



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **BROADBAND SURVEY RESULTS LAY ‘ROAD MAP’ TO CONNECTIVITY**

**Uniontown, PA** – The results of Fayette County’s broadband connectivity survey are officially in.

The Broadband Data Collection and Feasibility Study - also known as “Fast. Fiber. Fayette.” – aimed to show where investments are needed to ensure all residents have access to high-speed, affordable internet.

The Fayette County commissioners partnered with Michael Baker International (MBI) to complete the study between November 2022 and January 2023. More than 1,500 residents participated, and MBI officials presented their findings to municipal leaders, internet service providers and other local stakeholders during a special event Thursday in Uniontown.

“The purpose of the entire analysis of our broadband infrastructure was to develop a road map to making reliable Wi-Fi available in every home and business countywide,” Fayette County Economic Development Coordinator Mark Rafail said. “Michael Baker’s presentation very clearly established that road map by giving us what is, essentially, a living document that will constantly change as our local providers upgrade their systems.”

Rafail said the “best way” to accomplish said upgrades is for “the county, municipalities and local providers to team up and go after grant funding.” He said the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority currently has about \$200 million available for infrastructure projects.

“My hope is that everyone who was in the room today, along with all our other local leaders, will now see that if we don’t work together, we’re going to fall behind in offering high-speed internet for all,” he said. “Now that the study is done, we can begin the process of seeking the funding necessary to fill in the gaps where connectivity may be lacking and give our citizens the broadband they deserve.”

Fayette County also has access to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which can help address connectivity gaps and aid in improving Fayette’s economic development, public safety, agriculture, education, healthcare, quality of life and much more.

Commissioner Vince Vicites said Fayette County now has a strategy for increasing high-speed internet access for underserved and unserved communities.

“The timing is right. The state’s broadband authority is getting ready to give out grants to the tune of \$200 million, and Fayette County has completed its plans. We will aggressively seek grant funding for every phase of our countywide study to complete our broadband coverage in both the underserved

areas and those areas that have no service at all,” Vicites said. “This is a top priority for the Fayette County commissioners, and we will get this accomplished.”

Commissioner Scott Dunn said the pandemic illuminated the need for all families to have access to broadband internet, and the feasibility study shows the county how to meet those needs.

“Upgrading our internet will ensure Fayette County can continue to be competitive in education, industry and the digital economy,” Dunn said. “We now have the tools we need to go after grant funding, in the hopes of building a brighter, more connected future, in Fayette.”

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said it’s “frustrating” when Fayette County citizens struggle to receive the same service that people elsewhere take for granted. He said the broadband study highlights what we already know – “that there are wide swaths through the county with little or no internet.”

“That presents some very real barriers, including barriers to education, to healthcare and social services, to job opportunities, to banking, to e-commerce, and so much more,” Lohr said. “Infrastructure is more important than architecture. It’s critical to our viability as a place to live and work. Business can’t compete without reliable infrastructure. Improving infrastructure creates economic development, puts people to work and enhances local communities. With development comes job opportunities, as well as new residents and their families. When we increase our tax base, everyone benefits.”

For more information, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org/837/Economic-Development](http://www.fayettecountypa.org/837/Economic-Development) or contact Mark Rafail at 724-430-1200, ext. 1501, or [mrafail@fayettepa.org](mailto:mrafail@fayettepa.org).

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.fayettecountypa.org](http://www.fayettecountypa.org).

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