

BBTF information re the Announcements on the Home page of the SalineTownship.org web site

4.5.21 - BBTF First Announcement on Saline township web site – [click here to see the details of the First Announcement](#)

7.1.21 - BBTF insert in July 2021 Property Tax mailing - [click here to see the details of the Property Tax Insert](#)

7.1.21 - BBTF Second Announcement on Saline Township web site – [click here to see the details of the Second Announcement](#)

New Information (since the 7.1.21 BBTF Second Announcement) re the Washtenaw County Rescue Plan.

7.8.21 – **Learn about Potential Projects** : The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners has released a list of potential projects that could be included in the Washtenaw County Rescue plan . This plan leverages the \$71 million the county will receive through the American Rescue Plan’s Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery program, along with other funding. The total will be approximately \$100 million of investment in our community. – [click here for details](#)

7.8.21 **Complete the Survey (ASAP)** : Along with the priority project list, the Washtenaw County Board also announced a public engagement process to gather feedback and connect with residents about the Washtenaw County Rescue Plan. This process includes a newly launched survey where residents can express support for different potential projects, offer feedback about each priority category, and suggest other possible uses as part of this plan. – [click here to participate in the survey](#)

7.27.21 **ATTEND** the Town Hall meeting in Saline re the Washtenaw County Rescue Plan – Washtenaw County District 3 Commissioner Shannon Beeman (representing Saline Township) will be hosting a town hall event in the City of Saline on Tuesday, July 27 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Saline City Hall. The address is 100 North Harris Street, Saline, Michigan. In addition to the in-person component, the event will be streamed live on the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners Facebook page: <https://m.facebook.com/WashtenawBOC/>

8.4.21 - **ATTEND** the virtual Washtenaw County BOC meeting on August 4, 2021 at 6:30 PM to support the requested allocation for the Broadband Gap-Filling initiative. **To join the BOC zoom meeting** use this link and then follow the instructions in red text <https://www.washtenaw.org/2874/Board-Meeting-Agendas-Minutes>

4/5/2021 – BBTF First Announcement on SalineTownship.org

Recent activities of the Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force (BBTF)

Greetings Saline Township residents, Gary Pirkola here. I'm the (very recently appointed January 2021) Saline Township representative on the Washtenaw County BroadBand (High Speed Internet) Task Force (the BBTF). Following is an update on the recent activities of the BBTF that should be of interest to Saline Township residents.

But first some context, the BBTF (or some variation of the same) has been in existence since July 2017, and states as its basic mission that it is:

“A task force convened by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to explore countywide broadband equity via collaboration with local townships, and to explore grant opportunities that would result in countywide broadband equity”

And then a bit of recent history concerning the activities of the BBTF. In January of 2020 the BBTF initiated/commissioned a county wide Survey to determine the extent of the underserved and unserved areas of Washtenaw County. Underserved areas are defined as those with internet service less the 25 Mbps (Megabits per second) download and 3 Mbps upload. Unserved areas have no internet service. At that time, it was determined that of the 1400 “active parcels” in Saline Township, approximately 450 were underserved or unserved (i.e. close to 1/3). Additionally, in June of 2020 the BBTF initiated/commissioned a county wide Pre-Engineering Study to ascertain preliminary physical infrastructure requirements and estimated costs. These two steps were critical in order to be able to apply for grant funding.

Very recently (February 2021) the BBTF has been informed that as a result of their grant application efforts, Washtenaw County has been awarded a sizeable federal Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) grant from the FCC to “build out” a fiber optic infrastructure to serve a large segment of the underserved and unserved areas of Washtenaw county. In particular, the grant will (eventually) provide high speed internet access to close to 350 of the 450 underserved or unserved “active parcels” in Saline Township (i.e. over 75%). This is very good news for Saline Township residents who currently do not have High Speed internet access

The BBTF has published a “one-pager” document announcing this RDOF award and detailing what it means for Washtenaw County. I have included this “one-pager” below.

But before getting too far ahead of this very good news for Saline Township, a few cautionary notes are in order. The grant specifies that the company selected for implementation of broadband service in Saline Township, specifically Midwest Energy and Communications (MEC), will have up to 6 years to complete their “build out” of the fiber optic infrastructure. Further, there are still a number of Saline Township residents (close to 100) that will not be served by the RDOF grant.

The included BBTF “one-pager” below contains an FCC link, that allows Saline Township residents to type in their address and determine if their location will be served by the RDOF grant (key: green means an address served by RDOF).

The BBTF “one-pager” also has other useful information, specifically:

A link to an MEC web site where Saline Township residents can “express an interest/desire” to sign up for broadband service when it becomes available. I would encourage all interested Saline Township residents to “express an interest/desire” including their specific location information on this MEC site, as this will be an indication to MEC of the interest/desire for broadband service in Saline Township. Note that at this time, this MEC site only allows residents to “express an interest/desire”, not to actually sign up for service (which does not currently exist in Saline Township). Ignore the fact that the questions and responses may seem like you are being asked to sign up for actual internet service in the near future.

The BBTF “one pager” also contains a link to the general Washtenaw County BBTF web site where Saline Township residents can sign up for notifications about BBTF meeting notices and updates, as well as a general FAQ link (answers to Frequently Asked Questions). I would encourage interested Saline Township residents to visit these links regularly.

Finally, I have included two additional maps below that might help identify more clearly the details of the Saline Township RDOF award areas:

The first map is a “side-by-side” map that shows on the left side, the Saline Township award area (in green) from the FCC web site link mentioned in the

“BBTF one-pager”, and on the right side a version of the same (in gray) with annotated Saline Township roads included.

The second map shows again just the Saline Township award area by location/parcel/household, obtained by going to the link “BROADBAND ACCESS MAP” on the general Washtenaw County BBTF web site.

Note that the Key for this second map is as follows:

Blue - Proposed RDOF Service Area

Red - Not awarded via RDOF

Green /White - Considered Served (currently) /not active(agriculture)

In closing I will say that the BBTF is well aware that not all underserved or unserved areas in Saline Township are covered by the RDOF grant award, and thus residents should be reassured to know that the BBTF is continuing to pursue other grant opportunities to accomplish its mission of “countywide broadband equity”.

Feel free to e-mail me with any additional questions you may have. With your permission, I will add your e-mail address to a “Saline Township BBTF interest group”. I am just now beginning to think about how best to inform ALL Saline Township residents of BBTF issues and activities going forward. Any suggestions for broader communication will be appreciated.

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Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force

Working to Achieve Countywide Broadband Equity by 2022

www.washtenaw.org/broadband



RDOF Awards for Broadband Expansion What does it mean for Washtenaw County?

What is RDOF?

RDOF (Rural Digital Opportunity Fund) is a federal grant program to expand rural broadband networks by providing operational funding (not construction) over a 10-year period.

How can I find out if my address is part of the RDOF award?

<https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/rdof-phase-i-dec-2020/>

Click on this link.

Enter your address in the search bar in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

Note the color identified in the Map Legend. It indicates the type of internet service planned for you.

How long before my township has broadband access? The two companies selected for the grant will have up to 6 years to complete their build outs. It may be 2026-2027 before the work in Washtenaw County is finished. An estimated timeline will become available later this summer (2021).

How do I express my desire to sign up for broadband when it becomes available?

- For MEC areas (Midwest Energy & Communications)

<https://www.teammidwest.com/internet/sign-up-internet/>

- For Mercury Wireless area :

[Check For Service - Mercury Broadband](#)

Where can I sign up to receive Broadband Task Force meeting notices and updates?

<https://www.washtenaw.org/2867/Broadband-Task-Force>

Click on the blue "Sign-Up for Notifications" button to the right of the page.

Is there an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) about broadband in Washtenaw County?

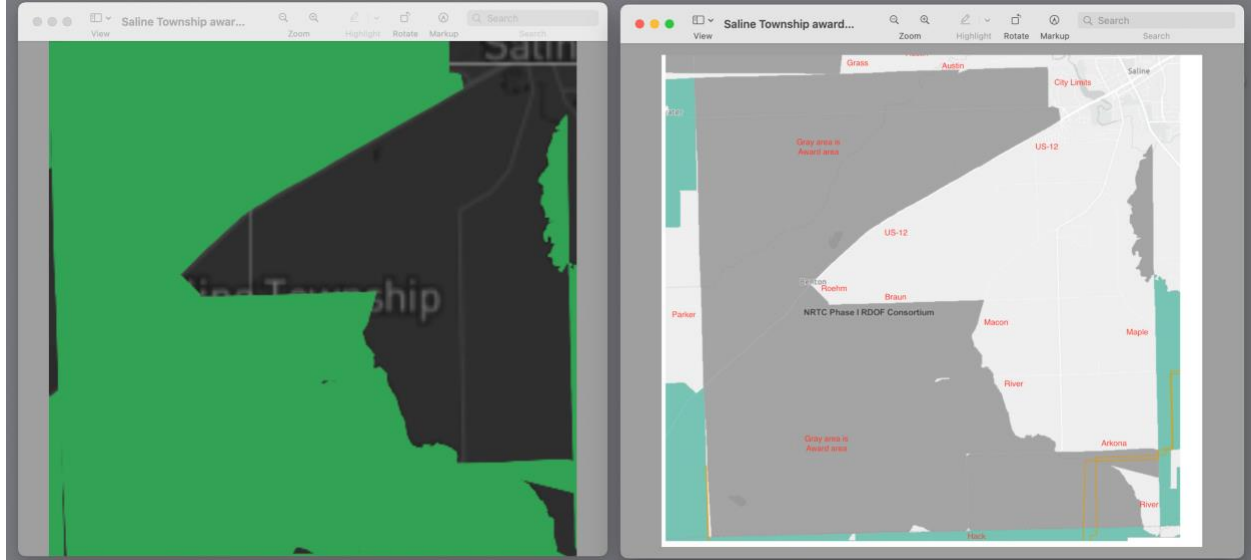
<https://www.washtenaw.org/2867/Broadband-Task-Force>

Click on the blue "FAQ's" button on the right hand side of the page.

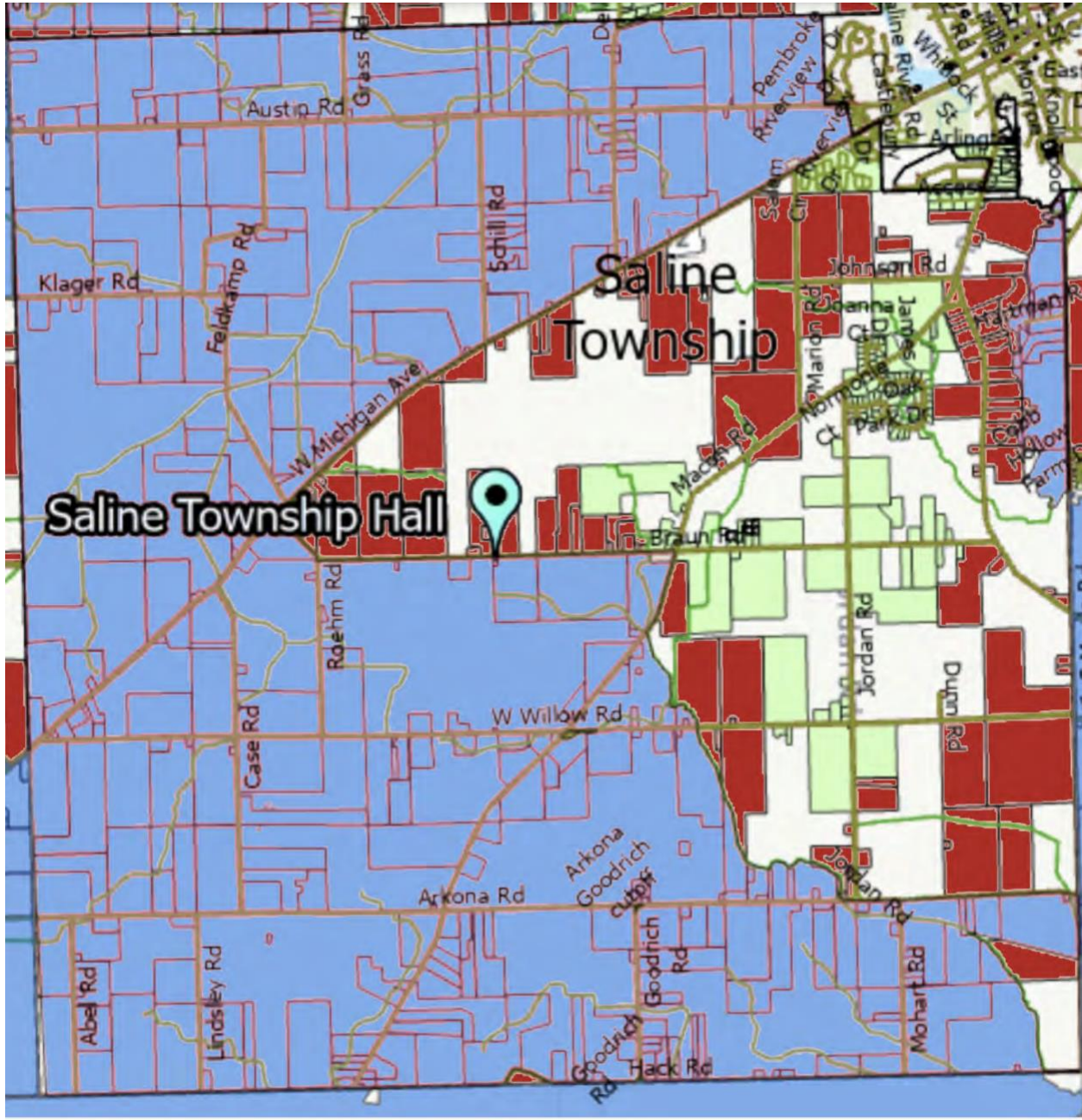
Questions: barb@provide.net

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***** Saline Township side-by-side map
***** green(left) and gray(right) areas are RDOF award areas



***** Saline Township BROADBAND ACCESS MAP award area
***** from BBTF general web site, key: blue=yes, red=no, green/white=already served/agriculture)



7/1/2021 - Half page insert in July 2021 summer property tax mailing

Washtenaw County Broad Band Task Force (BBTF) - Status Update (7/1/21)

The mission/goal of the BBTF is to provide high speed internet access to all residents in Washtenaw County. In early 2020, the BBTF commissioned a survey to determine the number of under-served and unserved residents in Washtenaw County. More recently the BBTF commissioned a pre-engineering study to determine infrastructure and cost options.

In the last 6 months, the BBTF applied for and received a Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) grant from the FCC that, specifically for Saline Township, will provide high speed internet access (within at most 6 years) to approximately 350 of the 450 under-served and unserved residents in Saline Township.

Currently the BBTF is exploring public/private opportunities for “filling the gap” for those remaining Washtenaw County residents not served by the RDOF grant. This effort would benefit the remaining (approximately 100) under-served or unserved residents in Saline Township.

To find out if your property is one of those in Saline Township that will be served by the RDOF grant, as well as to find out the most current information on the “gap filling” activities of the BBTF, view the 7/1/21 “Announcements” section on the home page of the Saline Township website at salinetownship.org.

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7/1/2021 Second Announcement - Status/Update - Washtenaw County Broad Band Task Force (BBTF)

Greetings Saline Township residents. Quite likely you have arrived here on the SalineTownship.org web site as a result of the half page insert in your July 2021 (Summer) Property Tax mailing, referencing the activities of the Washtenaw County Broadband Taskforce (BBTF).

In actuality, this is the SECOND Status/Update on the township web site re the activities of the BBTF. If you have NOT ALREADY READ the initial announcement of the activities of the BBTF, posted on the web site on 4/5/21, I would strongly encourage you to PAUSE in your reading of this SECOND announcement now, and instead go and read the initial and rather lengthy FIRST announcement posting of 4/5/21.

In the FIRST announcement, you will be introduced to the mission of the BBTF, the activities of the BBTF as of 4/5/21, the successes of the BBTF (specifically the awarding of grant money to Washtenaw County from the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF), and finally the implications of the RDOF grant for a large percentage of the underserved and unserved residents of Saline Township.

PAUSE HERE (if necessary) to read the [4/5/2021 – BBTF First Announcement](#)

OK, now that we are all on the same page, so to speak,

As noted previously, approximately 350 of the currently 450 underserved or unserved (by high speed internet access) residents of Saline Township will benefit from RDOF grant monies in (at most) the next 6 years. Following the links in the 4/5/21 announcement, any resident can determine if their address will benefit from RDOF grant monies. That still leaves however anywhere from 75 to 100 Saline Township residents without an option for high speed internet access going forward.

Commencing with the awarding of the RDOF grant monies in early 2021, the BBTF shifted its focus to exploring public/private opportunities for “filling the gap” for the remaining underserved and unserved residents in Washtenaw County.

In May the BBTF issued an RFI (Request For Information) and shortly thereafter issued an RFP (Request For Proposal) with a response deadline of early June, soliciting proposals for “filling the remaining gap”. Four proposals were received and the BBTF is currently negotiating the details of those proposals with the specific respondents. The next step will be for the BBTF to advocate before the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (BOC) for necessary funding.

As a result of the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), Washtenaw County has received monies to facilitate recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. One encouraged use of that ARP money is for expanding high speed internet access.

The ultimate goal/desire of the BBTF is that the BOC will use part of their ARP money to “fill the gap” for high speed internet access for the remaining under served and unserved County residents.

The BBTF has issued a “Call to Action” asking Washtenaw County residents to express, to the BOC, their support for allocating ARP funds to achieve countywide broadband equity.

It should be noted that at their June meeting the Saline Township board unanimously passed and sent to the Washtenaw County BOC, a “Resolution To Support Affordable Countywide Broadband Access”

Following are some facts as well as some specifics for what Saline Township residents can do.

- Washtenaw County is receiving \$72 million in COVID-19 relief funding (American Rescue Plan). These funds are not part of the county’s general fund and must be allocated by the end of 2024.
- At least 3,317 households in Washtenaw County do not have access to the infrastructure to access the internet
- The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners could vote to use ARP funding and make Washtenaw County the first county in Michigan to have 100% broadband accessibility
- The cost of closing the digital divide in Washtenaw County is \$14.7 million (20% of the ARP funding the County will receive)

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!!!

By August 1st, 2021 at the latest, email Broadband Task Force Chair Barb Fuller, barb@provide.net and let her know you support closing the digital divide in Washtenaw County. Share your stories, your frustrations and let her know you want our Board of Commissioners to be leaders in the county, the state and the country by allocating \$14.7million to ensure every single household, regardless of location, has access to high speed internet. Barb will compile your notes and send them to the Board of Commissioners.

Additionally – you will have the opportunity in the near future to have your voice heard at future BOC public engagement sessions that will be scheduled to hear from the public about ideas for use of ARP funds.

And finally, there will likely be a regularly scheduled BOC meeting where the BBTF request for funding will be on the agenda. These future dates and times have not yet been announced, but they will be posted here when they are scheduled.

Speak up, and then stay up-to-date by visiting salinetownship.org regularly.

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