

Washtenaw County Broadband Taskforce Comments to DTMB on Comcast Dexter Township

The Washtenaw County Broadband Taskforce was formed by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to close the broadband gap and achieve digital equity within Washtenaw County. A recently completed study that the Taskforce performed in partnership with Merit Network and the Michigan State University Quello Center revealed that 64% of households in rural Washtenaw County, representing about 30,000 residents, do not have broadband at home. Needless to say, the Taskforce is highly supportive of grant funding that will result in broadband access for more of our residents. The Taskforce wishes to express support for the Comcast Dexter Township project.

In regard to Comcast Dexter Township, Comcast worked with the Taskforce to identify unserved areas of Dexter Township using survey data collected by Dexter Township. The proposed service area has many households that are unserved at the 10Mb download /1Mb upload threshold who will significantly benefit from gaining access to service. Comcast's proposed technology of hybrid fiber/copper will serve this area well into the future, with initial service capabilities at the 2Gb download /2Gb upload threshold and the ability to scale up as DOCSIS technologies improve. The Taskforce is concerned however that Comcast has only been awarded partial funding – partial funding may jeopardize this project as Comcast may need to modify or reduce the scope as compared to the submitted proposal. The Taskforce would like to encourage DTMB to consider expanding the funding award for this project to the full amount.

Finally, we understand there is some ambiguity regarding whether cellular service at a 10Mb download /1Mb upload threshold would leave an area open to challenge. We would encourage that any challenge based on cellular technology be discarded – cellular solutions have data caps that make the services prohibitively expensive as a replacement for fixed residential broadband, and cellular coverage maps for Washtenaw County are demonstrably overstated.

Thank you to the DTMB for your facilitation of this important program.

Sincerely,
Barb Fuller
Chair, Washtenaw County Broadband Taskforce