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Contact 304.558.2234 | Email:

[WVBroadbandCouncil@wv.gov](mailto:WVBroadbandCouncil@wv.gov)



photo courtesy/Hampshire County EDA

The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council is commissioned to enhance the development of plans, processes and procedures for extending broadband access into underserved and unserved areas of the state.

## **2017 Accomplishments Set Stage For A Productive 2018 We Are Just Getting Started!**

*A message from WV Broadband Enhancement Council Chairman Robert Hinton*

With 2018 underway, the Council says 'thank you' to everyone united in the mission to bring affordable and reliable broadband service to the unserved and underserved areas of West Virginia.

A key provision in House Bill 3093 states that the Council "shall report to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance on or before January 1 of each year. The report shall include the action that was taken by the Council during the previous year in carrying out the provisions of this article."

The [2017 report](#) is in the books. Here is a snapshot of what we are letting our elected officials know. In 2017, the Council:

- Launched the West Virginia Internet Speed Test Portal.
- Created West Virginia's First Interactive Statewide Broadband Coverage Map.
- Established the Council's role as a facilitator in statewide broadband planning.
- Conducted broadband development training for local government leaders, planners and project managers.
- Designed and launched broadband development grant programs with the West Virginia Development Office.
- Represented West Virginia's interests in matters of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- Initiated the development of a Broadband Cooperative Toolkit with the WVU Entrepreneurship and Innovation Law Clinic and Generation West Virginia.



- Partnered with the West Virginia Department of Transportation and the West Virginia Department of Commerce to develop policies for the installation of fiber infrastructure.

Stay tuned for an exciting 2018 and thank you for being part of this journey.

## News from Capitol Hill

*The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council has extended invitations to West Virginia's Congressional representatives to provide a broadband-related column to this newsletter. Columns will be featured as they become available.*

### Connecting West Virginia: Where We Are Going

By U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.)

Now, more than ever, broadband is a powerful tool that West Virginia students, job creators and communities need to compete and succeed in a global digital economy.

Since my first day in the Senate, connecting West Virginia has been a top priority of mine. And one way I have been working to accomplish that goal is my [Capito Connect plan](#)—an initiative I launched in 2015 to serve as a roadmap for bringing affordable, high-speed internet access to homes, businesses, and classrooms in West Virginia.



Since launching the initiative, I have taken several steps to increase connectivity and bridge the digital divide. I've heard from thousands of West Virginians during a state-wide listening tour, hosted roundtable discussions, released a guidebook to help our communities understand the federal resources available to them, and coached West Virginians on these opportunities.

Capito Connect has also helped in a larger, very tangible way. For example, in 2015 I announced a new provider for a cell tower in Paw Paw, and last year, I announced a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide access in Barbour, Randolph, and Upshur counties.

Capito Connect is making a difference, but it's not the only avenue I am using to bridge the digital divide.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have identified new funding for broadband and strengthened federal programs. On the Senate Commerce Committee, I have spoken with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross about broadband deployment. I've also hosted Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai in West Virginia a number of times to show him how expanding access to rural broadband would help our communities.

I've raised these same issues directly with President Trump and Vice President Pence on numerous occasions, urging them to make rural broadband a priority. To date, I've written to the president three times to encourage the administration to include broadband deployment as a core component of any infrastructure package. It's encouraging to see the president and other members of the administration have repeatedly said rural broadband will be part of an infrastructure proposal.

Through all of these efforts, I've worked hard to draw attention to this critical issue and to make progress in closing the digital divide in our state and others. But there is more work to be done.

As Congress and the administration begin to focus more on an infrastructure package, I will continue to fight for broadband deployment to be a key component. As new challenges and needs arise, I will continue to help our state tackle them. And as new funding and investment opportunities arise, I will continue to make sure West Virginia is prepared to seize them.

I look forward to continuing this important dialogue with the president and the administration, my colleagues in the Senate, and state and local leaders. Working together, we can bring more innovative solutions to the table, and we can further close the digital divide in West Virginia.

Connecting our communities won't happen overnight, but we are headed in the right direction. This goal is not only achievable, but it is critical for our state to compete and thrive.

### Hampshire County Laying Foundation For Greater Broadband Connectivity

Efforts to bring high-speed internet connectivity throughout Hampshire County continue as local officials laud the latest developments in this endeavor.

A USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant has allowed the county's Economic Development

Authority (EDA) and the Hampshire County Broadband Initiative Council to build a fiber optic backbone network which will allow for quality Gigabit broadband connectivity. The project includes the installation of over 12,000 feet of 144-strand armored ribbon cable with four splice points and a demarcation patch point to allow for future expansion. The network connects the underserved Hampshire County Technology Park to a Gigabit circuit which also includes fiber connections inside of a multi-tenant building within the park. The county has been struggling to attract business due to a lack of reliable broadband service.



The Hampshire County EDA is the infrastructure owner but will partner with the county commission staff as well as private sector businesses to deploy, manage and

maintain this network. County officials note the ongoing goal is to provide broadband connectivity to the Capon Bridge Technology Park and surrounding areas and leverage any future grant funding to bolster connectivity to businesses and residences in unserved and underserved areas.

"As West Virginians, we are really great at developing water and sewer infrastructure across our beautiful state," said Hampshire County Broadband Council Director Aaron Cox. "Educating ourselves and taking similar design and layout schemes used in other infrastructure projects, we can join with knowledgeable, trustworthy partners that will enable us as a group to take a bite out of the huge digital divide that we are suffering in which repeatedly hinders economic development across the entire state."

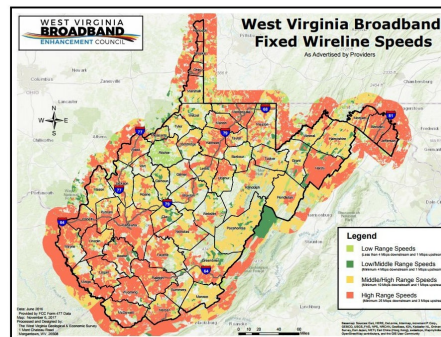
The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council salutes Hampshire County officials for forging ahead with this game-changing project.

## Static Maps Pinpoint Broadband Needs For State's 55 Counties

The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council has initiated the development of an interactive broadband mapping system through partnerships with the West Virginia Department of Commerce, West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey (WVGES), the State Office of GIS Coordination, and the West Virginia Office of Technology. This mapping system will provide much-needed information about where broadband is lacking in the state and serve as a guide to improving connectivity, particularly in unserved and underserved areas.

The mapping system includes static maps for each of the state's 55 counties. For the inception and first iteration of the static maps, the WVGES arranged each county for best visual perspective. The individual county maps are featured on the Council's [website](#).

Each map is created via ESRI's ArcGIS Desktop (ArcMap). Images are exported as layered and interactive PDFs, rather than JPG images. This format allows the user to activate or deactivate individual map layers, map text, map labels and other data elements. Speed tier colors are consistent with those applied throughout the interactive broadband mapping system.



This format also provides the flexibility to print the PDF as needed. For instance, one can view advertised low range broadband speeds (less than 4 Mbps downstream and 1 Mbps upstream), while other speed tier layers can be deactivated.

The interactive broadband mapping system, which includes the Statewide Broadband Coverage Map and these county level maps will allow consumers, broadband providers, policy makers, and community leaders the ability to identify service availability and speed, provider coverage areas, and community anchor institutions.

Data sources include biannual broadband service provider submissions in FCC Form 477 data, third party datasets, and other publicly available sources. Data has been modified, where necessary, to meet broadband mapping standards set by the Council and the State Office of GIS Coordination.



West Virginia Internet Speed Tests

*Is your internet connection up to speed?*

Find out with the West Virginia Internet Speed Test from the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council. Conduct the speed test from your personal or business computer, public connection or mobile device. Close all windows, apps and streaming media for the most accurate results.

Take the Speed Test

GO

Complete The Survey

WV Speed Test

Questions for West Virginia internet users on how they access the internet:

How are you accessing the internet?

- Through a home network, the school, library or Wi-Fi hotspot.
- Through a private network on your personal or business computer or mobile device.

☐ Home Network  
☐ School Network  
☐ Public Access Point

Enter your location below:

After clicking on the map, you can zoom in where your home or business is, you can drag the map to the correct location indicated under the blue marker.

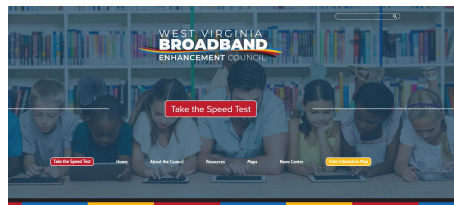
WV Office of Technology

## Speed Test; Data Campaigns Continue

The West Virginia Speed Test continues to provide valuable data as the Broadband Council maps broadband services in communities and business districts throughout the state.

As of January 22, more than 25,520 speed tests, completed by more than 15,600 residents, have been recorded. More than 2,100 online surveys have been complete and nearly 1,000 individuals have provided survey comments.

Actual user data is essential to the accurate assessment of internet speeds. "This is one of the most important things this Council can do for the citizens of West Virginia because it provides an accurate assessment of service," stated Michael J. Holstine, P.E. Mr. Holstine represents Congressional District 3 and serves as the Council's Secretary-Treasurer.



## Council Launches New Website

The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council launched its new [website](#) in early January. Designed with the goal of connecting West Virginians with the resources they need to pursue broadband service, the site features a resource library, news center, and events page. The Council's mapping resources are also featured for easy access.

"The website is the most valuable outreach tool for the public to keep apprised of everything the Council is doing to fulfill its mission to bring broadband connectivity to unserved and underserved areas of West Virginia," said Council Chairman Robert Hinton. "This website will be updated with new information and will be complimented by other social media platforms which the Council and Commerce Communications will begin in 2018."

Additional components related to the formation of broadband cooperatives, project development strategies and models, funding options, and policies are also being developed.

## Making A Difference: WorkForce WV Field Offices Fill Digital Gap For Many Citizens

*This is a Continuing Series of articles highlighting industries, businesses and institutions utilizing internet connectivity to enhance services for the state's residents and businesses.*

WorkForce West Virginia (WorkForce WV) is a one-stop center for state residents for employment resources which includes job opportunities, unemployment compensation, and training. In addition, WorkForce WV has the largest online database of job seeker and job opening information in the state.

The state agency uses internet broadband connectivity to serve the public with 18 field offices throughout the state, all equipped with computers and internet access. The offices collectively have more than 1,700 computers available for public use.

## WV Connected



The West Virginia Broadband Council was represented at "GIS Day at the Legislature" at the Capitol on January 25. Information about the Council was distributed to citizens and elected officials.



This allows state residents to conduct important online business such as employment searches, filling out job applications, or completing and submitting online unemployment claims. The field offices and local libraries are often the only public sites for many citizens to access free and reliable internet services.

The internet connectivity allows employers to do on-the-spot hiring in some instances by allowing applicants to apply and test online for employment vacancies. Field office employees do not offer formal internet training or educational courses, but are proficient in digital literacy and offer individuals one-on-one assistance as needed. WorkForce WV offices are equipped to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

"Broadband provides access to job openings and other employment and training opportunities that some state residents would never have," said Chad Ketchum, WorkForce WV Assistant Director of Field Operations. "It allows individuals access to information outside their own community that will benefit them in such areas as jobs, training, resources and community functions that assists them in overcoming barriers to employment and/or training."

For more information about the WorkForce West Virginia, please visit [www.workforcewv.org](http://www.workforcewv.org).

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**To read past West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council Newsletters, click [here](#).**

## Mark Your Calendar

### Next Broadband Enhancement Council Meeting:

Thursday, February 8, 2018; 10:00 a.m. State Capitol, Building 3, Suite 800 Conference Room.

### Resources

BroadbandUSA is sharing with states and communities a digital partnership opportunity with the [Post Road Foundation](#), which is looking to help communities build integrated utility systems based on future-proof fiber optic networks. The Foundation is in the initial stage of selecting three partner communities to conduct pre-feasibility studies on the costs and benefits of deploying fiber optic networks.

**BroadbandUSA seminar:** "Best Practices for Enhancing Deployment of a Public Wi-Fi Network"

February 22, 2018 - 2 p.m. - More information [here](#).

### West Virginia Broadband In The News

[Newspaper Column: Improving WV Internet Access Could Help Fight the Opioid Epidemic](#)

[Senator Manchin Applauds President's Effort to Expand Broadband to Rural Areas](#)

[West Virginia Partners with SANS Institute to Offer Cyber Security Training to High School Girls](#)

[New Alliance For Southern West Virginia To Encompass Broadband](#)

[Journey to Better Broadband Takes Patience](#)

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