Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force (BBTF)

FINAL REPORT

October 2022

TO: Sue Shink, Chair
   Board of Washtenaw County Commissioners

FROM: Barb Fuller, Chair
       Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force

DATE: October 26, 2022

SUBJECT: Final Report

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BBTF Web Site [www.washtenaw.org/broadband](http://www.washtenaw.org/broadband)
- Final Report, Broadband Equity Sub-Committee
- Media Releases
- Broadband FAQ’s
- Broadband Access Map
- RFP 8119 Public Private Partnership to Build Broadband Infrastructure and to Fill Coverage Gaps
- RFI 8096 to Select Private Partner to Build Broadband Infrastructure
- RDOF Grant Awards for Broadband Expansion in Washtenaw County -
  - Where to Find More Information
- Internet Assistance Programs for Low-Income Households
- Broadband Sub-Committee Final Report
- Pre-Engineering Report
- Back-To-School WiFi Hotspot Information
- Broadband Survey - Final Report

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Washtenaw County has long been a leader in ensuring quality of life for its residents, as evidenced by the Board of Commissioners creation of the Broadband Subcommittee in mid-2017. Since that time, the group has worked to bridge the digital divide that exists in our less densely populated areas, striving to bring the infrastructure necessary to communities that are currently un or underserved; always maintaining the goal set by the Board of Commissioners of 100% broadband equity by 2022.

In 2018, it was estimated that some 20,000 Washtenaw County residents (about 8,000 households) did not have access to high-speed broadband as defined at the 25 megabit download speed and 3 megabit upload speed. The primary cause of this lack of access is the fact that market forces leave broadband providers with a high profit margin in more populated areas than in less densely populated areas.

This lack of high-speed broadband access impacts this group of residents in the following ways:

- **Education**: Students without broadband at home are at a significant disadvantage versus their peers. There are students lacking access in all Washtenaw County school districts, but the two worst impacted are Chelsea School District (40.6% or 2,836 households unserved) and Manchester School District (69.5% or 2,327 households unserved).

- **Economic development**: Lack of broadband hampers entrepreneurship, job seeking, and attraction of both businesses and talent.

- **Property value**: Studies show that homes without broadband access are on average worth 3.1% less than comparable homes with broadband, and the gap rises to 7.1% when faster fiber optic broadband is considered.
• **Personal prosperity**: Having broadband access enables cost savings in many areas of personal commerce, yielding hundreds or thousands of dollars each year that those without broadband are overspending.

• **Health and safety**: Communities without broadband experience higher rates of lost lives, injury, and crime, and residents in these communities have difficulty leveraging new capabilities like electronic medical records and e-Visits.

• **Quality of life**: Broadband enables people to communicate more freely with friends and family, leverage new technologies like smart home features, use modern entertainment services like streaming video, and generally participate in modern society.

Appreciating that high-speed broadband infrastructure access, affordability and adoption/literacy are all essential, the sub-committee and the BBTF prioritized achieving high-speed broadband infrastructure access. In response, the sub-committee and the BBTF set goals that are listed in Appendix 4. It is noteworthy that these goals were put on paper pre-RDOF, pre-ARPA and pre-COVID. Those events had a dramatic impact on the work and direction of this effort.

The announcement of Rural Digital Opportunity (RDOF) grant funding in late 2020 was welcomed news to nearly 7,000 households in our rural communities. While RDOF was exciting for many in our less densely populated areas, 3,317 households remained under or unserved as they are not located in the grant funding areas. The Broadband Task Force, therefore requested that the Board of Commissioners allocate up to $14,672,270 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to work with private partners to build the infrastructure that will ensure all residents of Washtenaw County are provided equitable access to high-speed broadband. This allocation will make Washtenaw County the first county in the State of Michigan to achieve 100% broadband access.

County-wide broadband access in Washtenaw County will provide every resident the opportunity to connect to high-speed fiber optic and to fully participate in commerce, telemedicine, government and education. It would permit telecommuting and encourage home-based businesses, leading to increased employment and economic growth, especially in our rural communities. Digital connectivity will serve to affirm the social well-being of those residents who may not have access to public transportation – thus allowing exchanges with friends and family and maintaining important bonds.

The Sub-Committee and Task Force Goals have been largely successfully addressed. The impact of the RDOF and ARPA funding in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be overstated. It is a tribute to the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, County Administration and staff, and the Broadband Task Force that we are on track to realize 100% county-wide access to high-speed broadband by the end of 2024.
Chronology of Washtenaw County’s High-Speed Broadband Journey

(full page version on page 20)

- May 2017 | Request to create Broadband Subcommittee submitted to BOC Chair Andy LaBarre
- July 2017 | Broadband Subcommittee established to identify inequity issues (Res 17-112) Sunset Dec. 31, 2018
- Nov 2018 | Final Report Broadband Subcommittee
- April 2019 | BBTF established to explore viable grant opportunities that would yield countywide broadband coverage (Resolution 19-074) Sunset Dec. 31, 2022
- Nov 2019 | Survey Project Awarded to Merit Network, Inc.
- Jan 2020 | The BBTF, in partnership with Merit Network, conducted a 33,000 parcel, 15 township survey to establish accurate, granular coverage data needed to pursue state and federal grant opportunities. Exec. Summary, Final Report and PowerPoint Presentation posted at www.washtenaw.org/broadband
- March 2020 | COVID-19 lockdown
- June 2020 | Pre-Engineering RFP # 7914 Split Award to DCS Technology Design (pre-engineering) and CTC Technology & Energy (grant application preparation).
- July-Sept 2020 | Back-To-School Hotspots funding approved to support online instruction for students in 8 under- and un-served rural townships. This provided free 24/7 WiFi access in these township hall parking lots.
- Aug 2020 | Anticipating the continuation of online instruction for students due to the pandemic, the BBTF provided parking lot WiFi internet connections to seven township halls in under- and unserved areas of the county where parking lot WiFi access did not exist. Back-To-School Hotspots Summary posted at www.washtenaw.org/broadband
• Oct 2020 | Pre-Engineering Final Report released
  WCTF-Broadband-Pre-Engineering-Report- (washtenaw.org)
• Nov 2020 | RDOF awards issued
• Jan 2021 | Release Final Report, Grant #7914
• May 23, 2021 | Cutoff date for addresses to be included in Gap-Filling project
• March 2021 | RFI #8096 – select private partner(s) to build broadband infrastructure
• May 2021 | RFP #8119 – select public/private partner(s) to achieve 100% broadband equity in Washtenaw County.
• May 2021 | First ARPA allotment received by Washtenaw County
• Sept 2021
  o BOC approves $14,672,270 to fund the Gap Filling Initiative
  o RFP #8119 Split award to Washtenaw Fiber Properties, LLC; Midwest Energy & Communications, Comcast, Charter Spectrum
• Oct 2021
  RFP # 8215 – Project Manager awarded to Chris Scharrer, DCS Technology Design, LLC
• Sept 2022 | RFP #8119
  o Washtenaw Fiber Properties contracted for deployment in specified areas
  o Charter Spectrum contracted for deployment in specified areas
  o Midwest Energy & Communications contracted for deployment in specified areas
• Sept 26, 2022 Broadband Town Hall at Sylvan Township
• Oct 2022
  o Comcast contracted for deployment in specified areas
• Oct 20, 2022
  o Final BBTF meeting
  o Final BBTF Report submitted to BOC
• Dec 31, 2022 | BBTF sunsets

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Help prospective home buyers determine the availability of high-speed broadband access by requiring the disclosure of high-speed broadband service in real estate listings and sales agreements.
• Urge local jurisdictions to adopt Zoning Ordinances requiring broadband connectivity in conjunction with new construction
• Provide for the transfer, to the County, of the knowledge and interactive tools associated with the Broadband Sub-Committee, Broadband Task Force and Broadband Gap-Filling project, on or before Dec 31, 2024.
• Through Dec 31, 2024, residents without service should leverage the Washtenaw County Broadband Map to check future service status, or contact the local service provider as indicated on the Map. For additional details residents may contact washtenawbroadband@outlook.com
• Maintain accuracy and access in perpetuity to the broadband coverage interactive map on the County website
• Develop a county-wide economic needs-based program to support broadband subscriptions for financially challenged residents, working in conjunction with national programs.
• Encourage county-wide digital literacy and adoption programs
• Encourage county-wide digital device access programs

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

County Commissioners Supporting the Project

Jason Maciejewski, County Commissioner District 1 & BBTF Member
Kent Martinez-Kratz, County Commissioner District 1 (former)
Sue Shink, County Commissioner District 2
Michelle Deatrick, County Commissioner District 2 (former)
Shannon Beeman, County Commissioner District 3 & BBTF Member
Alicia Ping, County Commissioner District 3 (former)
Caroline Sanders, County Commissioner District 4
Felicia Brabec, County Commissioner District 4 (former)
Justin Hodge, County Commissioner District 5
Ruth Ann Jamnick, County Commissioner District 5 (former)
Ricky Jefferson, County Commissioner District 6
Andy LaBarre, County Commissioner District 7
Jason Morgan, County Commissioner District 8
Katie Scott, County Commissioner District 9
Conan Smith, County Commissioner District 9 (former)
APPENDIX 2

Broadband Sub-Committee, Broadband Task Force Members & Participants

Barb Fuller, Chair
Ben Fineman, Vice-Chair
Hon. Jason Maciejewski, County Commissioner District 1
Hon. Shannon Beeman, County Commissioner District 3
Hon. Kent Martinez-Kratz, County Commissioner District 1 (former)
Hon. Michelle Deatrick, County Commissioner District 2 (former)
Hon. Alicia Ping, County Commissioner District 3 (former)
Hon. Conan Smith, County Commissioner District 9 (former)
Hon. Amanda Nimke Ballard, Sylvan Twp representative & Sylvan Twp Clerk
Hon. Valisa Bristle, Freedom Twp representative & Freedom Twp Clerk
Hon. Ken Dignan, Northfield Twp Supervisor
Hon. Belynda Domas, Augusta Twp representative & Augusta Twp Deputy Clerk
Hon. Jan Godek, Lodi Twp representative & Lodi Twp Supervisor
Hon. Alec Jerome, Scio Twp representative & Scio Twp Trustee
Hon. John Kingsley, Webster Twp representative & Webster Twp Supervisor
Hon. Jack Knowles, Scio Twp representative & Scio Twp Supervisor (former)
Hon. Duane Luick, Lima Twp representative & Lima Twp Supervisor
Hon. Craig Maier, Lima Twp representative & Lima Twp Supervisor (former)
Hon. Mike Moran, Ann Arbor Twp representative & Ann Arbor Twp Trustee
Hon. Lisa Moutinho, Manchester Twp Trustee & Task Force representative
Hon. Karen Nolte, Dexter Twp representative & Dexter Twp Trustee
Hon. Diane O’Connell, Ann Arbor Twp representative & Ann Arbor Twp Supervisor
Hon. Peter Psarouthakis, Sharon Twp representative & Sharon Twp Supervisor
Melanie Bell, Library representative
Mike Compton, Dexter Twp representative
Karen Domino, WISD CIO
Theresa Herron, Educator Manchester Community Schools
Kyle Mazurek, Corporate representative, Comcast Governmental & Community Liaison
Gary Munce, Lyndon Twp Broadband Implementation Committee
Don Stein, Bridgewater Twp representative
Gary Pirkola, Saline Twp representative
LJ Walter, Northfield Twp representative
Scott Wooster, Director IT Chelsea Community Schools

APPENDIX 3

15 Townships Surveyed for Broadband Coverage

Ann Arbor Township    Lima Township    Scio Township
Augusta Township     Lodi Township     Sharon Township
Bridgewater Township  Manchester Township Sylvan Township
Dexter Township       Northfield Township Webster Township
Freedom Township     Saline Township     York Township

Other areas were not surveyed due to reasonable assurance of existing coverage by current data sets.
APPENDIX 4

Sub-Committee Goals  (Final Sub-Committee Report November 29, 2018)

- Achieve 100% county-wide broadband access by 2022
- Further define/refine the need and share the story
  - Conduct a county-wide broadband feasibility study
  - Build a county-wide demand aggregation map
  - Collect and map available fiber in the county
  - Raise awareness of the program, of limited broadband Access and its impact on residents and local businesses
- Support best and emerging practices
  - Support the Lyndon Township Broadband initiative
  - Distribute a “community broadband playbook”
  - Raise awareness of the incumbent providers’ low income rates/plans
  - Seek out and support discussion and opportunities for partnerships
- Seek Funding
  - Provide grand identification, writing, and aggregation resources for Washtenaw County communities
  - Identify and pursue private investments and other funding sources to help subsidize and incentivize broadband expansion
- Change or Update Policy
  - Require disclosure of broadband access in real estate listings and sales agreements
  - Support Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) enabling legislation for broadband projects
  - Formally make existing fiber assets owned by public entities available for municipalities to use for backhaul connections
- Coordinate with Local Governments
  - Help minimize or eliminate barriers that discourage broadband providers from expanding their service areas
  - Enact a county-wide “dig-once” policy
  - Include achievement of 100% broadband access in Washtenaw County’s Master Plan

Broadband Task Force Goals  (Resolution 19-074 April 17, 2019)

- Explore viable grant opportunities that would yield county-wide broadband coverage
- Engage with local, rural townships who are experiencing broadband inequity
- Form an ad hoc committee to help interested municipalities to partner with Washtenaw County on a cost-sharing basis to help with county-wide broadband efforts
APPENDIX 5

Panelists and Experts

Ray Berg, Manchester Chamber of Commerce & DDA President (former)
Amy Cell, CEO Amy Cell Talent
Len Chockley, CEO Data StrateaGems, LLC
Karen Coronado, SE Michigan Region Manager, State Government Affairs, Charter Communications
Sally Elminger, Planning Consultant, & Principle Carlisle Wortman
Ben Fineman, Chair Lyndon Twp Broadband Implementation Committee
Tom Frazier, Michigan Townships Association Legislative Liaison
Ed Goliembiewski, Washtenaw County Deputy Chief Clerk Register
Jim Haeussler, President, Peters Building Company
Dave Halteman, Washtenaw County Director of Emergency Services
Matt Harshberger, Chief Pittsfield Twp Department of Public Safety
Meg Ivy, IT Manager/Deputy Court Administrator, Washtenaw Trial Court
Hon. Donna Lasinski, State Representative, 52nd District
Mike Lott, Educator Chelsea Middle School
Matt MacDonnell, Washtenaw County Road Commission Director of Engineering
Dan Manning, Community Technology Advisor, Southern Lower Peninsula, Connect Michigan
Mike Moran, Ann Arbor Twp Supervisor (former)
Hon. Lisa Moutinho, Manchester Twp Trustee
Brian Norman, Director of External Affairs, AT&T Michigan
Marilyn Passmore, Government Affairs Director, Charter Communications
Hon. Peter Psarouthakis, Sharon Twp Supervisor
Dawn Putnam, Educator, Chelsea High School
Hon. Harley Rider, Dexter Twp Supervisor (former)
Phil Santer, Ann Arbor Spark, Senior Vice-President & Chief of Staff
Melissa Seifert, Associate State Director of Governmental Affairs, AARP Michigan
Matt Shane, MSU Extension
Kathy Spiegel, Certified Medical Writer, President American Medical Writers Association, Sharon Twp resident
Robert Stewart, Government Affairs Manager, Frontier Communications
Jaime Woodring, Educator Middle/High School, Manchester Community Schools

**Washtenaw County**

Gregory Dill, County Administrator
Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel
Curtis Hedger, Corporation Counsel (former)
Diane Heidt, Deputy County Administrator
Lisa Moutinho, BBTF Staff support
Kelly Belknap, ARPA Compliance, CFO (former)
Teresa Gillotti, Director, Office of Community & Economic Development
Andy Brush, IT Director (former)
Crystal Campbell, Public Information Officer
Latitia Sharp, Contract Processing
Tina Gavalier, Budget Manager
Beth Ann Duffy, Senior Buyer
Angela Perry, Purchasing Manager
Candace Reum, Digital Media Manager
Raman Patel, Equalization Director
Andrew DeLeeuw, Director of Strategic Planning
Merit Network, Inc.
Charlotte Bewersdorff, Vice President for Community Engagement
Ryan Fuller, Marketing
Michalis Kalitsis, Research Scientist
Megan Martin, Marketing Coordinator
Mary Shindell, Member Engagement
Bob Stonefall, Vice President of Infrastructure Strategy & Research
Pierrette Widmeyer, Director of Marketing & Communications

MSU Quello Center
Johannes Baurer, Chair for Media & information Policy
Keith Hampton, Professor of Media & Information

DCS Technology Design, LLC
Chris Scharrer, RCDD/NTS/OSP-CTS-D

CTC Technology & Energy
Joanne S. Hovis, President
Ziggy Rivkin-Fish, Statistical Analysis Team Lead
David Talbot, Senior Analyst
Ara Casey, Program Manager and Analyst
### APPENDIX 6 – Financial Overview

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<td>IRS mandated stipends</td>
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<td>Gap-Filling Project Management</td>
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<td>Affordability Assistance</td>
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APPENDIX 7 -

BOC Resolution 21-158 and Background Memo ARPA Funding Allocation

RESOLUTION 21-158

A RESOLUTION TO ADDRESS IMMEDIATE CHILD CARE NEEDS; LAUNCH A SOLUTIONS ACCOUNTS PROGRAM; CONNECT ALL COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS TO BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE; ADDRESS BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY, LITERACY, AND ACCESS; EXPAND THE COUNTY’S WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM; AND ACCOUNT FOR LOST REVENUES DUE TO COVID-19 AS PART OF THE WASHTENAW COUNTY RESCUE PLAN

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
September 15, 2021

(excerpt)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners obligates up to a total of $14,672,270 to fully fund the Broadband Task Force’s Request for Proposals to expand high-speed broadband internet infrastructure to all households in Washtenaw County, inclusive of up to $4,890,757 directly from the county’s ARP SLFRP, up to $1,000,000 from the County’s General Fund Balance, with the remaining up to $8,781,513 from recovered ARPA lost revenues funds.

BACKGROUND MEMO

TO: Justin Hodge, Chair Ways & Means Committee
FROM: Gregory Dill County Administrator
DATE: September 1, 2021
SUBJECT: Obligate up to $24,746,642 ARPA Funds plus $5,785,500 General Fund

(excerpt)

3. Expanding Broadband Infrastructure

Expend up to $4,890,757 of American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Program Recovery Funds and obligate the remaining $9,781,513 from recovered lost revenues ($8,781,513) and County general fund ($1,000,000) to fully fund the Broadband Task Force’s Request for Proposals to expand high-speed broadband internet infrastructure into those areas of the county that presently have no high-speed broadband internet access. This action also requests that the details of recommended request for proposal (RFP) responses, for a program plan, inclusive of overviews, timelines, project activities, and performance metrics be submitted to the Board.
It has been a long-term goal of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioner to connect all of Washtenaw County with high-speed, affordable broadband internet. After receiving multiple grants in the past year, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) and Connecting Michigan Communities (CMIC), it is estimated that within the next 6 years all but 3,317 households in Washtenaw County will have been connected to high-speed broadband internet infrastructure.

On May 23, 2021, the Task Force issued Request for Proposal (RFP) #8119 to receive proposals that would provide affordable, equitable, and high-speed broadband internet access to all areas of the County unserved by high-speed broadband internet access. For the purposes of the RFP, high-speed broadband internet access is defined as 25 Mbps download speeds, and 3 Mbps upload speeds, although the RFP indicated a strong preference for speeds which exceed these minimums. This RFP was also used to understand the costs associated with meeting this goal, and the amounts returned through the RFP process form the basis of the obligation amount. As a part of this RFP, respondents were asked to also identify what low-cost programs they offer to subscribers, eligibility requirements for such programs, and utilization of such programs by their current subscriber base.

The result of the RFP is an estimate that it would take up to $14,672,270 to build the infrastructure for the remaining unserved households. Fully allocating these funds is time sensitive as many other communities across the country and region consider using ARP funds for their own high-speed broadband internet needs, which could put a strain on the materials and labor needed to Washtenaw County’s efforts to expand infrastructure. The clear and specific action of immediately allocating a third of these costs and obligated the expenditure of the remainder of these costs, the Broadband Task Force and County Administration will be able to commence contract negotiations this fall, allowing construction of new infrastructure to begin as soon as possible.

###

APPENDIX 8 - Interactive Maps (Pages 17-18-19)

**Washtenaw Broadband Gap Filling Project (arcgis.com)**

- Pre-RDOF, CMIC and ARPA Gap-Filling Project coverage
- RDOF & CMIC Award Areas
- Washtenaw County ARPA Gap-Filling Areas

APPENDIX - 9 (page 20)

**Chronology of Washtenaw County’s High-Speed Broadband Journey**
Washtenaw County Broadband
Existing Service Provider Areas - 2020
Washtenaw County Broadband
RDOF/CMIC Broadband Awards - 2021
Washtenaw County Broadband
ARPA Broadband Gap Filling - 2022
APPENDIX 9
Chronology of Washtenaw County’s High-Speed Broadband Journey