



# BROADBAND PROGRAM

## Fact Sheet for use by Beaver County Municipalities re: Connect Beaver County Broadband Program Fall 2024

Beaver County continues to advance efforts to bring high-speed Internet to County residents without access to service. The Beaver County Commissioners awarded Verizon to deploy high-speed fiber-optic broadband service by the end of 2026 to nearly 2,000 eligible Beaver County locations. Additionally, recent investments awarded by the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) will allow Comcast to reach more than 600 additional locations – all of which were previously without access to Internet at qualifying broadband speeds. These efforts complement the Connect Beaver County Broadband Program’s now-completed Early Action Projects (EAPs) performed by Armstrong and Kinetic in the northwest and southeast areas of the County respectively.

You are receiving this information because your municipality may include residents who are slated to receive new Internet service. We would like to be proactive and assist you, beginning with this fact sheet, in managing questions and expectations about the upcoming project.

If you have additional questions, please visit [ConnectBeaverCounty.com](https://connectbeavercounty.com) or contact [feedback@connectbeavercounty.com](mailto:feedback@connectbeavercounty.com).

### About the Beaver County Planning Commission

The Beaver County Planning Commission is tasked with managing the Connect Beaver County Broadband Program, under the direction of the Commissioners, and with the support of Michael Baker International. The mission of the Beaver County Planning Commission is to provide strategic, coordinated, and objective guidance and oversight to the growth, planning, and development activities of Beaver County. The goal of the Commission is to ensure that Beaver County’s future is characterized by a healthy environment, economy, and society achieved through proactive planning, citizen representation, effective communication, and professional services.

## Frequently Asked Questions to Municipalities

The following questions may be asked of municipal officials, with suggested responses. Please feel free to reach out to [feedback@connectbeavercounty.com](mailto:feedback@connectbeavercounty.com) for assistance in responding to other inquiries.

### ***Where is the funding for each of the projects coming from?***

#### ***Verizon***

The Beaver County Commissioners have approved the use of up to \$20 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to bring high-speed Internet to the communities in Beaver County currently without access to service. This ensures that residents will not have to pay expensive out-of-pocket construction expenses to get high-speed Internet delivered to their homes, assuming it is even available. More than \$11.9 million has been set aside for this portion of the project and Verizon will more than match the County's investment with another \$12.2 million.

#### ***Comcast***

The Capital Projects Fund provided more than \$200 million in federal funding for Internet expansion into Pennsylvania homes, business, nonprofits, local governments, and economic development organizations. Of that, the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority (PBDA) has awarded Comcast nearly \$2.5 million to expand broadband Internet to remaining unserved areas of Beaver County. This will reach approximately 620 locations across 35 municipalities.

### ***What municipalities have locations slated to receive broadband upgrades?***

Municipalities with locations slated to receive service with Verizon include Big Beaver Borough, Brighton Township, Center Township, Chippewa Township, Darlington Township, Daugherty Township, Eastvale Borough, Frankfort Springs Borough, Franklin Township, Greene Township, Hanover Township, Hopewell Township, Independence Township, Industry Borough, Marion Township, Midland Borough, New Sewickley Township, North Sewickley Township, Ohioville Borough, Patterson Township, Potter Township, Raccoon Township, Shippingport Borough, South Beaver Township.

Municipalities with locations slated to receive service with Comcast include Aliquippa, Ambridge, Baden Borough, Beaver Falls, Big Beaver, Brighton Township, Center Township,



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Chippewa Township, Darlington Township, Daugherty Township, Eastvale Borough, Fallston Borough, Freedom Borough, Greene Township, Hanover Township, Hopewell Township, Harmony Township, Independence Township, Industry Borough, Midland Borough, New Brighton Borough, New Sewickley Township, Ohioville Borough, Potter Township, Patterson Township, Raccoon Township, Rochester Borough, Rochester Township, Shippingport Borough, South Beaver Township, South Heights borough, Vanport Township, West Mayfield Borough.

### ***Which areas of our municipality/borough will be covered by this work?***

Many locations will be in rural or remote areas. Please navigate to [www.connectbeavercounty.com/about-the-program](http://www.connectbeavercounty.com/about-the-program) to view an interactive map with locations scheduled to receive new service.

### ***How can residents and businesses stay informed about the Connect Beaver County Broadband Program's latest developments?***

We understand it is important to keep the community well-informed. We encourage residents to sign up for our email list, which can be found on our website. Subscribers will be updated on construction and other ongoing work throughout the life of the project.

### ***How will the residents of my municipality benefit from this program?***

The Connect Beaver County Broadband Program brings numerous benefits to your community. Fast and reliable broadband is essential today for a thriving economy. Broadband will help residents access telehealth appointments, secure employment opportunities, work from home, access educational materials, stay connected with friends and family, and so much more.

### ***Will there be any costs to residents or businesses for broadband connectivity?***

Residents or business owners receiving new access to service will not be charged for the new Verizon or Comcast infrastructure. The County has invested \$11.9 million into this phase of the project in addition to a \$12.2 million match from Verizon to ensure residents do not have to come out-of-pocket for the availability of high-speed Internet at their home or business. Comcast applied for and was awarded by the state nearly \$2.5 million of Capital Projects Funds.

While infrastructure is covered, it will be incumbent on the resident to pay for ongoing Internet service. Once fiber is deployed, it will be up to the resident or business owner to decide if they would like to subscribe to broadband service. Service plans from Verizon and Comcast will vary and competitive prices will vary depending on the selected service speed.



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## ***Who is the point of contact for the project? Whom can I contact with questions?***

The Beaver County Office of Planning and Redevelopment has been managing the Verizon and Early Action Projects on behalf of the Beaver County Commissioners. Comcast is working in partnership with the County. If you have a question, please use the designated Connect Beaver County Broadband Program email, [feedback@connectbeavercounty.com](mailto:feedback@connectbeavercounty.com) where we will ensure your questions get answered. Once the broadband infrastructure is in place, residents will be working directly with an Internet service provider to select and fund the service they choose.

## ***What can our municipality do to help expedite the process for our residents?***

Verizon and Comcast need time to design and construct a state-of-the-art fiber-optic network for each part of Beaver County receiving new service. Part of the work, and a common cause for delays, involves permitting. Broadband networks are often built along public land that runs alongside roads and railways or private land and facilities. Networks are either buried, aerial, or both. These deployments require many kinds of permits from owners and authorities. Verizon and Comcast will be applying for these permits, but if you are called upon to lend assistance, it would be in the interest of time to act or respond promptly.

Municipalities can also be of assistance by confirming maps identifying right-of-way access are up to date.

## ***What is the projected timeline for the broadband project implementation?***

Verizon is committed to connecting as many residents and businesses as possible by 2024 with very remote locations potentially requiring additional time for access. Comcast's project is required by funding guidelines to have shown significant progress by the end of 2026.

## ***Will this program be subject to Cable Franchise Fees that are currently collected by municipalities under existing law?***

No. Broadband service is not classified as a cable service by the FCC and is not subject to a franchise fee by the Local Franchise Authority (municipality). The federal government allows municipalities to collect fees up to 5% on cable services through franchise fees, which are only applicable to what the FCC determines to be "Cable Services."



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## Frequently Asked Questions From Residents

### ***Will my location be included as part of this project?***

To find out if your location is part of the program, please navigate to the interactive map on the About the Program page of the project website, [www.connectbeavercounty.com](http://www.connectbeavercounty.com). Type your address in the box and follow the instructions to determine if your location is included as part of the Connect Beaver County Broadband Program.

### ***What are Connectivity Opportunity Areas?***

The 2021 Beaver County Broadband Data Collection & Feasibility Study identified locations that are unserved and underserved with poor mobile and fixed broadband service speeds. Visit the About the Program page to see the Beaver County Broadband Connectivity Opportunity Areas identified on the map.

### ***What is the difference between unserved and underserved?***

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently defines high-speed Internet as 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 3 Mbps upload, which is inadequate for today's digital needs. For the purposes of this program, underserved and unserved are defined as follows:

**Unserved** - Locations with no access to wired Internet service at speeds that meet the FCC threshold of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload, meaning the Internet connection is slow and unreliable or nonexistent.

**Underserved** - Locations where Internet service is at or above the FCC threshold but with no access to wired broadband service at speeds 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, this can lead to slow or unreliable service.

### ***How soon will service be available in my area?***

Having just been awarded funds in April, Comcast has not yet designated an official groundbreaking date. Before that happens, Comcast must design a fiber-optic network and a schedule for the project. Locations receiving service with Verizon may start to receive service as early as September 2024. All work is projected to be completed no later than December 2026. We encourage residents to visit [www.ConnectBeaverCounty.com](http://www.ConnectBeaverCounty.com) and sign up on our email list to receive more up-to-date information.



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## ***What if my area is not identified for new service?***

The County has identified Connectivity Opportunity Areas in 24 municipalities. The project team is working with the providers to establish a specific timeline for expanding service into those areas that have been identified as unserved and underserved. If your location is not included in the Opportunity Area map and your area is currently unserved, please contact Connect Beaver County for more information.

## ***What speeds will the ISPs be delivering to newly serviced homes?***

Speeds may vary, but all will exceed the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) minimum speeds, and both new networks will enable minimum speeds that will allow residents to access and enjoy all modern uses including streaming video for education or entertainment, working from home, connecting to telehealth, maintaining social connections, and so much more.

## ***What is Comcast's Internet service called?***

Xfinity in the name of the Internet service provided by Comcast.

## ***How much will the new broadband service cost?***

Verizon and Comcast will contact residents and business owners with pricing and service options shortly before broadband connection is available. Residents can also check pricing at <https://www.verizon.com/home/internet/fios-fastest-internet> or <https://www.xfinity.com/planbuilder>.