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For Immediate Release

**NEW FROM THE CENTURY FOUNDATION'S BUILDING A STRONGER AMERICA SERIES:
A PLAN TO EXTEND SUPER-FAST BROADBAND CONNECTIONS
TO ALL AMERICANS**

January 28, 2009 — President Barack Obama has made infrastructure investment a major component of his administration's economic recovery plan. A new report from The Century Foundation says broadband communications are critical to our nation's social and economic well-being and should be a central part of new infrastructure investment.

In ["A Plan to Extend Super-Fast Broadband Connections to All Americans,"](#) John Windhausen, Jr., details how the universal availability of affordable high-speed access to the Internet has become essential not only for business, but also for public safety, research and education, health care, and protecting the environment. Yet, he demonstrates that the United States currently lags behind other nations both in terms of connection speed and the number of citizens who have access to broadband.

Windhausen writes that the United States is not keeping pace with needs of its citizens because the government has no national broadband policy, does not treat broadband as a form of infrastructure, and does not regard broadband as an "essential" service. He also points out that the deregulatory philosophy of the past decade has underperformed. Competition in the broadband industry is not working: the broadband industry is not investing as much to build and deploy broadband networks as the nation needs.

In this report, Windhausen discusses how the United States can formulate policy that recognizes the creation of and access to broadband service as a vital infrastructure issue. He concludes that a modest amount of funding by the federal government, combined with a simplified regulatory approach, could address the needs of our nation for widely deployed and affordable high-speed Internet access over the next four years. He predicts that such federal investment in broadband will pay for itself many times over in enhanced tax revenue and in lower medical, educational, and environmental protection expenses. Finally, he says, a federal investment in national broadband infrastructure will restore the U.S. position as the world leader in Internet ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

Windhausen makes some specific recommendations for improving our broadband communications. These include the following:

- The federal government should make a significant effort to provide "seed" funding to build high-capacity broadband networks across the country. It should use that funding to assure that everyone has access to this essential technology, especially people in rural, inner city, and unprofitable areas.

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- The United States should adopt additional measures to promote investment by the public and private sectors by putting in place streamlined and enforceable policies to ensure that local officials make access to rights-of-way more easily available at cost-based prices. In addition, federal and state tax policies should encourage ownership, construction, and use of broadband networks.
- The federal government should revise and clarify the regulatory approach that will apply to all broadband networks for the future. Essential elements of this broadband regulatory approach should include the following:
 - Joint federal-state jurisdiction should be established over broadband networks
 - Federal rules should preserve the openness and accessibility of broadband networks for users, service and applications providers, and equipment providers.
 - Federal rules should be developed to address the interconnection of networks to ensure the seamless operation of these networks and prevent the “balkanization” of our broadband future.
 - Federal broadband policies should encourage both retail and wholesale competition over broadband networks.
- The federal government should stimulate the adoption and usage of broadband services by subsidizing computer ownership for low-income persons, educating consumers about the value of on-line services, protecting the openness and accessibility of the Internet, and increasing state and local governments’ use of “e-government” services.

“A Plan to Extend Super-Fast Broadband Connections to All Americans” is part of The Century Foundation’s new series, **Building a Stronger America**, which focuses on providing specific, concrete ideas for upgrading the nation’s decaying and inadequate infrastructure. The goal of the series is both to deepen and to broaden the public’s understanding of the problems we confront, while offering proposals beyond the plans already in wide circulation. This report and others in the series are available on The Century Foundation’s website at www.tcf.org. For more information, or to set up an interview with John Windhausen, contact Christy Hicks at hicks@tcf.org or (212) 452-7723

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The Century Foundation conducts public policy research and analyses of economic, social, and foreign policy issues, including inequality, retirement security, election reform, media studies, homeland security, and international affairs. The foundation produces books, reports, and other publications, convenes task forces and working groups, and operates seven informational Web sites. With offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., The Century Foundation is nonprofit and nonpartisan and was founded in 1919 by Edward A. Filene.