



[Broadband Infrastructure Green Light Will Help Grow Manufacturing](#)

By [Brian Raymond](#)

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Augmented reality. Drones. The Internet of Things. Cloud computing. Robotics. 3D printing. What does this sound like? If you said these are the disruptive technology tools being leveraged by today's modern manufacturer in their products and on shop floors, you are correct.

Manufacturing has gone digital. The industry is investing in and leveraging new technologies to deliver better products faster. They know this is what it takes to compete.

We highlighted the benefits of disruptive technology when we shared the results of a National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) member [survey](#) last November. NAM members told us then that these new technologies are increasing shop floor efficiencies, enabling new revenue streams and allowing manufacturers to move into completely different product lines. That sentiment has not changed.

Another issue that has not changed is the common link throughout all of these technologies: They all run on top of our nation's telecommunications infrastructure.

There is no sign of the adoption of connected technology in the manufacturing enterprise slowing. Autonomous vehicles are getting closer to widespread deployment. Municipalities all over the nation are becoming "Smart Cities." More and more small and medium-sized manufacturers are investing in internet-enabled solutions. These innovations will benefit manufacturers, their communities and the ability of our economy to grow.

To fully leverage this technology and realize its benefits, today's modern manufacturer counts on a robust broadband infrastructure. And right now, the private sector is delivering it. In fact, we have seen examples of investments in that infrastructure just last month. [AT&T](#) announced it will roll out fiber to eight new cities. [Verizon](#) intends to buy more than 12 million miles of optical fiber each year from [Corning](#) to support its rollout of broadband.

This is good news for manufacturers. This investment in broadband infrastructure will make their technology deployments successful. However, improvements in the legal and regulatory environment are needed to remove barriers to additional investment or we risk losing our innovative and competitive edge.

As we approach Infrastructure Week later this month, the NAM continues to urge lawmakers and regulators to facilitate the growth of today's modern manufacturer by taking action to spur investment in innovation. We are encouraging them to remove barriers in the form of onerous permitting processes and unnecessary regulations at all levels of government that delay deployment of the next generation of wireless broadband. A "dig-once" policy that coordinates the laying of broadband conduit with road construction projects should also be a priority.

Congress should also take legislative action and ensure the internet remains open. In addition, federal decision-makers should continue to work in partnership with the private sector and states to foster infrastructure deployment in remaining hard-to-serve areas.

Those are just a few examples of what it will take to grow investment in America's broadband infrastructure. If this investment continues and it is incentivized, it will give manufacturers the green light to accelerate and advance their current lead in the global race of the world's leading innovators.

Brian Raymond is the Director of Innovation Policy at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). He works with NAM members, the Administration and Congress to shape and advance pro-manufacturing positions on technology policy issues ranging from intellectual property protection, privacy issues and cyber/data security to net neutrality and R&D funding.