

Rural Broadband Taskforce Meeting  
Thursday, October 26, 2017, 10am – 4pm,  
Frederick County Government Office, Winchester Hall,  
12 East Church Street, Frederick, MD  
Meeting Notes

**Participants:**

**Taskforce Appointees:**

Charlotte Davis, Chair  
Theresa Bethune  
Robert Branson  
Tom Dennison  
Senator Adelaide Eckardt  
Jonathan Favorite  
Hugh Grunden  
Delegate Carol Krimm  
Sean Looney  
Delegate Johnny Mautz  
Lisa McCabe  
Steve Pennington  
Mike Pennington  
Scott Randall  
Brian Roche  
Drew VanDopp  
Scott Warner

**Other Participants:**

John Allen  
Amanda Clevenger  
Dale Coldren  
Cheryl DeBerry  
Tom Dixon  
Meredith Donaho  
Bryan Goldberg  
Mitzi Herrera  
Mike Kiko  
John Lyons  
James McCormick  
Natasha Mehu  
Michelle Painter  
Shannon Reed  
Steve Ross  
Cassie Shirk  
Brian Skimmins  
Nathaniel Watkins  
Julie Woepke  
John Woodfield

**Presenters:**

Norman Farley, Maryland  
Department of IT;  
Darien Manley, Maryland  
Department of Transportation,  
State Highway Administration;  
Mark E. Ripper, Department of  
Technology Services, Carroll  
County;  
Nelson Smith, Maryland  
Department of Transportation,  
State Highway Administration;  
Cindy Stone, Maryland  
Department of Housing and  
Community Development

**Facilitator:**

Mae Johnson, retired Maryland  
Department of Agriculture

The meeting began at 10:13am. Charlotte Davis, Chair of the Rural Broadband Taskforce, welcomed the group and called for introductions.

### **September 19, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

The Taskforce reviewed the minutes from the September 19, 2017 meeting at Chesapeake College. A request was made to add Taskforce Member Hugh Grunden to the list of attendees. A motion was made by Mike Pennington to accept the minutes, with the addition. The motion was seconded by Delegate Carol Krimm, and all were in favor. The minutes from the September 19, 2017 Taskforce Meeting with the addition were accepted unanimously.

### **Presenters**

#### **Mark E. Ripper, President, Maryland Association of County Information Technology Officers and Director, Department of Technology Services, Carroll County**

Mr. Ripper provided an overview of county private-public partnerships and leasing of the fiber network with a specific focus on Carroll County's fiber network system. Carroll County has a 110 mile fiber network with 216 strands, one-third of the strands have been allocated for inter-governmental use, one-third of strands have been allocated to private business entities, and the remaining one-third of strands have been allocated towards future growth to be applied to inter-governmental or private business use.

Several private public partnership models were described, including a local hospital that connected to multiple locations within and outside Carroll County to create their own virtual private network. The hospital leased fiber from the County, and built their own fiber back-bone build which was turned back over to the County, and has been utilized to connect nearby shopping centers. A private company with two locations in northern and southern Carroll County leased fiber from the County to increase their connectivity. In addition, Carroll County Economic Development was also involved in working with local businesses to build a fiber back-bone based upon the projected number of employment opportunities the businesses would provide as a result of increased broadband service. However, there are an estimated 3,000-3,300 un-served homes/businesses in the County due to their terrain locations and thick tree coverage. The County conducted a study of how much it would cost to run fiber to these locations, a potential solution that is being explored in providing broadband to these un-served areas is a wireless shot out to a certain point in the County and connecting the locations from there.

Carroll County also created a committee to assess how to expand its fiber network to un-served locations, a recommendation from the committee's findings has included exploring the possibility of creating an ISP (Internet Service Provider) Grant Program to contribute funding to local ISPs who lack the capital to build fiber in areas that are currently un-served.

#### **Norman Farley, Statewide Interoperable Communications, Maryland Department of Information Technology**

Mr. Farley provided an overview of First Net Broadband Program for Emergency Operations, which provides first responders with high speed internet service and broadband cellular coverage in rural areas for public safety and emergency services, including voice and data. The legislation would provide seed funding, and States were given the option to opt-in or opt-out of First Net. States that choose to opt-out

would be responsible for creating their own radio access network. States that opted in early could receive implementation of the plan earlier, and would have to accept the vendor chosen at the federal level. AT&T was awarded the contract to build out First Net. Governor Hogan opted into the plan early in September 2017, Maryland's first responders will receive access to prioritization and will receive 25 additional sites in addition to what AT&T planned to implement. AT&T will work with the State of Maryland to determine the site areas that will be built out over the next five years.

The 25 sites may not be brand new sites, they may be areas that are leased from another entity. AT&T is required contractually to provide deployable devices within 14 hours in case of an emergency event. AT&T will also be responsible for building the tower infrastructures or lease the infrastructure from another entity. First Net will not replace the land/mobile radio systems used by first responders and public safety.

**Cindy Stone, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development**

Ms. Stone provided an overview of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program for broadband services and implementation. The CDBG project needs to meet a national objective for broadband funding, benefiting low to moderate income persons. Specifically, the project must address broadband access by individuals in cases of emergencies. A current project is underway to address last mile in the City of Crisfield using CDBG funds. The CDBG program is a potential source for communities looking to address last mile broadband; however, there are limits on who can use the assets once they are in place.

**Nelson Smith, Statewide Utility Engineer, and Darien Manley, Chief of State Highway Administration Communications Division, Maryland Department of Transportation**

Mr. Smith and Mr. Manley addressed issues regarding access to right-of-ways. Mr. Manley spoke of tower resources and resource share agreements that exist. For additional questions and request for information, Mr. Manley can be contacted at [dmanley@sha.state.md.us](mailto:dmanley@sha.state.md.us) or at 410.455.8333.

Mr. Smith spoke about resource sharing agreements within State Highway Administration. Mr. Smith oversees policy for utility permits. There is currently no charge for utility permits. The permit applicant must be recognized by SHA as an authorized utility, and four documentation pieces are required including showing documentation that the utility is under the jurisdiction of an entity such as the Federal Communications Commission, provide proof of liability insurance, demonstrate the ability to respond to an emergency within a few hours, and underground facilities must be a member of the utility. Utilities include fiber, towers and poles. For additional questions and request for information, Mr. Smith can be contacted at [nsmith@sha.state.md.us](mailto:nsmith@sha.state.md.us) or 443.572.5267.

The Taskforce took a lunch break at 12:00pm, the meeting resumed at 1:00pm.

**Facilitated Discussion**

Facilitated discussion was led by Ms. Mae Johnson. The discussion involved breaking participants into three groups to develop a plan for broadband implementation by identifying purpose and objectives, generate ideas for critical success factors, identify roles and responsibilities, and to create an action list. Individual members would indicate their preference for priorities with stickers that would indicate a high priority (green), medium priority (orange), and low priority (yellow). The discussion groups were

composed of participants representing: 1) State/County/Regional; 2) ISPs/Other Private Entities; and, 3) Utilities. The following recommendations and priority areas were identified by the participants:

**State/County/Regional:**

Problem: Accessible, affordable high speed. Access in low density areas. (1 high priority)

Minimum Service: 25 megabytes per second (FCC Standards) (Aspirational Goal)

State Roles:

1. Collect map data on unserved areas for measurable goals (share with Taskforce) (4 high priority; 1 medium priority)
2. Affordable access to state assets (fiber, towers, etc.) (8 high priority)
3. Facilitate stakeholder dialog (3 medium priority)
4. Research/share funding sources (1 medium priority)
5. Streamline permits/application processes (7 high priority)
6. Revisit cost model for access to state assets (2 low priority; 1 high priority)
7. Share inventory of state assets (2 medium priority)
8. Identify programs for build out to low income residents (1 high priority; 1 medium priority; 1 low priority)

County Roles: Lead effort to get access to federal assets

1. Provide accurate data (unserved areas) and update (2 high priority; 3 medium priority)
2. Keep dialog open (2 low priority)
3. Provide inventory of county assets (1 low priority)
4. Streamline permits/application processes (2 high priority; 1 low priority)

Additional Notes:

- Ask for funds in Capital budget (identify amount) (1 high priority)
- Roadways – dig once, put in conduits for fiber (2 high priority)

**ISP/Other Private:**

ROI (6 high priority), Expenses and Revenue

1. Access to Government Structures
2. Competitive bidding (2 high priority)
3. Cultural Change – what we value? Accountability and response time (1 high priority; 1 medium priority)
4. Sources? Model: Carroll County, Montgomery County. Competitive bid and establish a policy for use of federal money
5. Lower expense (1 high priority; 1 medium priority)
6. Reduce time for permitting (6 high priority; 2 low priority)
7. Focus allocating money on solving the problem (1 high priority)
8. Hybrid solution (1 high priority)

Revenue: Taxes, franchise fees, grant funds recommended to the legislature (1 high priority)

**Utilities:**

Purpose/Objective:

- Provide “adequate” and scalable broadband service to un/underserved rural areas of Maryland in a timely manner (FCC definition of adequate/ 25 Mbps Down) (2 high priority)

Critical Success Factors:

- Ubiquitous access by 2022 (3 medium priority)
- Affordable (TBD)
- Measure areas/households that go from un/underserved to adequate (1 high priority)

Action List:

- Fully develop Governor's Office of Rural Broadband (4 medium priority)
  - Technical Advisor/Clearinghouse for federal funding
  - Resolve issues surrounding private use of public fiber, i.e. open access (2 high priority; 1 medium priority)
- Canvas best practices and share results, e.g. portfolio of PP and end-user funded last mile (2 high priority)

Recommendations:

- Continuation of this Taskforce (4 medium priority)
- Identify federal resources, money and other (2 low priority)

**Additional Recommendations:**

1. Technology skills
2. Define acceptable access – is current definition acceptable?
3. Hybrid Solution, develop expertise (wireless, fiber, copper, DSL)
4. RFP will define needed results (allow market to show creativity)
5. Develop case scenarios
6. Financing options for citizens
7. Mapping of assets and comprehensive inventory of state agencies, including Maryland Department of IT, State Highway Administration and Department of Natural Resources

**Next Steps**

The voted priorities from the facilitation discussion will be drafted as recommendations in a draft report to be presented at the next Taskforce meeting.

Additional topics mentioned to be discussed at the next meeting included:

- Technology, technology skills
- Using Estonia as a case study for broadband access, case scenarios
- Evaluation of effective solutions
- Rural Broadband Assistance Fund, tax restructuring bill, franchise fees, financing options for citizens
- Defining basic principles, creating a basic framework
- Research resources, including looking at the capital budget and allocating a percentage to broadband

With no other suggestions for input, the meeting concluded at 2:35pm.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 20, 2017, 10am -2pm, located at Southern Maryland Electrical Cooperative (SMECO), Hughesville, MD.

