

BROADBAND AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Telecommunications continue to play a vital role in economic development and quality of life for residents of the County. The rural areas in particular have seen a shift towards greater demand from residents for access to internet service. While some areas of the County currently have access to fiber, cable, or powerline-based services, much of the County's rural areas are not served by broadband and must rely on satellite or tower-based providers.

FOCUS FOR THE FUTURE

The lack of broadband service can be a constraint on the rural economy and puts households and students at a disadvantage. There are numerous challenges to bringing high speed broadband services to the rural areas of Frederick County. With over 416 square miles, Frederick County has topographic conditions that range from mountainous areas to the rolling and flatter rural areas, posing problems for cell tower provision of services. The County should study ways to match demand for internet service with availability of service in rural or underserved areas.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Access to high-speed internet is important for a variety of reasons, accessibility for school age children, residents that operate home based businesses, cellular phone service and access for new public safety communication facilities.

GOALS/STRATEGIES

GOAL: PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGH-QUALITY WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY TO SERVE ITS RESIDENTS, WHILE PROTECTING THE COUNTY'S VISUAL LANDSCAPE, HISTORIC RESOURCES AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

STRATEGIES:

- Monitor broadband service coverage to ensure that as the county grows, adequate broadband services are provided to meet the needs of future residents and businesses.
- Support and facilitate the development of high-speed wired and wireless telecommunication networks, including broadband technology, to support rural businesses and residents.
- Develop a broadband policy to reflect the County's need to have internet service speeds appropriate for educational, business, and residential purposes in all parts of the County.