

Washtenaw County Broadband Taskforce Comments to DTMB on Mercury Connects Lenawee, Monroe, and Washtenaw

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 Mercury Connects Lenawee, Monroe, and Washtenaw, the Taskforce is excited to see service extended in some of our least served townships. We understand that Mercury Wireless is committing to provide 100Mb download / 20 Mb upload service to all households in the proposed service areas. We understand that with the topography and foliage in these areas this will be no small feat and will require construction of a significant number of towers and installation of miles of fiber optic cable. We look forward to working with Mercury Wireless to both facilitate their success and verify that all of our residents in these areas are able to receive the committed levels of service.

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