



## **Volunteers in Titus County Join Connected Texas, ETCOG, ATCOG on Regional Project to Increase Broadband Speed, Availability**

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***Titus County joins Connected program; enlists residents, businesses to assist with collection of data for assessment***

**Mt. Pleasant, TX** – This past summer, representatives from Connected Texas met with delegates from Titus County to discuss the [Connected Community Engagement Program](#) that is designed to facilitate better Internet service and availability within a community. As volunteers have been working with Connected Texas Community Technology Advisor Ron Turner to gather information about the current use and needs of broadband, the Ark-Tex Council of Governments and the East Texas Council of Governments have been developing a link that will enable the public to test their broadband speeds at home and work.

Information gathered in this speed test is vital for completion of the project. The objectives of this test are to compare the service offerings reported by service providers to Connected Texas' broadband mapping program and to pinpoint vital areas that are not receiving effective service. A major focus of the project is the availability of broadband to students.

"I spent a lot of time talking to representatives from each school district while working on this project," said Chuck Barlow, a local volunteer. "I was astonished by the number of economically-disadvantaged students who did not have access to the Internet. The Internet is a tool for improving future earnings to meet future needs. Studies have shown that children perform better in school when they have Internet access."

The test can be completed online [here](#). Additionally, the test can be found on multiple websites and Facebook pages including, but not limited to, the [Titus County Chamber of Commerce](#), [Mount Pleasant ISD](#), and [Harts Bluff ISD](#) websites, and the [Mount Pleasant Economic Development Facebook page](#).

“Northeast Texas is in the second decade of the twenty-first century, but not for its rural students in K-12. They are stuck in the twentieth century. The longer they’re stuck there the further they will fall behind not only the rest of America, but the rest of the world,” said Barlow. “That’s why we are working together on this project. We want to give our children and our community more opportunities for success.”

“The results of this test will help us validate and enhance our understanding of the broadband landscape in the region,” said Turner. “Action plans are being created by community leaders in each county based on the understanding gained from our maps, from local insight, and from services that will be reported by residents through this newly available tool.”

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**About Connected Texas:** Connected Texas, the Texas division of Connected Nation, is a public-private partnership, funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the State of Texas, working with telecommunications providers, business and community leaders, information technology companies, researchers, public agencies, libraries and universities to enable economic growth and a better way of life through improved broadband Internet access, adoption, and use. For more information visit: <http://www.connectedtx.org>.

Also follow Connected Texas on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

### **Connected Nation**

developed the Connected Community Engagement



Program to help guide a community through an assessment of its overall broadband and technology status. Connected certified communities have measurably demonstrated their proficiency for effective Access, Adoption, and Use of broadband-supported technologies. Connected Nation through its partners provides a national platform for recognizing those communities that excel across these important benchmarks. Funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), this effort is part of the State Broadband Initiative.

**About ETCOG:** The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments

in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.

**About ATCOG:** The Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the nine-county Northeast Texas region and Miller County, Arkansas. ATCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ATCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for Northeast Texas seniors, housing assistance, peace officer training, homeland security planning, environmental grant funding, GIS services, business finance programs, economic development grant funding and Texarkana bus and rural transportation services.