

Permitting Resources for Broadband Deployment



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& Economic Opportunity
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Illinois Office of Broadband
Permitting & Policy Team
June 30, 2026

Purpose

- Provide an overview of Illinois Office of Broadband created broadband permitting resources, built for all stakeholders interested in broadband deployment
- Preview upcoming resources and programs
- Provide links to permitting resources

Agenda

- Meet the Illinois Office of Broadband (IOB) Permitting & Policy Team
- Overview of Broadband Permitting Resources
- Permit Map
- Dig Once
- Upcoming Opportunities

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Meet the Permitting & Policy Team

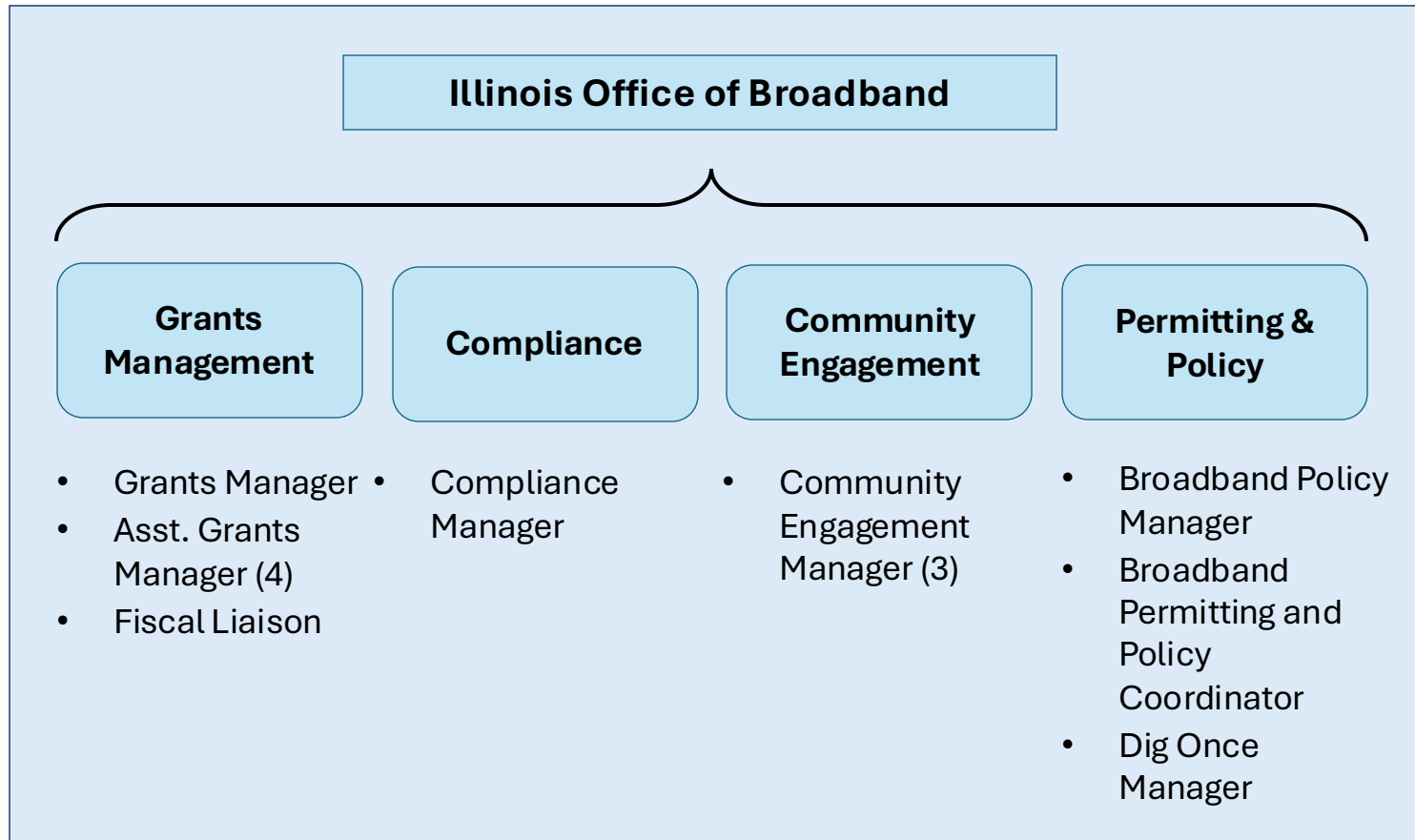


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Illinois Office of Broadband



Illinois Broadband Lab at the University of Illinois System

- Mapping & Data
- Regional Engagement
- Communications

Permitting & Policy Team



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Permitting & Policy Team Goals

Support statewide broadband deployment

Build programs that expand broadband access, troubleshoot permitting issues, and ensure that communities are connected safely, efficiently, and effectively.

Create broadband specific resources

Document permitting processes, policies, and points of contact statewide.

Identify opportunities to streamline deployment

Co-design streamlined solutions to broadband deployment issues with providers and communities.

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Broadband Permitting Resources



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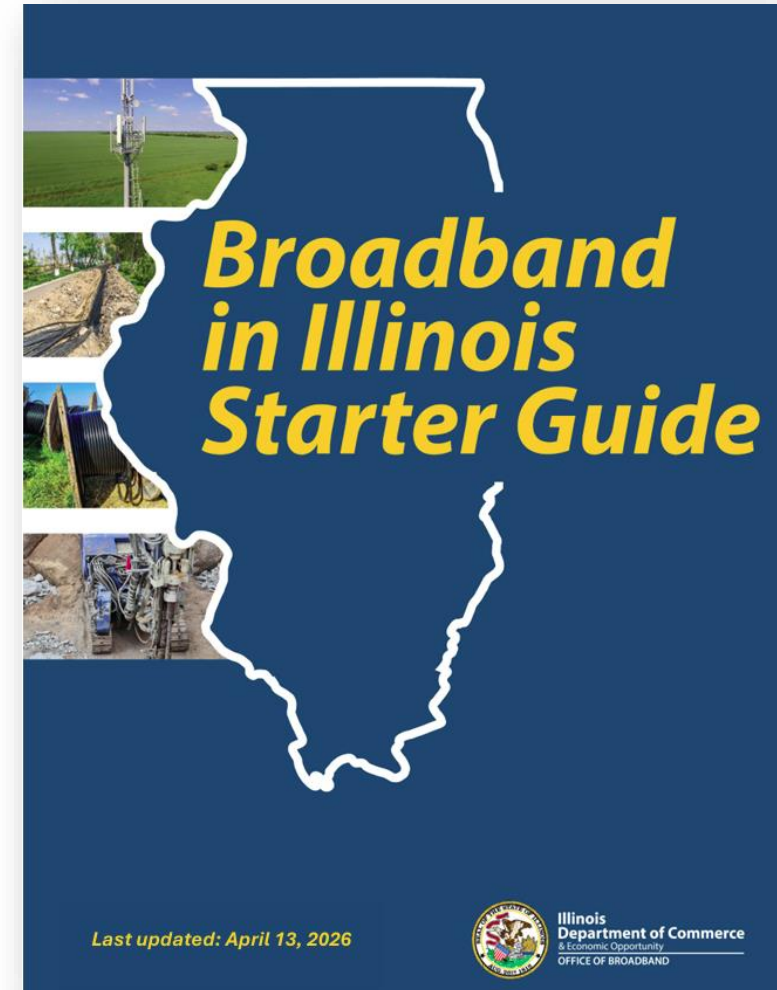
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Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide

A high-level overview of permits required for broadband deployment in Illinois.

You will find sections on...

- Right of Way (ROW) Access
- Railroads
- Pole Attachments
- Drainage Districts
- Fixed Wireless
- Locating
- Dig Once



Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide

Each section provides...

- Overview of the permit entity
- Process to submit a permit
- Best practices
- Resources with more information

Section 2: Railroad Permitting

Section 2: Railroad Permitting

There are more than 40 different railroad companies operating throughout Illinois, each with its own permitting process, requirements, and review timelines. Due to this complexity, applicants should anticipate significant variation in application procedures and plan for a lead time of 6 to 12 months to obtain construction approval. This extended timeframe is often necessary to allow railroads sufficient time to review applications, assess safety considerations, and coordinate critical safety measures such as flagger scheduling. The permitting process plays a vital role in managing construction requests, ensuring the safety of railroad operations, and protecting existing infrastructure. By researching and understanding each railroad's specific requirements early in the planning phase, broadband providers can better align their project timelines, minimize delays, and avoid costly setbacks.

Permit Process

1. Identify railroad jurisdiction

To determine the jurisdiction of a railroad right-of-way (ROW) that may be impacted by a broadband infrastructure project, providers can utilize mapping resources available through various railroad stakeholders including:

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA): [ArcGIS RR System Map](#)
- Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC): [Grade Crossing Map](#)
- Illinois Railroad Association (IRA): <https://ilrail.org/members/>
- American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASRRA): <https://engage.asrra.org/Railroad-id> (Click **Illinois** and **Search**).
- Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT): [2023 Illinois State Rail Plan](#) – Section 2 (PDF Pg. 32) for detailed discussion on Rail System

These resources allow providers to identify which railroad owns or operates a specific segment of track that may intersect with the proposed project area and what requirements they need to follow to submit a complete application. If a provider needs further certainty on which railroad to contact or what the requirements are, they can submit an inquiry to the ICC Rail Safety at ICC.RailSafety@Illinois.gov.

2. Read the requirements

Once the appropriate railroad provider has been identified, the broadband provider must review that railroad's specific requirements for utility installation. This involves researching the railroad's official website for any published manuals, guidelines, or documentation related to utility crossings or installations within the railroad's ROW. These documents typically outline the application instructions, approval process, technical specifications, and post-approval procedures. If such resources are not readily available online, the provider should contact the railroad's public works or engineering department directly to obtain the necessary information. A

Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide

Example Section: Railroad Permitting

Introduction

- Overview of the permit entity
- Details about jurisdiction ownership

Permit Process

- Steps from start to finish on how to submit a permit
- Linked resources throughout

Section 2: Railroad Permitting

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Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide

Example Section: Railroad Permitting

Who's Involved?

- Stakeholder list
- Responsibilities and relevance to the permitting process

Tips and Best Practices

- Mitigate challenges
- Streamline the process
- Organization recommendations

Section 2: Railroad Permitting

Who's Involved?

- **American Short Line & Regional Railroad Association:** Association for smaller railroad companies
- **Federal Railroad Association (FRA):** Created by the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. It is one of ten agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation concerned with intermodal transportation to create standards and specifications for operations.
- **Illinois Railroad Association:** A railroad association with all 6 class I Railroads that pass through Illinois, but any Railroad company can obtain membership.
- **Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC):** The state regulatory agency for rail safety in Illinois. The ICC has jurisdiction over public highway-rail crossings per the IL Commercial Transportation Law and inspects rail infrastructure and operations per 49 CFR 212.
- **Railroad Companies and Registered Rail Carriers:** Private companies that own and operate the railroads and permit broadband providers to build under or around their infrastructure.
- **Designated Agent:** The railroad employee on record with the IL Secretary of State corporation filings. The IL Municipal Code identifies this as the person who receives the permit application.
- **Public Works / Public Projects Group:** The person working at the railroad that is generally in charge of overseeing the permit approval process for utility installations and maintenance.

Tips and Best Practices

Build your Team: Contractors and internal permitting coordinators should be willing and able to navigate varying permitting requirements across railroads. Providers should take ownership in ensuring consultants are well-informed about all relevant safety protocols and railroad requirements.

Minimize Railroad ROW: Due to safety considerations and timeline, consider public ROW whenever feasible. If use of the railroad ROW is necessary, aim to consolidate construction activities to minimize duration which can reduce flagging expenses.

Build Relationships: For projects involving multiple railroad ROW crossings, engage public project contacts early to provide advance notice. Each railroad has unique processes and requirements—take time to understand them thoroughly. For large-scale efforts, inquire about opportunities to streamline coordination and permitting.

Stay Organized: Maintain an internal system to track all permit applications, including key details and current status. Regularly follow up with your consultants to monitor outstanding permits and ensure timely follow-through.

Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide

Example Section: Railroad Permitting

Relevant Statutes

- Illinois Law
- Municipal Code
- Illinois Administrative Code

Key Contacts and Resources

- Email addresses to key stakeholders
- Permit entity websites
- Maps
- Tools

Section 2: Railroad Permitting

Relevant Statute

[Illinois Law: 220 ILCS 70 Crossing of Railroad Right-of-Way Act](#)

The Crossing of Railroad Right-of-Way Act provides an overview of when a provider can access the railroad ROW after 30 days of sending in notice of installation. It also indicates the types of fees that can be charged from the Railroad to the provider to cover their costs.

[Illinois Municipal Code: 65 ILCS 5/11-42-11.1\(f\)](#)

The Cable Television Facility Access and Compensation Law provides regulations for what procedures to follow to gain access to Railroad ROW in Illinois. This applies only to facilities such as wire, cable, fiber, or conduit that cross the Railroad tracks or ROW perpendicularly (at a right angle) to the tracks or the ROW. It includes details on written notice, timeline, fees, and dispute information.

Key Contacts

ICC.RailSafety@illinois.gov

Resources

[FRA Website](#)

[ICC Website](#)

[Grade Crossing Map](#)

[Illinois Rail Association](#)

[Illinois Municipal Code: 65 ILCS 5/11-42-11.1\(f\)](#)

[Illinois Law: 220 ILCS 70 Crossing of Railroad Right-of-way Act](#)

[49 CFR Chapter II Federal Railroad Administration, Department of Transportation](#)

Broadband Permitting Directory Demo

The [Permitting Directory](#) is a spreadsheet with contact information for various permitting entities

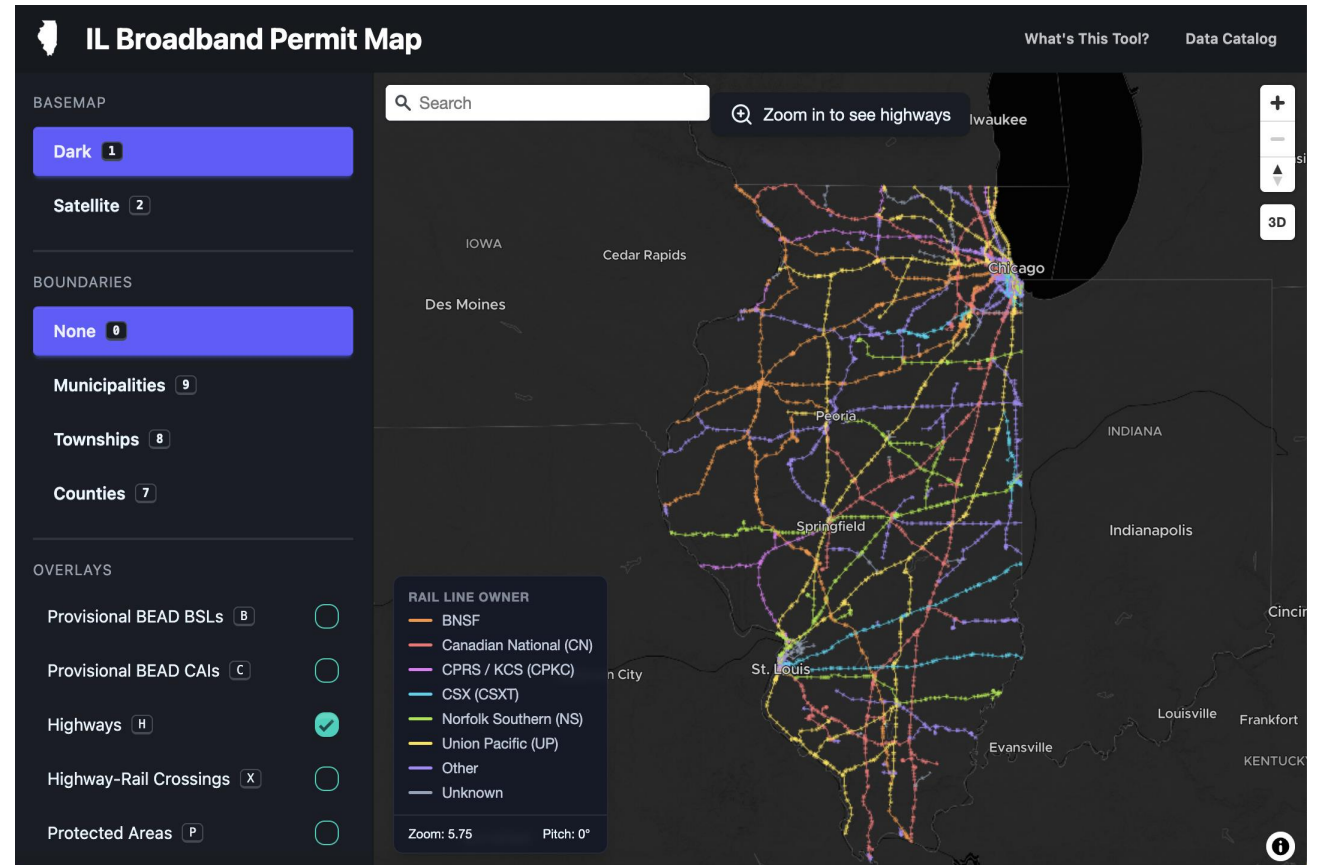
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County ▾	How to get started ▾	Primary Point of Contact ▾	Email ▾	Phone ▾	Secondary Point of Contact
Adams	Contact via phone or email with route and preliminary plans.	James Frankenhoff	jamesfrankenhoff@adamscountyil.gov	217-223-0614	
Alexander	Contact the County Engineer at the email and phone number below for more information on required permits.	Nate Bullard	alexandercohwy@gmail.com	618-776-5242	
Bond	Contact via phone or email for further information and to receive the PDF of the permit.	Michael McCormick	michael.mccormick@bondcountyil.gov	618-664-1144	
Boone	Email the County Engineer at highway@boonecountyil.gov	Justin Krohn	highway@boonecountyil.gov	815-544-2066 (Ext. 4)	Permit fee coordinator: kmishler@boonecountyil.gov Technical review assistance: wvlk@boonecountyil.gov
Brown	Call the County Engineer to initiate application.	Chris Johnson	highway@browncoil.org	217-773-2427	N/A
Bureau	Contact the County Engineer at the email and phone number below for more information on required permits.	John C. Gross	bchcoeng@nbsmail.net	815-875-4477	

Illinois Broadband Permit Map

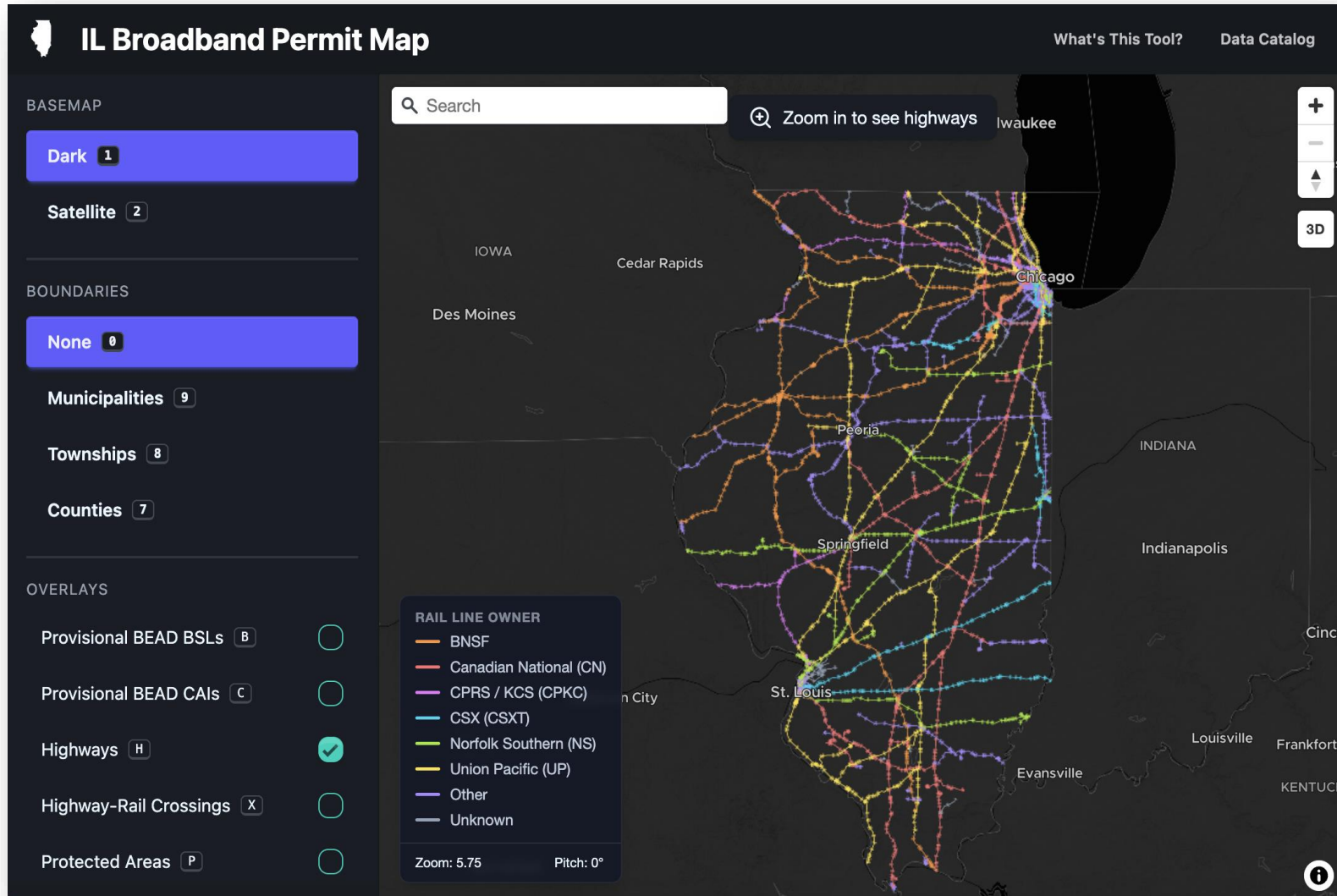
A GIS [map](#) combining multiple layers of permit and BEAD information into one place

You will find layers for...

- BEAD BSLs and CAIs
- Railroads
- Highways
- Local Jurisdictions (Counties, Municipalities)
- Waterways
- Protected Areas



Illinois Broadband Permit Map Demo



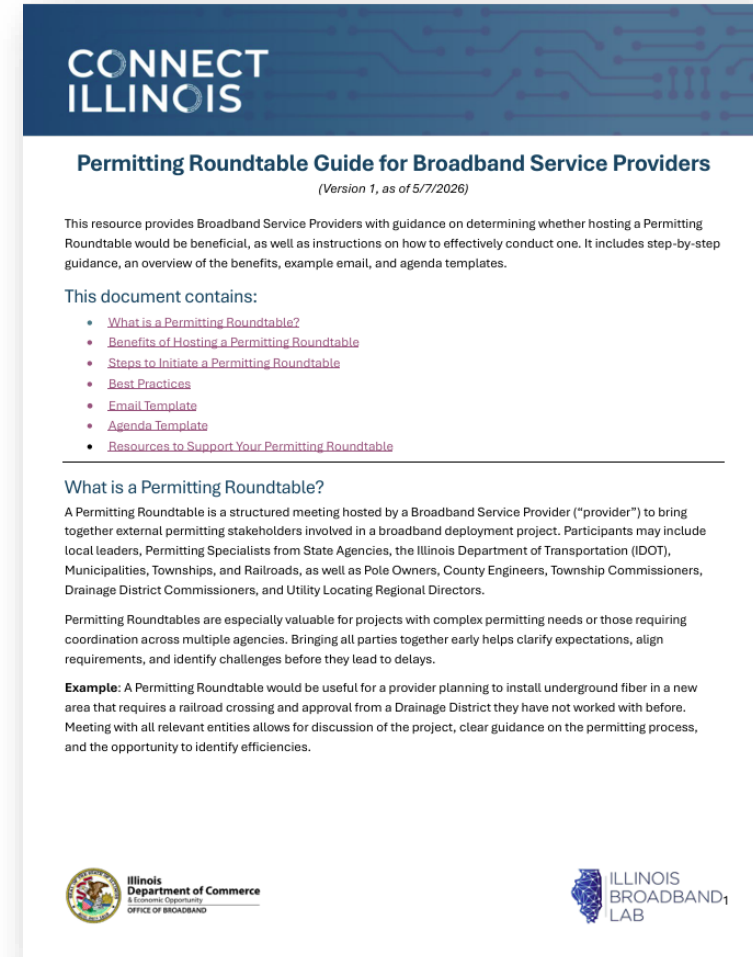
<https://permitmap.ilbroadband.org>

Permitting Roundtables Guide

A Permitting Roundtable is a structured meeting to discuss the details of a broadband deployment project with permitting entities impacted in attendance.

You will find sections on...

- What is a Permitting Roundtable
- Benefits
- Steps to Initiate a Roundtable
- Best Practices
- Email Template
- Agenda Template



Permitting Roundtables Guide

Benefits

- Improve local support
- Build relationships
- Streamline processes

Steps to Initiate

- How to decide if you should host one
- How to organize a group of attendees
- Materials to prepare ahead of the Permitting Roundtable

Benefits of Hosting a Permitting Roundtable

Builds Working Relationships

- Establishing channels of communication early can make it easier to ask questions, seek clarification, and address issues as they arise throughout the project schedule.

Improves Local Support

- Informing local stakeholders about the project can enhance assistance in acquiring easements, promote municipal or township right of way (ROW) access, and support general awareness to the community.

Identifies Early Efficiencies

- Suggesting solutions can prevent challenges proactively, reduce the need for rework on permit applications, and support more efficient deployment.

Streamlines Permitting Processes

- Reviewing large project details may prompt permitting entities to improve internal processes, clarify application requirements, or align standards to better processes and systems where appropriate.

Steps to Initiate a Permitting Roundtable

Planning the Permitting Roundtable

Determine whether a Permitting Roundtable would benefit your project:

- Overlay your project's network diagram onto the Illinois Permitting Map to identify all permitting entities involved.
- Please review the questions below. If the answer is "yes" to two or more questions, the Illinois Office of Broadband recommends a Permitting Roundtable to support efficient deployment:
 - Are there at least two permits needed from different permitting entities on your project?
 - Is this a new project area in which your organization hasn't yet deployed?
 - Are at least 50% of the permitting entities new to your organization?
 - Does the project require at least one of the following permit types:
 - Railroad (e.g., Union Pacific, BNSF)
 - Federal agency (e.g., Dept of Natural Resources, Dept Fish and Wildlife)
 - State and/or National Park (e.g., Starved Rock, Shawnee National Forest)

Prepare your project details:

- Document the following information in a PDF and share it with permitting entities before a Permitting Roundtable
 - Project ID (i.e., BOTB-1234) and/or the location of the project
- Number of locations to be served (i.e., total BSLs and CAIs)
 - Technology type (i.e., fiber, wireless, satellite)
 - Technology quantity (i.e., footage of fiber, number of towers)
 - Installation methods (i.e., underground, aerial, equipment to be used)
 - Estimated number of crews and where they will be placed
 - Estimated schedule (i.e., start and end date for each set of crews)

Document a list of permits needed and the relevant jurisdiction owner:

Permitting Roundtables Guide

Email Template

Subject Line: Action Required: Invitation to Broadband Permitting Roundtable

Hello,

I hope you are doing well. My name is [FIRST AND LAST NAME], and I am the [TITLE] at [ORGANIZATION]. We will be expanding broadband access through the Connect Illinois grant program, funded through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program, within your permitting jurisdiction in [INSERT RELEVANT LOCATION/COUNTY/TOWNSHIP] beginning [ESTIMATED DATE], and we want to ensure the process is smooth, well-coordinated, and in alignment with your needs.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in a 90-minute Permitting Roundtable, in which you, along with other local stakeholders, can meet our staff and learn about the upcoming project. Additionally, part of the agenda for the Permitting Roundtable will be delegated for your organization to provide a brief overview of your requirements and best practices. Your participation ensures that we have all the information needed to submit complete permits, reduce back and forth, and mitigate any issues ahead of deployment.

Please let me know which of the dates and times below would work for you

- [Possible date/time]
- [Possible date/time]
- [Possible date/time]

I will work to schedule a time that works well for all participants. Please let me know your availability by [INSERT DATE ONE WEEK FROM SEND DATE].

If you have any questions or would like additional information, I am happy to help.

Thank you, and I look forward to the opportunity to work together. To learn more about the Connect Illinois grant program, funded through the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program, visit the Illinois Office of Broadband Website [here](#).

Best,

[INSERT NAME]

Email Template

Sample Agenda Template for 90-Minute Permitting Roundtable

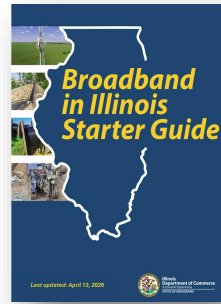
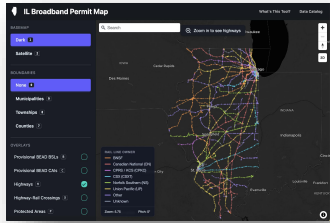
Adapt this guide to fit the goals of your organization and the needs of the stakeholders who will be attending. Sharing the agenda helps participants understand how the Permitting Roundtable will run and ensures clear timing for each section to keep the discussion on track.

Time	Agenda Item	Details
5 min	Welcome and Objectives	Greet all members as they enter the in person or virtual room. Designate someone to take attendance for everyone present. Explain the overall purpose of the Permitting Roundtable, goals, and review the agenda for the meeting.
10 min	Introductions	Have each attendee state their name, role, organization Example ice breaker question for everyone to answer: What is your favorite type of municipal infrastructure? Manhole covers? Power poles?
20 min	Sharing Project Details	Broadband Service Provider will explain their project details including: • Project ID (i.e., BOTB-1234) and project area • Number of locations to be connected • Technology type (i.e., fiber, wireless, satellite) • Technology quantity (i.e., footage of fiber, number of towers) • Installation methods (i.e., underground, aerial, equipment to be used) • Number of crews and where they will be placed • Number of locations to be served • Estimated schedule (i.e., start and end date for each set of crews)
10 min	Clarifying Project Details	This section is intended for the permitting entities to ask any clarifying questions about the project details. • Ex: confirming timing, number of crews, size of labor, footage etc.
20 min	Permitting Entity Requirements	Permitting entities will share each about 5 min about their process, where to find more information, and share best practices on how to submit a quality and complete application.
20 min	Discussion	Open the floor for the permitting entities to ask questions or discuss any potential challenges with implementation of the project. If the permitting entities do not have any questions or discussion items, the provider can ask the following questions: • Any areas of concern with the project details? • Any opportunities to make this project more efficient? • Are there any other conflicting projects or improvements in the local community that could cause a delay to this project?
5 min	Wrap Up and Conclusion	Summarize the discussion topics, proposed solutions to challenges, and will document any next steps stakeholders discussed for follow up.

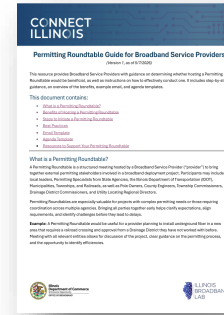
Sample Agenda Template

How to utilize IOB permitting resources

If Lincoln Telecommunications is interested in building fiber infrastructure in Lee County they can...



County	How to get started	Primary Point of Contact	Email
Adams	Contact via phone or email with route and jurisdiction details.	James Freidenreich	james.freidenreich@adamscountyl.gov
Alexander	Information pending.	Steve Bullard	stevebullard@alexandercountyl.gov
Bond	Contact via phone or email for further information and to receive the PDF of the permit.	Michael McCormick	mccormick@bondcountyl.gov
Boone	Email the County Engineer at: highways@boonecountyl.gov . Call the County Engineer to initiate application.	Justin Krohn	highways@boonecountyl.gov
Brown	Information pending.	Chris Johnson	highways@browncountyl.gov
Bureau	Information pending.	John C. Greas	jcgreas@bureaucountyl.net



Permitting Map

BEAD
Starter
Guide

Permitting
Directory

Permitting
Roundtable
Guide

Host a
Permitting
Roundtable

Apply for
permits

Identify what
permitting
entities they
might engage
with

Read up on the
process to
obtain permits
from relevant
authorities

Collect contact
information for
the various
permit entities

Determine if a
Permitting
Roundtable
would be helpful

Execute a Permitting
Roundtable to
collaborate with
permitting entities

Submit required
information to the
permitting entities

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Illinois' Dig Once Program



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Dig Once Overview

When Illinois builds or repairs a road, the ground is already open. **Dig Once** coordinates installing/updating broadband facilities and other utilities during that same construction - so infrastructure can be added *without digging twice*. The Illinois Dig Once Act (605 ILCS 145) created the Dig Once Program, and the rules needed to run it were recently adopted.



Dig once, not twice

Install infrastructure while the road is already under construction - one excavation instead of two.



Lower costs

Excavation can be up to 90% of broadband deployment costs - shared digging saves money.



Wider access

Expands broadband throughout Illinois – reaching disconnected or under-connected communities in the process.

Dig Once Structure

The program is led by a **Dig Once Manager** at DCEO and the **Dig Once Committee** with the use of a **Dig Once Portal**.

Dig Once Committee



Dig Once Manager

Runs the program day to day - coordinates providers, manages the platform, and connects projects to opportunities.



State Agencies

DCEO, IDOT, the Illinois Tollway, ICC, and JULIE - setting policy and aligning agency processes.



Voluntary Members

Broadband providers, utilities, and local governments who participate in coordinated projects.



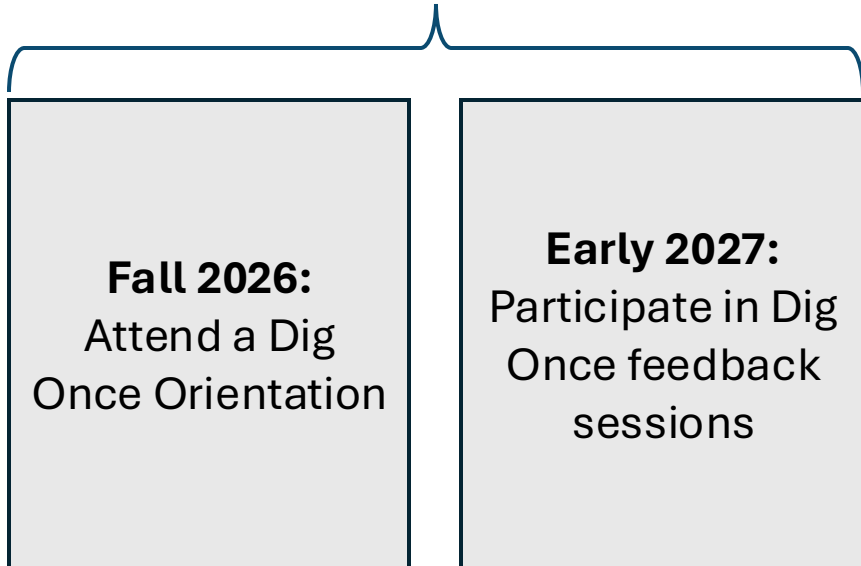
Dig Once Portal

An online platform that will house Dig Once opportunities and provide a centralized place to initiate a Dig Once collaboration.

Future Opportunities to Engage

Look out for opportunities to learn more and share your perspective

2026-2027



Coming mid-2027



Example: Dig Once in Action

If Lincoln Telecommunications is interested in participating in Dig Once, they may...



Share info on
conduit/fiber
they have for
lease



Look for
upcoming
roadway
projects where
they also want
to deploy



Join a joint dig
opportunity in
an area where
they want to
deploy



Share project
information with
others who may
want to cost-share
on a joint dig

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Questions



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Resource Roundup

Permitting Resources – Illinois Office of Broadband

- [Broadband in Illinois Starter Guide](#)
- [Broadband Permitting Directory](#)
- [Broadband Permit Map](#)
- [Permitting Roundtables Guide](#)

Interested in providing feedback on IOB resources and programs?

Add yourself to the list of collaborative partners [HERE](#).



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Get in Touch!

General questions?

Email broadband@illinois.gov

Sign up to receive our newsletter:

<https://bit.ly/IOBnewsletter>

Find all our links:

<https://bit.ly/m/IllinoisBroadband>



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