

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF THE
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Dr. Rebecca B. Bridgett, County Administrator



Commissioners of St. Mary's County

James Randy Guy, President
Eric Colvin, Commissioner
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner
Todd B. Morgan, Commissioner
John E. O'Connor, Commissioner

DEPARTMENTAL PLAN OF ACTION

Issue: Improving Broadband access in St. Mary's County.

Date of Report: December 16, 2021

Department: Information Technology

Director: Robert Kelly

SUMMARY:

In recent years, St. Mary's County has invested in the expansion of existing commercial Cable Providers networks to allow service to be extended to areas which may not be economically feasible for commercial vendors to expand. The infusion of government grant funding has expanded the Middle Mile service in many underserved areas in our county. By funding the construction of these plant expansions, the county offsets the capital improvement costs of the vendor without assuming any maintenance and/or support costs associated with the services already being provided by the vendor. In 2021, the St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) requested assistance from the county in identifying and resolving the connectivity limitations for students without broadband; in response to the Covid-19 assembly restrictions.

To meet the challenge, a collaborative effort between the county, SMCPS, the State of Maryland, the Federal Government of the United States, and Service Providers have been working to identify the county addresses where wired broadband service is not currently available. Analysis is nearly complete which will determine the actual construction costs for connecting the remaining unserved addresses within the county.

The investment to date has provided wired broadband connectivity to 98.4% of SMCPS students and 94.3% connectivity for all registered addresses in the county. Building on our previous successes and methodologies and leveraging as much grant funding possible, staff recommends the following Plan of Action to achieve the Maryland Legislator's goal of providing 98% broadband connectivity by 2026.

PROJECT PLAN OF ACTION:

Approval of the following projects will provide broadband service to underserved addresses as funding allows:

- **Middle Mile** – Additional wired broadband infrastructure would provide broadband coverage for critical activities including tele-work, tele-health, and tele-school capabilities to clusters of identified underserved\unserved addresses in the county. Installation of middle mile infrastructure provides connectivity path to connect these remote areas.
- **Last Mile** - Broadband for Unserved Citizens (BUC) – Extending Broadband to county addresses using the methodology established under the Broadband for Unserved Students (BUS) Grant would begin to address the connectivity needs for all St. Mary's non-connected addresses.
- **Facility connectivity and security** - Digital and physical security of the facility requires networking infrastructure to county facilities. Security and operations at Nicolet Park, Chancellors Run, Lancaster, Snow Hill Park, Fifth District Park, and Myrtle Point, would significantly benefit with connectivity to existing county infrastructure, WiFi, security, and video systems.

P.O. BOX 653 ♦ CHESAPEAKE BUILDING ♦ 41770 BALDRIDGE STREET, LEONARDTOWN, MD 20650
PHONE 301.475.4200 X1321 ♦ FAX 301.475.4935 ♦ www.stmarysmd.com

