

## Annual Minnesota Broadband Profiles | Carlton County

Rank: 74 (out of 87) for access to 100/20 megabits per second (Mbps)

### Background

Every year since 2017 Blandin Foundation has contracted with Ann Treacy of Treacy Information Services to synthesize data from the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development and broadband news from communities across the state to gauge progress toward the state broadband goals (2022: 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up and 2026: 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up).

Leaders can use this information to plan and act to improve broadband access and use in their communities.

### Carlton County: data and community action

Carlton County does not appear to be on track to meet the Minnesota broadband speed goals for either 2022 or 2026. There are some anomalies with the measures, especially a dip in access to 100/20 Mbps in the last year but even without it they seem unlikely to make the goal.

Percentage of Served Population by Speed and Date			
Carlton	2019	2018	2017
100/20 (2026 goal)	47.57	58.22	52.32
25/3 (2022 goal)	71.71	67.29	62.74

In 2017, Carlton benefited from a state broadband grant:

- **2017 - Carlton County w/ Frontier - Phase I: Cromwell/Kettle River – GRANT: \$569,058**

The project will leverage federal CAF II funding available to Frontier Communications combined with State of Minnesota grant dollars to bring enhanced broadband to 298 currently unserved households in the western one-third of Carlton County in northeastern MN, in and around the communities of Cromwell and Kettle River. The project will improve broadband service levels to the 2022 state speed goal of at least 25 Mbps download by 3 Mbps upload.

But the improvements, as explained in the grant proposal need only be to 25/3 Mbps access, which does not leave them well situated for meeting the 2026 goals.

Carlton County is part of a collaboration with neighboring counties (Carlton, Aitkin, Kanabec, Pine, Mille Lacs) called the East Central Broadband Initiative, which grew out of Carlton County’s participation in the 2015-16 [Blandin Broadband Community cohort](#)<sup>1</sup>.

While countywide there are nine providers, you can see from the map below that much of Carlton County (and [indeed the surrounding area](#)<sup>2</sup>) is served by only one provider – and that is a large national

<sup>1</sup> <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2017/08/24/carlton-county-look-back-at-impact-of-being-a-blandin-broadband-community/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/09/05/impact-of-competition-on-broadband-speeds-may-come-down-to-type-of-provider/>



provider. It can be a challenge to get a national provider to work in an area with such low population density.

In 2018, a [Blandin Foundation report](#)<sup>3</sup> looked at the impact of Federal CAF II funding in two towns in Chisago, Isanti and Kanabec Counties: Lindstrom and Braham. CAF II money went to qualifying providers (including the national provider serving Carlton) to subsidize network deployments that can deliver service of at least 10/1. The study found that while some areas were upgraded beyond that speed; some remain at speeds that do not meet the 2022 nor 2026 Minnesota broadband goals.

Carlton County could benefit from future grants. In 2019, SCI Broadband has applied to upgrade service in Carlton. (That doesn't mean they will get the grant; they have only applied.)

#### Checklist:

- 100/20 ranking: 73 (down from 44)
- 25/3 ranking: 74 (down 2)
- Has worked with Blandin: yes
- Has received a MN Broadband grant: yes
- Household density: 15.5
- Number of providers: 9

#### Details:

- Find more articles on broadband in Carlton County. (<http://tinyurl.com/z4me5k4>)
- Districts: CD 8  
Senate: 11  
House: 11A
- [Find your reps](#)<sup>4</sup>

#### Analysis: **Code Red**

- **Red (action needed)**
- **Yellow (warning – ramp up efforts)**
- **Green (good shape)**

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/Impact-of-CAF-II-funded-Networks\\_WEB.pdf](https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/Impact-of-CAF-II-funded-Networks_WEB.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>

