

Frequently Asked Questions

Manchester Township Broadband Initiative

What is the Manchester Township Broadband Initiative?

Citizens of Manchester Township have asked the Manchester Township board to address the lack of broadband coverage in the area. In response to this citizen led initiative, Manchester Township funded a feasibility study. ~~The study is~~, set to take place in the summer of 2018, ~~which will facilitate an understanding of- how to address broadband~~ access ~~to all Manchester residents (both Village & Township) to understand how this issue might be addressed. The intent of the feasibility study is to learn options as they pertain to broadband accessibility within the Township.~~ Upon completion of the feasibility study, the Manchester Township board will evaluate the feasibility report, and make a determination regarding the best course of action.

Do Manchester Township residents care about having access to broadband?

~~The Township is inclusive of the Village, so this is a bit of a complicated question. Village residents already have access to broadband through major providers, so, while they are concerned for their neighbors in the Township, their technological needs are already being met. With that being said,~~ in July of 2017, Manchester Township included a survey with the summer tax bill to gauge public interest in broadband. Of the responses received, 67% were from those residing within the Township, 29% in the Village and 4% from 'other' areas ~~(-that those 4% was/were not included in our outcomes)~~. 86% of responding registered voters said that having high speed internet access at home is "important" or "very important". Additionally, when asked if their current internet service met their needs, 67% responded with "not really" or "not at all". ~~It must be noted that the Township is inclusive of the Village, and residents of the Village largely have existing access to broadband from Comcast, while residents outside the Village do not. With that being said, residents both inside out outside the Village strongly supported a broadband feasibility study, with 92% of residents outside the Village supporting and 89% of residents inside the Village supporting.~~

Do Manchester Township residents have access to broadband services today?

Current data from Connect Michigan (a subsidiary of Connected Nation, partnering with the Michigan Public Service Commission, as part of a national effort to map and expand broadband) shows that at the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) broadband threshold of 25Mb download and 3Mb upload. While these speeds are ~~obtained by available to~~ residents in the Village ~~with some current providers from Comcast, with few exceptions~~ this is not an option offered by any service ~~providers~~ to households/businesses outside Village limits.

Commented [BF1]: AT&T is the DSL provider for the Village – their website indicates the max speed they offer in the Village is 18Mb

Where is the current step of the Broadband proposal?

Based on the survey results ~~indicating strong support from residents and lack of service too area residents~~ the board has agreed to complete a feasibility study. This study does not tie us into any contracts and will add no additional taxes to any residents.

What is a feasibility study?

A feasibility study is an engineering study that is completed by a consulting company. In our case, CCG Consulting is the chosen firm that specializes in providing viable broadband infrastructure implementation and funding models to rural communities. To complete this, they will travel to our community and assess all the things needed to complete the project. This is also the same company that completed the feasibility study for Sharon Township ~~and is providing project management for~~

[Lyndon Township's fiber to the home deployment](#). The result of this feasibility study will yield a feasibility report, which will provide the Township answers to all facets of this endeavor, including if undertaking this project would be of benefit to Township residents.

What will Manchester Township do with the feasibility report?

At their regular public meetings, the Manchester Township board will review the report and discuss the options provided. Additionally, the Township is committed to receiving continued feedback from residents and will likely hold several Town Hall meetings so residents may provide commentary.

Commented [BF2]: I suggest that there is an ongoing role for a broadband committee that is inclusive of one or more board members and residents to conduct this next phase

When will this feasibility report be available, is it public information?

The Township is hoping to have the final report in hand by late summer, at which point, it will be discussed at the Manchester Township Board meeting as well as posted here for the public to review.

What kind of connectivity will this provide? Fiber? Wireless?

It's too early to know. CCG is tasked with considering many different [internet-based technologies](#) [and how they relate to Manchester Township's situation](#) and providing funding models for each.

I heard my taxes are going to double if we get broadband, is this true?

No. A *voter approved* millage is *only one* possible funding mechanism. The Township specifically asked that the feasibility study provide other funding options, too.

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So, if this happens, will I get broadband accessibility for free?

No. At this point in time ~~though, any potential costs~~[the cost is are](#) unknown. The feasibility study will help us to learn this information.

Why don't we wait for Comcast or AT&T to provide these services to our rural areas?

Based on their respective return on investment models, the population density outside the Village is too small to warrant the expense that would be involved, therefore, they are unwilling to construct the infrastructure that would provide service to that area.

What about the Village, we already have Comcast?

The Township is very aware of the challenges we face with the differing needs of our residents, and have specifically asked that the feasibility study address this issue as well. [Feedback from some residents in the Village indicates that they would be interested in having a choice other than Comcast if the service were better and less expensive.](#)

I live in the Village, would I need to maintain my current service if this becomes available?

[Options explored in the feasibility study will include providing an alternate service within the Village. If one of these options were pursued, Village residents could switch to this service from their current service. No resident would be forced to switch – such a service would provide an additional choice.](#)
~~No, this would become an additional choice for your technology needs.~~

Is there a way to exclude the Village from ~~the proposal~~proposed solutions?

Based on the survey results, those who responded from the Village were in favor of understanding what their other options could be. [The feasibility study will explore various deployment and funding models,](#)

[including models that include and exclude the Village. For models financed by the Township, currently the only mechanism is a Township wide bond backed by a millage. Using a special assessment district would give the Township the ability to exclude the Village from financing, but this is not currently allowed under state law. House Bill 4162](#), introduced by State Representative Donna Lasinski last winter would grant ~~special assessment rights which would give the Township more latitude with funding could be generated~~ [Townships the ability to use special assessment districts in this way](#). That bill is still in committee, if you'd like to offer your support for its passage, you may find a letter of support here.

What can I do if I wish to support or oppose this initiative?

The Manchester Township Board meets on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7:00 p.m., at the Township Hall. These meetings are open to the public and provide citizens 2 opportunities to speak for 3 minutes each time about any issue that is important to them. You are always encouraged and welcomed to attend/participate.

Will there be any public forums held to voice concerns?

The Township is planning to have public town hall meetings that is open to all area residents. Although none are decided yet there will be active communications for when they are confirmed.

Commented [BF3]: Offer township email to accept comments? Mention possible town halls?