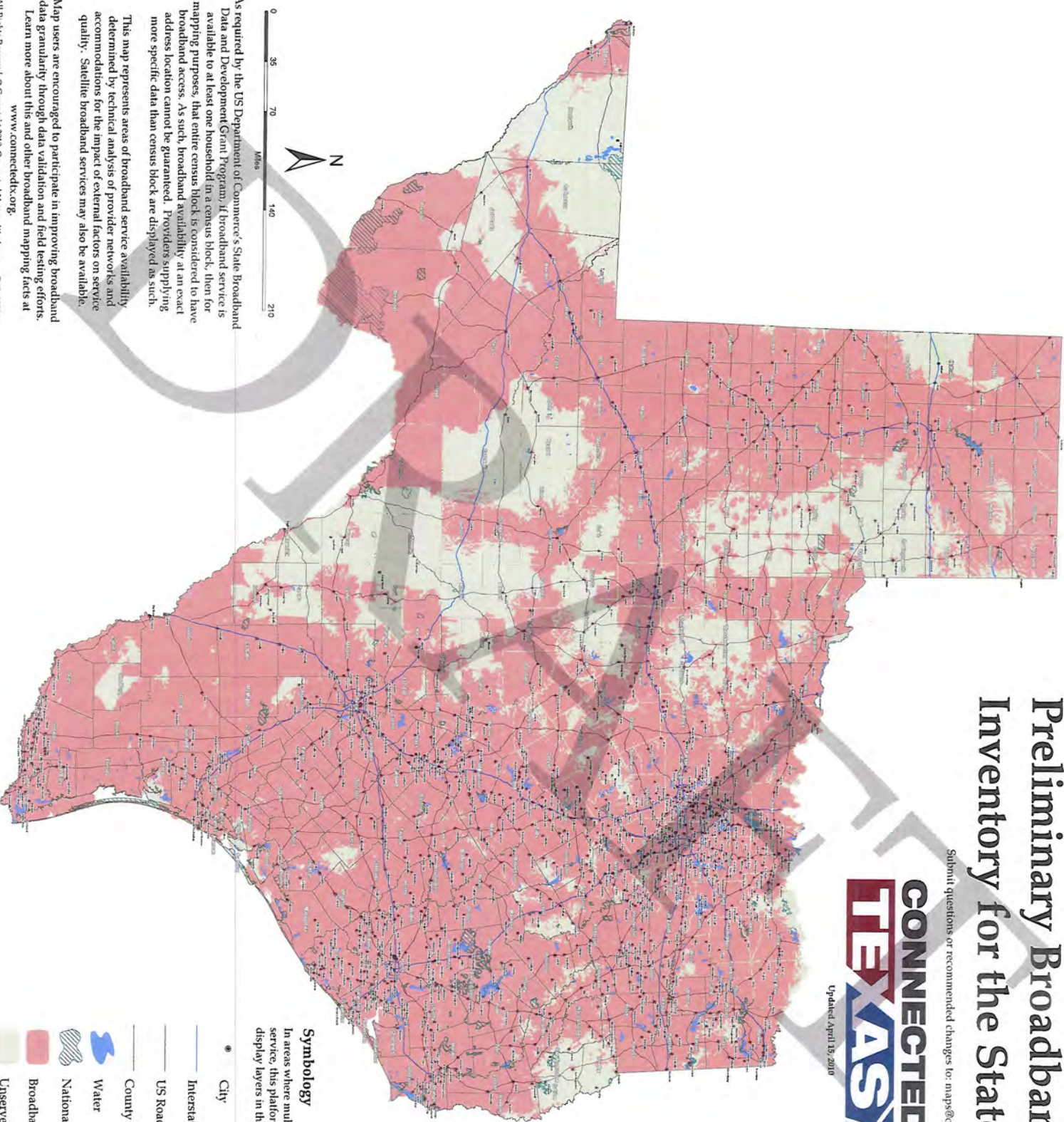* XW, LLC, Grant Number 6677

Preliminary Broadband Service Inventory for the State of Texas

Submit questions or recommended changes to: maps@connectednation.org

CONNECTED TEXAS

Updated April 15, 2010

Symbology

In areas where multiple broadband providers offer service, this platform composite map stacks coverage display layers in the order presented below.

- ⊛ City
- —— Interstate
- —— US Road
- —— County Boundary
- ∿ Water
- ▨ National Lands
- Broadband Service Available
- Unserved Areas

As required by the US Department of Commerce's State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program, if broadband service is available to at least one household in a census block, then for mapping purposes, that entire census block is considered to have broadband access. As such, broadband availability at an exact address location cannot be guaranteed. Providers supplying more specific data than census block are displayed as such.

This map represents areas of broadband service availability determined by technical analysis of provider networks and accommodations for the impact of external factors on service quality. Satellite broadband services may also be available.

Map users are encouraged to participate in improving broadband data granularity through data validation and field testing efforts. Learn more about this and other broadband mapping facts at www.connectedtx.org.

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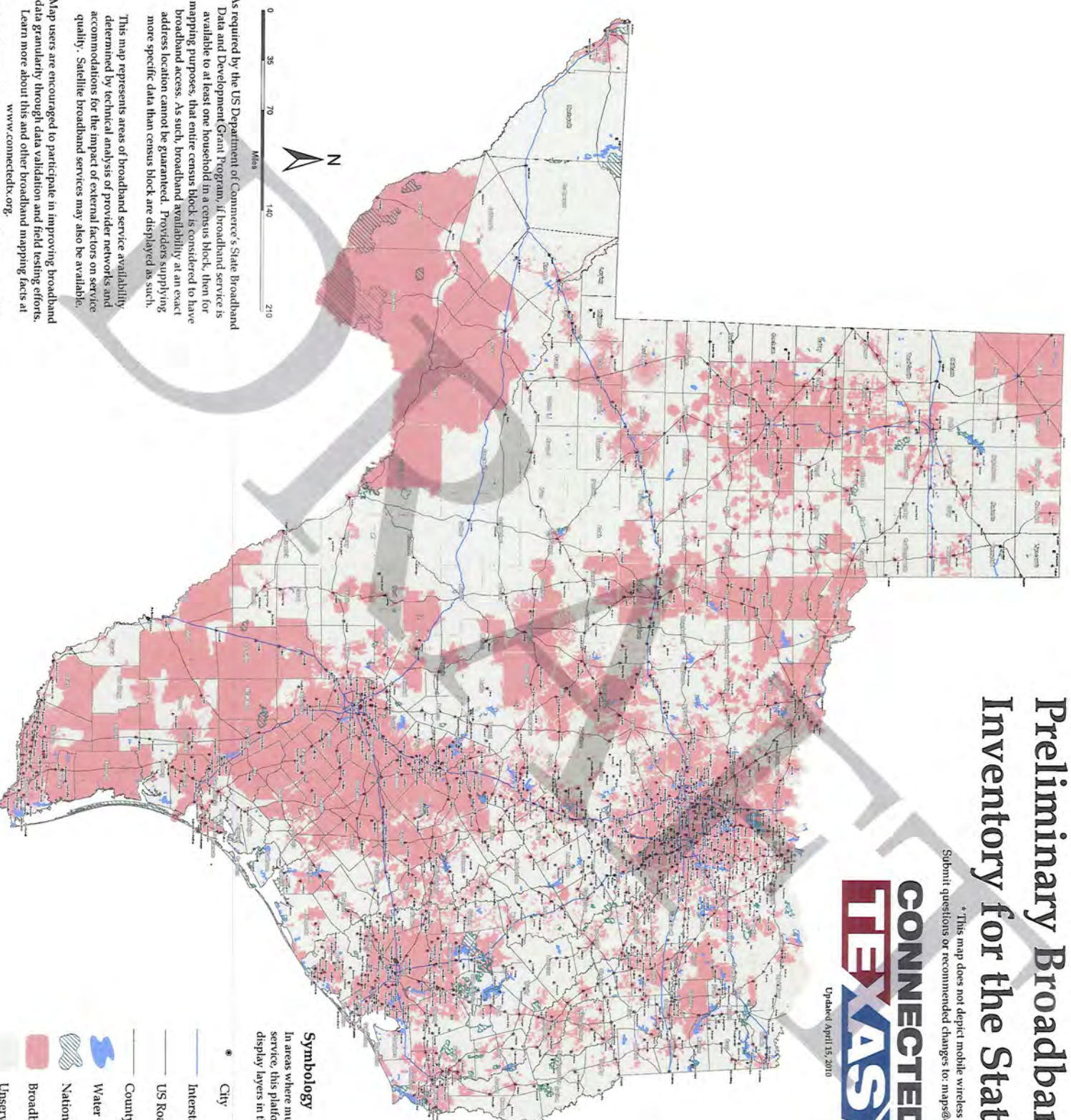
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Miles

Preliminary Broadband Service Inventory for the State of Texas*

* This map does not depict mobile wireless services.

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CONNECTED TEXAS ®

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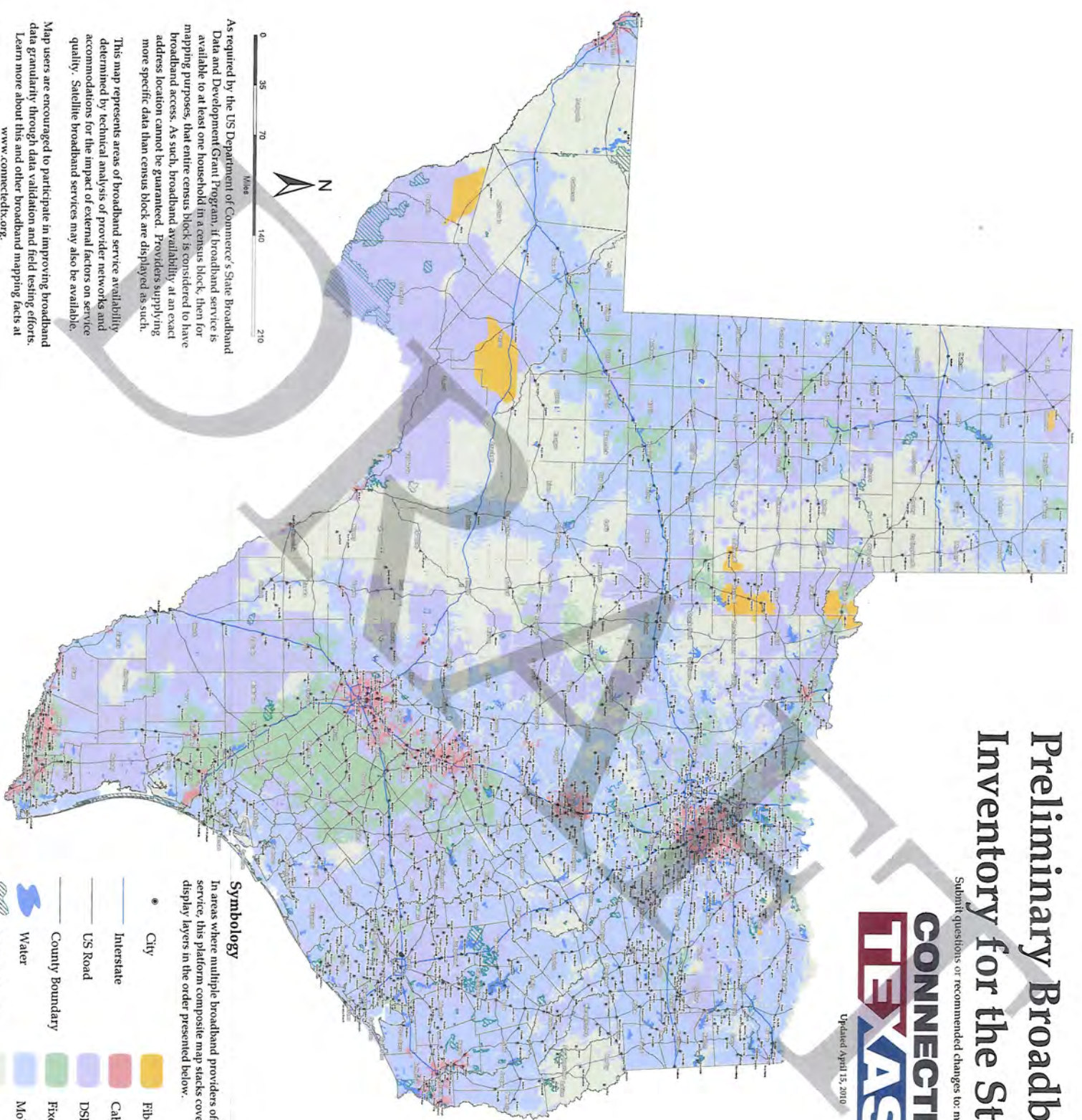
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Miles
0 35 70 140 210

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Miles
0   35   70   140   210

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⊛ City

—— Interstate

—— US Road

—— County Boundary

Water

National Lands

Fiber Broadband Service Available

Cable Broadband Service Available

DSL Broadband Service Available

Fixed Wireless Broadband Service Available

Mobile Wireless Broadband Service Available

Unserved Areas