Latest BB update 08-26-16

Hi Broadband Hopefuls ...

A lot has happened over the last several weeks.  Here is a recap and, importantly, upcoming volunteering events.

Broadband Community Meeting

We held our fifth community-wide broadband update meeting at the GHS on August 3.  The theme was to explain our decision to pursue *Fiber-To-The-Home* (FTTH) broadband model after studying the other technology options (i.e., fixed wireless, cable, DSL upgrades).  The main reasons for FTTH in our case include:

* FTTH is best solution for the future and has the most established track record for *high speed* broadband.  The attached brochure "What Fiber Can Do For Your Community" answers many questions you may have about FTTH.
* Most towns in Maine pursuing broadband upgrades are implementing FTTH (e.g., Waldoboro, Islesboro, Fort Fairfield, Edgecomb, Sherman, Appleton, Nobleboro, and many others).  We have been tracking their progress and lessons learned.  The momentum is clearly with fiber.  For example, in the last round of ConnectME funding, 12 of the 15 projects awarded funds were FTTH.  The other three were cable, which is not available to our towns (as confirmed by Comcast and Time Warner).
* For our island communities, new infrastructure is required for whatever technology solution is chosen, including wireless.  This scenario makes fiber more cost-effective than other options in the long-run.

We discussed our introductory meeting with Lincolnville Communications (LCI), a unit of Tidewater Communications.  LCI is based in Nobleboro and has a business plan to wire the Maine Midcoast with FTTH broadband.  Tidewater/LCI is a good company with a 100+ year track record in Maine.  They have successfully completed 11 ConnectME funded FTTH projects including Waldoboro, and have a presence in Bath.  LCI advised us to focus our mapping efforts on the pole survey and more accurate locations of households.  This will save LCI time and costs in preparing a design and budget for our broadband solution.

Finally, we discussed priority actions for the AGBI committee and community volunteers.  These include the pole survey and an updated survey of actual household broadband speeds.

Visit to LCI/Tidewater

Six members of the AGBI planning committee visited LCI at their Nobleboro operations center on August 18th (thanks to David Tudor for arranging).  It was a good meeting with a lot of detail and shared interests.  For example, LCI gave us new ideas about how an FTTH network could be deployed, coming in from two directions -- Route 1 from the north and across water from Southport where LCI already has fiber infrastructure in place.  This strategy would provide redundancy (for reliability), and more options for phasing the project.  LCI said they would help AGBI prepare the ConnectME funding application this fall.  Our next step with LCI is to share results from our pole survey for their review and guidance.

ConnectME

We met with ConnecME's Lisa Leahy on July 20.  ConnectME's funding criteria emphasizes "unserved" households that have access to only 1.5 mbs or less download speeds.  Lisa's advice was to identify the unserved households and shape a ConnectME grant application to provide high speed broadband service to them.  The infrastructure necessary to bring broadband to the unserved areas can then be used to build out other areas.

Georgetown Celebration

AGBI had a booth at the Georgetown 300 Year Celebration on July 23.  Kate MacKay arranged a primo location near the great entertainment.  We chatted with any and all about broadband stuff (what else?) and had some real fiber cables for show and tell (thank you Jeff Stoebe).

UPCOMING VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES

Here are the priority actions we must get completed in the coming weeks.  They are essential prerequisites for the network architecture, budget and funding plan.

* **Household Geo-positioning (GPS)** -- The purpose of this is to task refine the locations of households on the map, a key input to design and budgeting. The task involves manually locating each household on a Google map to capture the Latitude, Longitude coordinates at that point.  We already have the households identified and approximately located by parcel, so the this task should go relatively quick.  I will be sending out detailed instructions on the process this weekend.  If you would like to get involved in the survey, please drop me a note and provide the [www.SpeedOf.Me](http://speedof.me/) test results for your computer location.  The task will be easier with download speeds >= 3.0 mbs.  Having a second monitor would be helpful but not essential.
* **Utility Pole Survey** -- The key to FTTH network planning is an accurate inventory of utility poles.  One of the largest budget items of of a broadband build-out is the pole "make-ready" costs.  Make-ready includes things like moving existing communication services up or down on the pole, strengthening pole guy wires, or in some cases replacing or adding poles.  This tasks will involve small teams to take photos of the poles, the pole numbers, and capturing the GPS location.  Fortunately, most Android and Apple smart phones have the necessary functionality for this task. By taking on the pole survey as a community project, we can reduce the costs and timeline for the engineering work.  We have done some prototyping of the survey process, and will conduct trials next week.  If you would like to get involved in the survey, please drop me a note and provide the make and model of your smart phone. We also need neighborhood coordinators to help organize and lead the survey efforts in their areas.
* **Speed Test Survey** -- This weekend the entire community will receive an email letter requesting speed test results.  The text of that letter is shown at the end of this email.  A key qualification for grants from ConnectME and other funding sources is the degree to which the project brings broadband relief to the truly *un*served or *under*-served areas.  The speed survey is a critical input.   Anything you can do to encourage friends and neighbors to complete the survey will help the cause and be greatly appreciated.

Thanks for your support!

Mark Aukeman, Arrowsic
Arrowsic and Georgetown Broadband Initiative
<https://www.facebook.com/AG.Broadbanders/>

PS:  The AGBI "broadband hopefuls" map of households is on display the Robinhood Free Meetinghouse.  Stop in for a coffee and waffle on weekend mornings and let Carlos know how you are faring with home internet access.