Mobile Broadband Usage Helps Bridge Digital Divide in South Carolina

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1.8 million South Carolina adults use mobile broadband via cell phone or wireless service

Read the report

COLUMBIA, SC – A new report from Connect South Carolina released today in conjunction with the spring Municipal Technology Association of South Carolina Directors Meeting shows that across the state, **over one-half** of residents age 18 or older **(51%)** access the Internet via cell phones or subscribe to mobile wireless service via a laptop or tablet. This represents approximately **1.8 million** South Carolina adults who use mobile broadband.

"Mobile broadband is a resource that allows people to get online virtually anywhere and complete many of the same tasks they would be able to do from a desktop," said Corey Johns, Connect South Carolina stakeholder relations manager. "Internet usage via a mobile device is growing exponentially and, with South Carolina's telecommunications providers announcing investment plans to continue expanding and upgrading mobile broadband coverage, it doesn't show signs of slowing anytime soon. From our standpoint, its encouraging to see mobile broadband adoption numbers up 12% since 2011 and having a significant impact on young adults, rural communities, and African Americans in South

Carolina. We look forward to seeing the impact of this trend on employment opportunities and enhanced quality of life as we continue to advance broadband, access, adoption, and use in South Carolina."

Additional key findings from the report include:

- **Four out of five** mobile broadband users say that they also subscribe to home broadband service. Among these residents, nearly **three out of four** still use their home broadband service as often as they did prior to subscribing to mobile broadband service.

- South Carolina adults age 18-34, as well as African Americans in the state, are **more likely to subscribe** to mobile broadband service than home broadband.

- When asked why they decided to subscribe to Internet service on their cell phones, **more than one in four** subscribers in South Carolina **(28%, representing approximately 491,000 adults)** reported that they wanted to be able to go online when they were away from home.

- Even though rural South Carolina residents are **less likely** than urban residents to subscribe to mobile broadband service, those who do subscribe to mobile service are more likely to access a variety of online applications. For example, **56%** of rural adults who access the Internet via their cell phones go online to research or purchase goods and services, which is much higher than their non-rural peers.

"Mobile broadband usage isn't just a means to the end of being tethered to a desk and chair; in fact, the connotation is much more to individuals with disabilities; It is a way to communicate, to participate in society, to become independent; it is freedom," said Sandy Hanebrink with Touch the Future. "We are working on a project called 'BlueAssist' and a complimentary app for smartphones called 'Cloudina,' that provides strategies to enable citizens to engage and be able to communicate and assist individuals with disabilities to ascertain a higher level of independence and to participate in society in an individual way. The evolution of mobile technologies is huge for different disability populations; BlueAssist is completely changing the lives of users and becoming the global symbol for assistance. None of this would be possible without mobile broadband."

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About Connect South Carolina: As the State Broadband Initiative, Connect South Carolina is leading the effort to increase high-speed Internet access, adoption and use to ensure South Carolina's competitiveness in the connected global economy of the twenty-first century. Connect South Carolina is a public-private partnership designated by the state to work with all broadband providers to create South Carolina's first interactive map of broadband coverage. This work serves as a foundation for addressing remaining service gaps while also engaging state, regional and local leaders in workforce development activities designed to bridge South Carolina's digital divide. For maps, research or to get involved with efforts in your community please visit: www.ConnectSC.org.

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