WEST VIRGINIA
BROADBAND
ENHANCEMENT COUNCIL

Can't see this email? View it online here.
Contact 304.558.2234 | Email: WVBroadbandCouncil@wv.gov

This Jackson County telecommunications tower will serve as a starting point for broadband connectivity in the Sandyville community. See story below.

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.

Broadband-Friendly Policies Clear The Way For Greater Connectivity
A message from Broadband Council Chairman Robert Hinton

When Governor Justice announced Zayo's planned 200-mile fiber infrastructure route through West Virginia, the impact of broadband-friendly policies became clear. In September, the Governor announced that West Virginia would provide access to the state right-of-way to promote the expansion of broadband connectivity. This broadband-friendly policy is already making a big difference.

One of the most dynamic changes the state can make concerns how we utilize the state right-of-way and make it available for infrastructure expansion. West Virginia lacks long-haul Tier I fiber, due in part to long-standing policies that did not encourage this type of investment. The tides are turning and West Virginia is seeing the massive impact that simple policy changes can make in attracting private investment.

During the announcement, the Governor used words such as "incredible," and "amazing," to describe the Zayo project, and rightfully so. This project will connect major internet exchanges in Ashburn, Virginia, and Columbus, Ohio, creating significant opportunities for network expansion along the route. Jack Waters, Zayo Chief Technology Officer noted, "Fiber networks play a central role in development. We should view fiber networks in the same way we view roads, electricity and water."

West Virginia simply cannot compete economically without broadband. Recent policy initiatives are moving the state in the right direction and we look forward building upon Zayo's announcement to pursue connectivity in communities throughout West Virginia.

Zayo Group Announces Major Fiber Infrastructure Build In West Virginia!

The West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council welcomes exciting news from the Zayo Group! Jack Waters, Zayo Chief Technology Officer and WVU graduate, has announced his company's plan to build a 200-mile fiber route across West Virginia. This major project will provide significant opportunities for the expansion of high-speed connectivity built upon advanced fiber infrastructure.

Governor Jim Justice announced the project, joined by U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Senate President Mitch Carmichael. During his remarks, Waters said construction could begin early next year and estimated construction would take 24 to 36 months to complete. The long-haul build will serve as a catalyst in providing broadband service to rural communities.

"Fiber helps connect the underserved and bridge the divide," Waters said. "We expect this network will ultimately support broadband internet providers and their expanding services to rural areas across the state."

Watch the Zayo announcement press conference from October 25 at the Capitol here. The Broadband Council will provide additional details through its website, Facebook page, and this e-newsletter as they develop.

Access To Broadband Equals Access To Opportunity In Southern West Virginia

The Small Communities Big Solutions Conference at BridgeValley's Advanced Technology Center in South Charleston challenged participants to focus on what is working and what is not working in southern West Virginia. The Alliance for the Economic Development of Southern West Virginia, Coalfield Development Corporation and the West Virginia Community Development HUB sponsored the event. Broadband development was front and center throughout numerous presentations.

State Senator and Broadband Council member Robert "Bob" Plymale introduced West Virginia native Ryan Palmer, who currently serves as Chief of the Telecommunications Access Policy Division of the Wireline Competition Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

During his remarks, Palmer explained that the methodology employed in the recent Connect America Fund (CAF II) Auction was the first of its kind. He stressed that technical verification would be pursued as CAF II projects move forward. "We do have a system of coming back and auditing and checking speeds, so if a provider says they are going to offer gigabit service, we will make sure they are providing that service if they want to receive this funding." Palmer noted.

Palmer indicated that the FCC aims to provide the most efficient utilization of available funds and is considering the provision of additional funds for rate of return carriers, a category that includes smaller and more rural carriers, as well as additional incentives for innovative broadband-enabled telehealth as immediate goals.

Palmer noted that as a West Virginian, the expansion of broadband was especially important to him. "Through technology, what seems impossible today becomes possible. Broadband is the defining infrastructure of the 21st century and that access to broadband equals access to opportunity."

State Receives ARC POWER Grant For Broadband Development Hub

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has announced funding for the West Virginia Broadband Development Hub through its Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) grant.

The project is a partnership between the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey (WVGES) as the grant administrator and lead mapping agency; the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council, and the West Virginia Development Office within the West Virginia Department of Commerce; and the West Virginia Division of Highways within the West Virginia Department of Transportation.

This grant will enable the Council to create a one-stop-shop for information concerning prospective broadband deployment in West Virginia through enhanced mapping and coordination with the WVDOH, the creation of a guide to broadband development in West Virginia, and the integration of site selection data. The project will include 10 southern West Virginia counties, including Boone, Clay, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, Mingo, Nicholas, Wayne, Webster and Wyoming.

The project will assist these counties in a detailed assessment of broadband infrastructure, services and technology as they seek economic diversification. This assessment will include digital mapping of existing permit data and a review of data submitted by broadband industry partners.

Upon completion of the ARC POWER project, funds will be sought to expand the project to other areas of West Virginia. The ARC POWER program targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining and related industries.

Jackson County Broadband Project Focuses On Safety, Students In Sandyville
This is a continuing series which features HUD CDBG Broadband Development Projects

The Jackson County Commission (Commission) is the lead agency for a 2018 HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) designated for a broadband infrastructure build in the Sandyville area. The Commission was awarded the grant in February, and in conjunction with the Jackson County Economic Development Authority, will leverage an existing communications tower owned by the county as the catalyst for affordable wireless broadband in the Sandyville area. The Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council is the grant administrator.

"The addition of new broadband internet connectivity would be an enormous asset for the Sandyville and surrounding areas. Currently, internet connectivity in the area is greatly lacking and inconsistent and the addition of affordable, high-speed internet service would greatly benefit students, first responders, citizens and local businesses," said Luke Peters, MOVRC project manager. "Sandyville is regarded as a nice community to relocate or retire to but we also know lack of broadband internet is a hindrance for some. This project aims to remedy that."

The telecommunications tower sits atop a mountain over-looking an elementary school and other local businesses and area neighborhoods. 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.

WVU Land Use Clinic Emphasizes Broadband Connectivity In Smart Community Planning

"Planning to Increase Broadband and Telecommunications Capacity" was a topic during the daylong County Mountain State Land Use Academy workshop sponsored by the WVU Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic at Tygart Lake State Park. Municipal and county planners from across the state gathered to learn more how achieving broadband connectivity needs to be a focal point of a community's development plans.

Participants were presented with information touting the benefits of broadband connectivity, particularly in the state's rural locations. Jared Anderson with the WVU Land Use Clinic told attendees that the purpose and goals of a community's comprehensive plan should include the development, expansion and accessibility of broadband and communication networks, noting it should be considered an asset where available and a necessity where it is not. Hardy County Planner Melissa Scott added that a county-wide survey of realtors revealed that:

- Broadband connectivity ranked 4.6 out of 5 in importance to customers;
- All responded that customers refused to look at a property because it did not have broadband connectivity;
- 82 percent of customers asked about broadband service before considering a property; and
- The majority said that broadband was a more important selling point than public water.

Governor's Office, Gaming Company Form Promotional Partnership

Governor Jim Justice and the West Virginia Tourism Office announced a partnership with award-winning video game publisher Bethesda Softworks® for promotion of its upcoming release of *Fallout® 76*, an online open world video game set in post-nuclear West Virginia.

The video game is the latest game in the iconic Fallout series and will be the largest and most ambitious yet.

"It's finally time the rest of the world sees what a gem West Virginia is," said Gov. Justice. "For years, I've been saying we have it all: beautiful scenery, the best people you could ask for and more. And now, we get to share a piece of that with people all over the world through the unique lens of this video game."

The Tourism Office, in partnership with Bethesda, will be creating advertising strategies to both educate players about West Virginia's unique landscape and culture, as well as offer them an open invitation to visit the state over the coming months.

The game promises to be an international sensation for players, and the Tourism Office is capitalizing on the opportunity to reach a new, engaged audience. A trailer is featured on the West Virginia Division of Tourism website.

More details on the promotional partnership will be announced in the coming weeks. Cross promotion will include advertising and touring opportunities. The Governor's Office press release can be read here.

Map of the Month

Tyler County, West Virginia

Each month, the Broadband Enhancement Council will feature a map detailing broadband fixed wireline speeds based upon current FCC data. All county maps are available to print, save and download at the Council website.
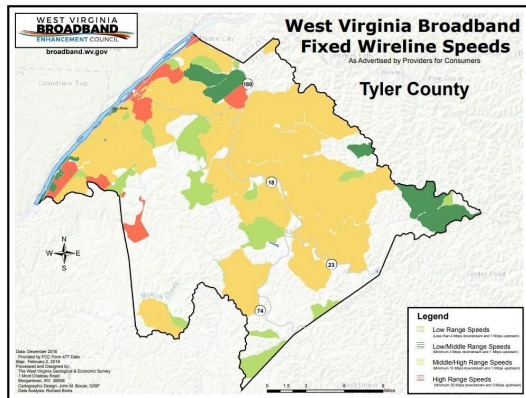
Tyler County is located along the Ohio River in the northwestern part of the state and is located among

WV Connected

the state's primary areas for natural gas development and production.

The Tyler County Commission has secured a 2017 Community Development Block Grant award for broadband planning development and planning.

The Commission is utilizing the grant to obtain the professional services needed to lead the county down the right path to effectively and efficiently deploy broadband for businesses and residents (*see related article above*).

Click on the image for a larger view.

The Broadband Council urges commercial and residential internet users in this region to test their internet speed through the West Virginia Speed Test portal.

Data obtained through the speed test will support the pursuit of funding for broadband infrastructure development.

To read past West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council Newsletters, click here.

U.S. Economic Development Association (USEDA) representative Tracey Rowan spoke at the annual West Virginia Economic Development Council meeting. Rowan detailed the importance of broadband development and the USEDA programs which serve as valuable resources for communities looking to enhance broadband connectivity.

Mark Your Calendar

Next Broadband Enhancement Council Meeting:
Thursday, November 8, 2018, 10:00 a.m. State Capitol, Building 3, Suite 100 Conference Room.

Broadband USA webinar - Broadband Connectivity Is Transforming Healthcare
Wednesday, November 14, 2018. For more information, click here.

Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition - Broadband Legislation in the next Congress
Thursday, November 15, 2018. For more information, click here.

West Virginia Broadband In The News

Telecommuting Tops Public Transit For Getting To Work

New Tech Program Launched In Huntington

Mineral Co. Receives Broadband Expansion Grant

Commentary: 5G Could Be Game Changer For WV

Lewis County Looking To Broadband Grant

Green Bank: Under Radio-Quiet Skies

Brooke County To See Improvements In Broadband

Region VI Workforce Working To Bring Broadband Across Region

Enjoy what you're reading? Be sure to like us on Facebook!   Like us on Facebook

Visit our Website for More Information