

CREATING THE DANE COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increasing focus on the lack of broadband access to many rural communities throughout the country, state and county. When COVID-19 sent a large segment of the population home for school, doctors' appointments, work, banking, social interaction, and entertainment, the lack of reliable internet access became an even bigger barrier for people in rural, and pockets of urban areas, to do every day functions, and underscored that something needs to change.

There have been countless stories of families driving to library parking lots so their kids could participate in remote schooling. This issue is not only felt by those in rural counties – there are several communities in Dane County that do not have reliable internet access.

Many decisions regarding grants and broadband improvements are based on maps that were created by the Federal Communications Commission. Countless people and organizations that work on expanding broadband have remarked that these maps are not accurate and do not reflect the true story – which is that there are several communities in Dane County that are unserved or underserved.

When asking residents of the rural areas of Dane County, broadband access is routinely their number one issue that needs improvement. Approximately 25% of rural residents of Dane County lack accessible, reliable, affordable broadband.

In an information collection effort in the fall of 2020, the County Board Office received responses from a majority of Dane County school districts that indicated a lack of access for some of their students.

Additionally, as the country begins to see the end of the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic on small businesses will last for years. Broadband expansion is directly related to economic development and the ability of businesses to rebound, get established, and flourish.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors hereby creates the "Dane County Broadband Task Force" in an effort to ensure the following:

- Create a greater community understanding of Dane County's challenges related to high-speed, reliable and affordable internet access for the County as a whole;
- Prepare local partners in Dane County to have the background and knowledge to apply for various grants and funding to expand access to unserved and underserved areas of the county; and
- Increase awareness of the issues those without reliable internet access face in day-to-day life including remote learning, remote work, and virtual health appointments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Task Force shall hold regularly scheduled monthly public meetings, with the purpose of:

- 1) Understanding the complexities of broadband access as it relates to improving access to those unserved and underserved in Dane County;

- 48 2) Collecting data points on under-served and vulnerable populations to determine if
49 there is a greater percentage impacted by lack of access to reliable and affordable
50 broadband;
51 3) Understanding the various funding mechanisms used for improving broadband
52 access, to include state and federal grants, with the intention of identifying strategies,
53 partners, and potential funding sources that will support the expansion of broadband
54 services;
55 4) Partnering with various stakeholders to identify where access to broadband is and is
56 not available;
57 5) Exploring alternative solutions to inadequate broadband service including but not
58 limited to hot spots, satellite technology, and wireless service;
59 6) Making recommendations to the County Board on the role of Dane County in
60 facilitating the expansion of broadband services to residents; and
61 7) Holding two public hearings to hear from local officials and residents about challenges
62 related to broadband.
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64 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the membership of the Task Force will be as follows:
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66 The following members will be appointed by the County Board Chair unless otherwise specified:

- 67 • 3 Dane County Board Supervisors – 2 from the Public Works and Transportation
68 Committee and 1 from the UW Extension Committee
 - 69 • 1 representative from a healthcare provider in Dane County
 - 70 • 1 representative from a school district in Dane County
 - 71 • 1 individual with an economic and/or agricultural perspective
 - 72 • 1 representative from a Town Board
 - 73 • 1 representative from Dane County senior focal point
 - 74 • 1 representative from an internet/broadband provider
 - 75 • 1 representative from a youth community-based organization
 - 76 • 2 at-large members
 - 77 • Dane County Executive or designee
 - 78 • President of the Dane County Towns Association (DCTA), or their designee
 - 79 • President of the Dane County Cities and Villages Association, or their designee
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81 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Broadband Task Force will complete a report
82 on its findings, with additional reports or presentations as needed, as well as a summary of the
83 County's role, within one year of its initial meeting and the Task Force will sunset in June 2022.
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85 BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the staff support will be provided by UW Extension, including
86 facilitation of meetings. County Board staff will provide support for posting of agendas and
87 minutes.
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89 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors authorizes per diem and
90 mileage payments for all members of the Dane County Broadband Task Force on the same basis
91 and under the same policies as other Dane County bodies that receive per diems and mileage.