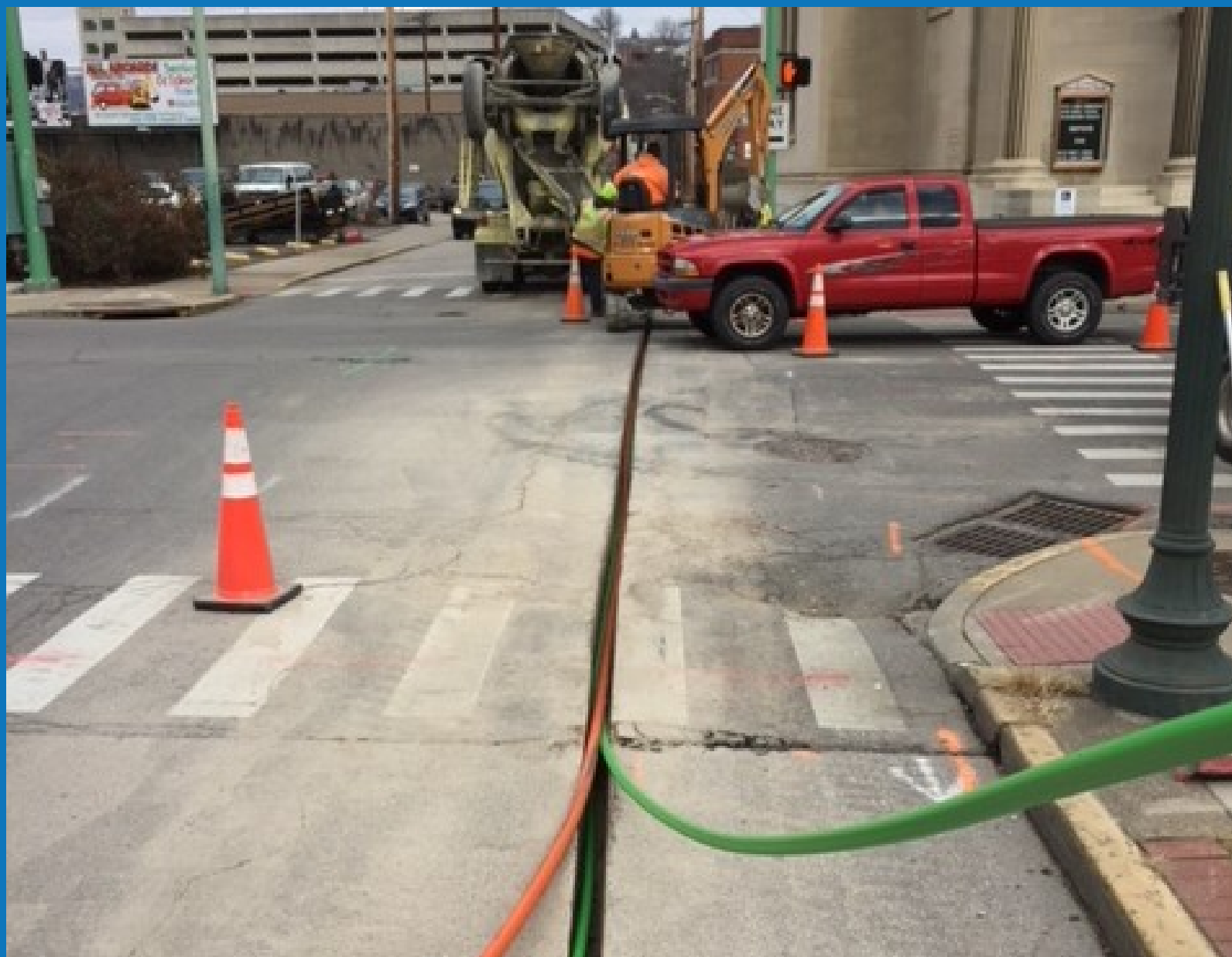




JUNE/JULY 2018
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The city of Charleston's 30-mile fiber ring buildout continues. It is one of more than half-dozen broadband infrastructure projects occurring around West Virginia.

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.

A Voice For Broadband Connectivity

A message from WV Broadband Enhancement Council Chairman Robert Hinton

In 2016, the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council became a voice for broadband development in West Virginia. As the Council continues to advocate for greater connectivity, we are supported by the West Virginia Legislature, the West Virginia Development Office, and numerous partners.

This summer, we joined local partners to welcome representatives from Microsoft and Google to West Virginia and worked alongside the U.S. Small Business Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, West Virginia Secretary of State's Office and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to focus on the extension of affordable and reliable broadband. There is a great deal of work to be done and these partnerships are critically necessary to connecting West Virginia, one community at a time.



Prior to the Council's formation, U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R - W.Va.) recognized the need for better internet service and launched the Capito Connect Initiative to help close the digital divide in West

Virginia Senator Capito is currently co-chair of the U.S. Senate Broadband Caucus and has been instrumental in creating bipartisan coalitions to address this pressing issue. Each of West Virginia's Congressional representatives continue to support and enhance federal programs for broadband development and their efforts are setting the stage for greater progress.

Today, West Virginia's voice is being heard. There are numerous broadband infrastructure projects underway or in planning stages. In addition, ventures and partnerships between public agencies and private companies demonstrate the collaboration needed to improve connectivity in West Virginia. Along with our partners, the Council will continue to press forward throughout 2018 as a voice for broadband connectivity in West Virginia.

'Grow With Google Charleston' Event Provides Digital Training

The Broadband Enhancement Council joined local partners at the "Grow With Google Charleston" held July 23 in Charleston. The event provided guided instruction, utilizing Google's free tools to enhance digital workplace skills and expand business technology.



The event featured two workshops, "Grow Your Business" and "Grow Your Digital Skills For Work," with a large presence of Google staff to assist with hands-on sessions that included online tools for small businesses, email basics, search engine optimization and Google Drive features.

Council Chairman Robert Hinton noted, "The Broadband Enhancement Council is proud to join Grow with Google to demonstrate the many ways that broadband connectivity and digital learning can create new economic opportunities for West Virginians. We echo Grow with Google's inspiring message of inclusion and share the belief that everyone deserves the chance to join the digital economy."

Businesses of all types and sizes require adequate technology and infrastructure systems to be successful. Along with coal mining and West Virginia's other major industries, small businesses and numerous enterprises and institutions also rely on a dependable broadband connection to conduct business efficiently. The Google team will continue to work with local partners in West Virginia to offer similar events in the future.

Mobility Fund Phase II Reverse Auction

FCC Paves Way For Mobility Fund II Challenge

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) recently visited South Charleston to review the FCC Mobility Fund II (MF II) Challenge process. The Broadband Enhancement Council has obtained access to the MF II data and can assist communities in the review of MF II data.

Michael Janson, the FCC Deputy Director of the Federal Broadband Auctions Taskforce, provided an overview of MF II, a federal program designed to provide up to \$4.53 billion in support available over 10 years, primarily to rural areas that lack unsubsidized 4G Long Term Evolution (LTE) service.

The MF II process will allow service providers, municipalities and other local governments an opportunity to challenge the FCC eligibility determination, if necessary, to participate in the reverse auction.

Currently, seven West Virginia counties and other individual census tracts around the state are ineligible to participate in this reverse auction as service provider information reported to the FCC deems these areas as 100 percent covered by standardized coverage data on qualified 4G LTE service.

Janson complimented those in attendance at BridgeValley Community and Technical College, which included the state's two U.S. Senators, Shelley Moore Capito and Joe Manchin, stating it was the largest turnout of any workshop he has conducted across the nation.

To learn more, visit the FCC [MF-II Challenge Process Order](#) website. The challenge period ends in August 27.



Microsoft, Brookings, Create WV Focus On Broadband Networks In State

The featured speakers at the "Broadband Networks: Providing Access for Economic Development and Opportunity" gathering at the State Capitol made one point quite clear: the country is transforming into a new era of economic activity powered by reliable and affordable high-speed internet connectivity.



"The workforce is going digital," said Adi Tomer, a Fellow at the Brookings Institute, one of the event's sponsors along with Microsoft and Create West Virginia. Among the many statistics offered on the trend, Tomer said in 2004, 34 percent of the workforce did not need digital skills for their jobs. By 2014, that figure dropped to 12 percent. "We are entering a new 'industrial era' and we have to be able to keep up with the changing nature of how business is conducted and one of the challenges is to make sure you have the physical infrastructure to be ready for it."

Melissa Sassi, Microsoft's Airband Initiative program manager spoke of the challenge the state and country have with internet connectivity, particularly in rural communities. The Airband Initiative is expected to include 12 projects in 12 states with the goal of connecting two million residents in rural communities with broadband coverage by 2022. Sassi said West

Microsoft is not just about internet access but digital skills too. When we land a project, we want to make sure not only people have broadband access but we want to make sure people have the skills they need to utilize the technology in front of them."

The event, held at the West Virginia Culture Center, concluded with a panel discussion which included Council Chairman Robert Hinton; Charlie Dennie of Alpha Technologies, Melissa Hill of GO Journey, Inc.; Jim Spencer with the City of Bluefield; Tomer and Sassi. The event video has been archived on the [Create West Virginia Facebook page](#).

Calhoun-Clay-Roane Counties Team Up for CDBG Broadband Grant

This is a continuing series which features the Program Year 2017 recipients of the HUD CDBG funding for Broadband Development.

Timing can be everything and that is certainly true for the residents of Calhoun, Clay and Roane counties. Not long after county officials and concerned citizens from those three counties formed its Calhoun-Clay-Roane Broadband Development Committee ([CCRBDC](#)), the Clay County Commission took the lead in applying for and securing a HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for broadband development.



The Clay County Commission will use grant to procure a professional firm that will develop a broadband feasibility plan. The Broadband Committee has noted four goals:

- Provide a fundamental understanding of the applicable interest access technologies;
- Determine the existing regional broadband infrastructure;
- Survey potential customers and their needs; and
- Specify the gaps in coverage and/or service capacity.

"This Broadband Committee was formed from the three county broadband groups (Clay, Calhoun and Roane) that have been dedicated to bringing broadband service to their businesses and homes for the past few years. The CCRBDC was formed to oversee the development of this broadband network," said Region III Project Coordinator Terry Martin, who is serving as the grant's administrator. "I have worked with many volunteer committees and this is the most dedicated group. Their backgrounds are in government, small business, medical, education, energy, security, web design, and banking. Every member adds an layer of expertise to the group and I am honored to be a part of this committee."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides CDBG funds to the State of West Virginia and has directed states to consider the availability of broadband in low- to moderate-income areas. For Program Year 2017, Gov. Jim Justice announced more than \$1.5 million in CDBG funding be dedicated to broadband projects.

The CCRBDC serves as the work group charged with finding the common ground for telecommunications goals of the three counties and will serve as a valuable asset for the design firm procured by the CDBG grant.



CDBG - Technology And Innovation Grant Application Deadline October 30

Local governments are encouraged to submit applications to the West Virginia Development Office for HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for Technology and Innovation which places an emphasis on broadband development. Funds are available for broadband infrastructure and planning. The deadline to submit Program Year 2018 applications is October 30.

The Technology and Innovation category is an expansion of the 2017 General Community Development category which included broadband development for the first time in the history of West Virginia's CDBG program. The 2018 allocation is \$2 million.

For more information, please consult the [2018 CDBG application and guide](#).



Broadband Funding Part Of Local Grant Workshop Sponsored By Congressman Mooney

Broadband funding will be discussed at a Grants Workshop sponsored by Congressman Alex Mooney (R - W.Va.) on August 14 at the BridgeValley Community and Technical College in South Charleston.

Community and business leaders are encouraged to attend to learn more about available grant and loan funding sources for broadband development. Other event topics will include economic development, law enforcement and related grant funding opportunities.

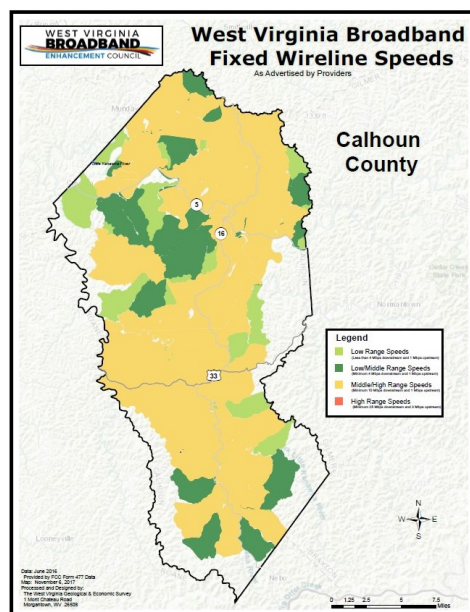
The event is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and interested individuals may call 304-925-5964 or email GrantWorkshopWV2@mail.house.gov for additional information. Seating is limited and the deadline to RSVP is August 8. There is no cost to attend and lunch will be provided. Registration is required.

Calhoun County

Each month, the Broadband Enhancement Council will feature a map based upon detailing broadband fixed wireline speeds based upon current FCC data. All county maps are available to print, save and download at the Council [website](#).

Calhoun County is this month's featured map and the county commission is a partner in a 2017 Community Development Block Grant award for broadband planning development with Clay and Roane counties (*see article above*).

Located in the mid-central portion of the state and known for its artisan and music festivals, Calhoun County plans to convert its planning grant into viable projects that will enhance broadband connectivity for online learning and telemedicine initiatives.



Click on the image for a larger view.

The Council urges commercial and residential internet users in this region to test their internet speed through the [West Virginia Speed Test](#) portal.



Broadband Council Chairman Robert Hinton spoke at the statewide Regional Planning and Development Council conference in Morgantown. Hinton emphasized the importance of community involvement from citizens to elected officials to advance broadband connectivity throughout the state, particularly in the unserved and underserved areas of West Virginia.

Mark Your Calendar

Next Broadband Enhancement Council Meetings:
Thursday, August 9, 2018, 10:00 a.m. State Capitol, Building 3, Suite 800 Conference Room.

West Virginia Broadband In The News

[Medical Center Sees Positives In Using Telemedicine](#)

[West Virginia Pursues Federal Broadband Funding](#)

[West Virginia Can Lead The Way To Broadband Advancement](#)

[U.S. Senators Propose E-Rate Eligibility For School Bus WiFi](#)

[Microsoft Eyeing Investment In West Virginia](#)

[Study Shows Windfall Of Rural Broadband Access](#)

[Business Leaders Discuss Need For Broadband](#)

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