

2019 Annual Minnesota Broadband Profiles | Kanabec County

Rank: 84 (out of 87) for broadband at speeds 100/20 (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.

Kanabec County: data and community action

Kanabec County is not on track to meet state broadband speed goals for either 2022 or 2026. They are at the bottom of the ranking with limited progress in the last few years.

Percentage of Served Population by Speed and Date			
Kanabec	2019	2018	2017
100/20 (2026 goal)	26.93	38.54	26.07
25/3 (2022 goal)	66.05	67.07	34.04

[Kanabec County has worked with the Blandin Foundation¹](https://blandinonbroadband.org/2014/08/27/strut-your-stuff-tour-in-kanabec-county-interactive-video-healthcare-training-business-website-development/). The [Kanabec Broadband Initiative²](http://www.kanabecbroadband.org/) has been working on better broadband for years and Kanabec County has been part of the East Central Regional Broadband Group. They are aware of the need in their area.

East Central, just north of the Twin Cities, is an area that is largely served by one large national provider. That lack of competition has been a roadblock.

Kanabec did benefit from a state broadband grant:

- 2016 - BENTON COOPERATIVE TELEPHONE COMPANY BOCK – GRANT: \$510,000**
 Serving 337 unserved households, 37 unserved businesses and 1 community anchor institution in the city of Bock and portions of Hayland and Borgholm Townships in Mille Lacs County and a portion of South Fork Township in Kanabec County with services to 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, reaching the 2026.

¹ <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2014/08/27/strut-your-stuff-tour-in-kanabec-county-interactive-video-healthcare-training-business-website-development/>

² <http://www.kanabecbroadband.org/>



Assuming that project was completed in a year or so, according to the table above, it looks like that grant project made a difference to community access – but only for a select area.

At the end of 2017, [CenturyLink announced upgrades](#)³ in Kanabec County using CAF 2 funding. Rural residents who have struggled to find ways to access the internet from their homes may be in luck as Century Link is expanding services to include an additional 1,400 homes in the Braham area, and 3,000 homes in the Mora area.

But these is some concern that the upgrades will not be sufficient to meet state goals.

“This is a step in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go,” said Doyle Jelsing of the Kanabec Broadband Initiative. “We welcome the improvement; however, time will work against us as the need for broadband increases.”

Assuming the CenturyLink project happened sometime in 2018, and again looking at the table above, it looks like it hasn’t improved countywide progress towards the 2022 or 2026 speed goals and that speaks to drawbacks of CAF II funding.

In 2018, a [Blandin Foundation report](#)⁴ 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 CenturyLink) subsidize network deployments that can deliver service of at least 10/1 Mbps. 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.

In September 2019, [Senator Klobuchar’s staff held a listening](#)⁵ session in Kanabec County. They heard from Marc Johnson, with the East Central Minnesota Education Cable Cooperative (ECMECC), who spoke about the insufficiency of CAF II-funded network speeds of 25/3 Mbps. Residents also spoke about their worry that as healthcare moves online, older residents won’t have access to the services they need.

Checklist:

- 100/20 ranking: 84 (down from 67)
- 25/3 ranking: 79
- Has worked with Blandin: yes
- Has received a MN Broadband grant: yes
- Household density: 12
- Number of providers: 7

³ <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2017/11/11/centurylink-expands-internet-access-to-parts-of-kanabec-county/>

⁴ https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/Impact-of-CAF-II-funded-Networks_WEB.pdf

⁵ <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/09/17/sen-klobuchar-staff-visits-mora-to-talk-about-broadband-infrastructure-and-housing/>

Details:

- Find more articles on broadband in Kanabec County. (<http://tinyurl.com/gvyes6n>)
- Districts: CD 8
Senate: 11, 15
House: 11B, 15A
- [Find your reps⁶](#)

Analysis: Code Red

- Red (yikes)
- Yellow (warning)
- Green (good shape)

⁶ <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>