



Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force

Established by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

Working to Achieve Countywide Broadband Equity by 2022



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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WASHTENAW COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE OFFERS UPDATE ON ACHIEVING COUNTYWIDE BROADBAND EQUITY BY 2022

ANN ARBOR, MI – At the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners Working Session meeting last evening, the [Broadband Task Force](#) provided an update on their work to bridge the digital divide in our rural townships.

Chair of the Task Force and Sharon Township resident Barb Fuller stated the following in her opening remarks, “You have tasked us with identifying gaps in broadband connectivity in Washtenaw County and exploring strategies for filling those gaps in collaboration with local townships. Today we are providing you with a highly detailed pre-engineering report documenting broadband gaps in 15 townships. This report provides data not previously available and includes a map that shows with a high degree of granularity what areas of the townships are not served by broadband.” You may find the link to the Pre-Engineering Report, [here](#).

Fuller added, “This effort found significant gaps in coverage, with a total of 8,022 premises unserved by broadband (defined as service of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload). We want to emphasize though; the map of unserved areas can change fairly quickly. The upcoming FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) auction has the potential to provide a significant source of funds to incentivize private partner ISPs to construct in these areas. This process will refine and clarify which areas will remain unserved. We will not know the results until December 2020.”

Commissioners Shannon Beeman and Jason Maciejewski represent rural communities who are most impacted by the lack of internet connectivity, Commissioner Beeman states, “We are fortunate to have a group of dedicated advocates and experts in our corner working to eliminate the digital inequity that exists in Washtenaw County. The detailed information in this report confirms the magnitude of the challenges our rural residents experience and will serve as a valuable tool as we continue to seek grant funding to expand broadband access.”

“Washtenaw County is a recognized leader in the effort to bridge the digital divide because of the dedicated work of the Broadband Task Force.” Said Commissioner Maciejewski, “They have effectively worked to gather critical information that shines a light on the severity of this issue for so many of our residents. I’m confident the data they’ve gathered will help us find partners to bring broadband to unserved areas of the county.”

The report estimates it would cost between \$41,785,000 and \$61,302,000—depending on the mix of aerial versus underground construction—to build a 740-mile fiber broadband network to reach these 8,022 premises. We note that the grant funding landscape is changing with increasing frequency. The construction cost estimate will likely be impacted by these changes.

Success will require a mix of federal, state and local funding. The Task Force is actively working with a consultant to help identify public/private partnership opportunities that will yield a strong grant application, likely in the first quarter of 2021.

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