



## 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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Attached: Back-to-School WiFi thumbnail

## Back-To-School Hotspots Help Rural Students Keep Up

RURAL WASHTENAW COUNTY, MI – Responding to the stay-at-home stay-safe era, the Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force (BBTF) is providing parking lot WiFi internet connections to seven township halls in under- and unserved areas of the county. The BBTF is grateful to the townships for their willingness to partner in helping to bridge the digital divide by participating in this project as well as appointing representatives to guide the work of the task force.

To help students keep up with their school work, these WiFi internet connections will provide a means for students to get online from additional township parking lots. To make parking lot access a reality, the equipment is being provided free of charge to seven townships; Ann Arbor, Augusta, Bridgewater, Freedom, Lodi, Northfield and Scio. These seven townships join Dexter, Lima, Lyndon, Manchester, Sylvan, Sharon and Webster townships in providing parking lot WiFi access.

“An astonishing 57% of K-12 students in the 15-township region do not have high speed broadband access at home. The broadband gap is real and putting our young people at a disadvantage for life,” emphasized Donna Lasinski, State Representative 52<sup>nd</sup> District. “I applaud the Board of County Commissioners (BOC) and the Broadband Task Force (BBTF) members for their leadership and commitment to achieving broadband equity. The COVID-19 pandemic has made broadband access even more urgent and has validated the BOC’s investment in this project.”

“COVID-19 has highlighted how essential Internet access is for K-12 learning. While several township hall parking lots currently offer WiFi connectivity, others do not. This project is a step towards rounding out access in areas where students are at a disadvantage,” noted Washtenaw County Commissioner Shannon Beeman-District 3.

“While parking lot access to the internet is just a little bit better than no access at all, it is a step we were able to take quickly,” remarked Washtenaw County Commissioner Jason Maciejewski-District 1. “Until we achieve county-wide broadband access, we must do whatever we can to close the digital divide for our students.”

“Free devices such as Chrome Books and laptop computers are of little use when you can’t get online away from school. As the BBTF continues its work to achieve broadband equity, this is a stop-gap measure to provide a bit of relief in this stay-at-home stay-safe pandemic era,” remarked Barb Fuller, BBTF Chair.

The BBTF was established by BOC to achieve broadband equity by 2022. To learn more visit [www.washtenaw.org/broadband](http://www.washtenaw.org/broadband).

To **locate** a WiFi hotspot:

<http://cngis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d69accbb5ff422a82eccc2c9101b69d>

To **add** a WiFi hotspot location: <https://arcg.is/Wy9T4>.

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