

BBTF activities as of 7/1/21

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”. A (small) number of 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 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 of the BBTF is that the BOC will use part of their ARP money to “fill the gap” for high speed internet access to the remaining underserved 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.

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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