



The York County Commissioners created the YoCo Fiber Broadband Task Force on February 3, 2021 to advise the county on developing and implementing a countywide broadband strategy.

BACKGROUND:

In April 2020, the YoCo Strong Recovery Task Force identified “investing in broadband infrastructure for all residents” as one of its priority recommendations. The Task Force noted the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the impact of inequitable access to broadband internet, as students and employees pivoted to work from home and more residents relied on the internet to access critical services, such as health care.

In early August, the Commissioners approved the allocation of federal CARES Act funding for a countywide broadband assessment. A consulting team from Lit Communities and Katapult Engineering completed the assessment in December 2020, which includes a preliminary design for a countywide broadband network, financial models for its construction, and several potential structures for its ownership and operations. In tandem with the assessment, the Commissioners also allocated \$1.5 million to construct a 16-mile fiber backbone project in conduit underneath the Heritage Rail Trail and install a wireless antenna at Hanover Junction.

One of the recommendations from the assessment was to establish a task force to advise on further developing and implementing the county’s broadband strategy, particularly the construction of a public Middle Mile fiber network to entice private investment in fiber to homes, businesses, and priority institutions.

Expanding broadband internet access is also a signature goal of the recently-adopted York County Economic Action Plan, which is a component of York County’s comprehensive plan, and other county and statewide planning documents. For example, the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania recently identified broadband expansion as a top statewide priority.

PURPOSE:

The YoCo Fiber Broadband Task Force is mandated to advise the County of York on implementation of its broadband strategy, in particular the preliminary design and recommendations outlined in the community assessment. This mandate includes, but is not limited to:

- Conducting a demand aggregation survey of residents in York County to prioritize broadband deployment and support future funding applications
- Prioritizing construction phases for the Middle Mile network
- Recommending ownership and financial models for county-constructed infrastructure and potential leasing agreements for use of the county’s fiber
- Securing federal and state grants and private funding to advance broadband
- Engaging private internet providers, utility companies, and other partners to advance implementation
- Regularly reporting out progress to the County Commissioners and the community

TIMEFRAME:

The Task Force will continue to meet on an ongoing basis until the Commissioners determine its role is no longer needed and the task force is dissolved. Frequency of meetings will be determined in discussion with the task force members but is anticipated to be monthly during the first six months.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT: The York County Economic Alliance will provide administrative support to the Task Force and coordinate closely with the County Commissioners and county staff.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

Facilitator:

Dr. Silas Chamberlin, York County Economic Alliance

Members:

Dr. Nathan Van Deusen, Superintendent, South Eastern School District
 Shayne Smith, Regional External Affairs, Met Ed / First Energy
 Chaz Green, Director, Public Works, City of York
 Mick Murphy, VP and Chief Technology Officer, WellSpan
 Phil Witkowski, Director of Telehealth, UPMC – Pinnacle Hospitals
 Kevin Schreiber, President & CEO, York County Economic Alliance
 Gary Laird, President & CEO, Hanover Chamber of Commerce
 Jeff Vermeulen, AVP, York College / JD Brown Center for Entrepreneurship
 Felicia Dell, Executive Director, York County Planning Commission
 John Klinedinst, County Engineer, CS Davidson
 Isaac Tucker, Director, Katapult Engineering / Dillsburg Borough Council
 Mark Derr, County Administrator, County of York
 Joe Sassano, Executive Director, IT / CIO, County of York