

**Rappahannock Broadband Committee
Broadband Survey Community Outreach**

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

WHO: The Broadband Committee of the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors in partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology's Rural Broadband group

WHAT: Is conducting a survey of Rappahannock County residents to determine exactly where the gaps are in our broadband access and to identify specific community needs for improved broadband service.

WHEN: The survey will be conducted from September 15-October 31, 2017.

WHERE: The survey will be available online, or as a paper copy available at your local library, fire department, schools, county administrative offices and local businesses. The survey can also be completed at one of the two upcoming town hall meetings to be held in September.

WHY: The survey will provide data that can help the County attract and incentivize broadband service providers to expand their service in our area. The survey is a key part of a more comprehensive evaluation of the county's current broadband assets, coverage and needs designed to gather required data for developing contracts with broadband providers, as well as apply for grant funds to support expanded access.

Keep up with the work of the Broadband Committee, including access to the survey, at our web site:
www.RappBroadband.org

FAQ's

What is broadband?

As defined by the FCC, the term broadband refers to high-speed Internet access that is always on and faster than traditional dial-up. Broadband includes several high-speed transmission technologies including Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), Cable, Fiber, Wireless, Satellite, and Broadband over Powerlines (BPL).

What broadband technology is available to you depends on a number of factors. These may include where you are located in relation to existing signal sources, how broadband Internet access is packaged with other services (such as voice telephone, cable and home entertainment), price and delivery infrastructure.

How could (faster) broadband access benefit me?

- Safety - Weather alerts, traffic updates, road and bridge outages and other vital information are available over the Internet. Some of our seniors also use the Internet to relay information from home health monitoring tools, while others use it to protect their property when they are away with Internet-connected cameras and sensors.
- Education – Students of all ages and grades can benefit greatly from better internet service at home to access homework assignments, complete research projects, quickly exchange information with teachers and classmates, and engage in distance learning from education sources outside of the county.
- Healthcare access – Telemedicine is a growing trend and can allow for faster, less expensive access to medical services, treatment monitoring, or follow-ups with your doctor and other health care providers. Many health insurance companies are moving to video chat or other online services as a preferred method of first contact. Medical appointments, test results and health records are also available online.
- Entertainment – More reliable and faster online service can provide alternate avenues for being informed and entertained such as downloading and listening to podcasts and viewing streaming videos in real time.
- Work – Telecommuting and home businesses are important employment opportunities for Rappahannock residents.
- Business – Reliable, high-speed Internet access is essential for county businesses communicating with customers, employees, employers and suppliers. Customers visiting our county businesses are increasingly demanding on-site Internet access to search directions, read reviews, and determine their next destination.
- Communication– Skype, Facebook, Facetime, Instagram, and other social media greatly improve our ability to communicate with friends and family. Whether its video chats with our grandchildren or instant messaging with our high school friends, improved Internet access can provide a meaningful and important tool to keep in touch.
- Telephones – Many in our country already struggle with substandard telephone service, and investments by the telephone companies to improve hardline systems are coming to an end. More importantly, their legal obligation to continue to support the telephone lines may not continue, which would potentially leave many without any telephone service at all. Broadband could offer an important alternative since technology now allows calls to be made easily over the Internet.
- Property value -Reliable broadband access has become so important that our local real estate professionals report that it's an important factor for many prospective buyers and renters.

If this project is successful, will I get (faster) Internet access?

Possibly. The goal of the project is to identify areas in the county that are currently underserved – where there is no broadband or it is too costly, too slow, or unreliable. With this information, we can work with service providers to develop a plan to provide the fastest available access to as many residents as possible at more competitive prices. This project will be implemented in stages over time and there is no guarantee that all areas of Rappahannock County will receive improved access.

Why is the county conducting this survey?

Through the Broadband Committee, the Board of Supervisors is researching the feasibility and available options for improving broadband access and reliability in our county. They are also seeking to expand access to broadband that does not have heavy restrictions on how much data can be uploaded or downloaded, or costs that are prohibitive. The survey provides required data on location and quality of existing access points, as well as information on the needs and wants of residents and local businesses.

How will survey data be used?

The data will be used to provide potential service providers with specific geographical information they require to assess infrastructure and demand for services. In addition, the data will be used in grant applications and for other funding initiatives to offset costs for expanded broadband. All data will be kept confidential and names of individual respondents will not be released.

What is the purpose of this survey?

The survey will collect information about the current state of broadband access in our county. It will identify existing services by location, speeds, current uses, current providers, and additional needs and services that residents have.

Rappahannock County has also participated in the assessment process by providing data and information about county assets that could be used for expanding broadband services to augment the data collected by the survey. This countywide information includes the current status of broadband access in our public institutions such as schools, library and administrative offices, and locations of existing and planned towers for police, safety, and emergency services.

Why do we need another survey when we already have the Foothills Forum survey results?

The Foothills Forum survey was a valuable tool in determining how residents of the county prioritize and value aspects of our rural life, and what areas residents would like to see improved. Access to expanded broadband service was overwhelmingly identified as an area of need by the survey. This is one reason that the Broadband Committee was formed by the Board of Supervisors.

This Broadband survey seeks to identify more specific data points, such as specific geographic locations, that are useful in developing partnerships with service providers, and in acquiring additional funds to support infrastructure and delivery systems.