

COUNTY OF BERKS, PENNSYLVANIA

Office of the Commissioners

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Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk

April 25, 2022

Greetings,

In today's world, it is more important than ever to be able to connect to the Internet quickly and easily from any location. Unfortunately, the cost and availability of reliable, high-speed Internet service makes it difficult for many residents in Berks County to thrive in this new virtual setting. With so many of the services we rely on moving online, we all need to be invested in making sure Berks County residents and businesses have the reliable access they need to succeed.

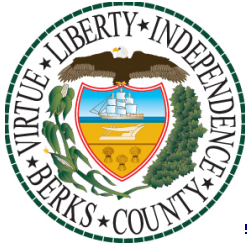
The Berks County Commissioners have undertaken an initiative to expand high-quality Internet service throughout our community. The goal is to ensure that all residents have access to high-speed broadband service so they can access telemedicine resources and online educational opportunities and be able to work from home. It is also essential for businesses to have sufficient Internet reliability and capacity to support not only their current needs, but also their ability to stay competitive and grow. This broadband initiative is not about moving Berks County into competition with the private sector providers but rather to identify the obstacles that currently exist making access unaffordable, difficult, or simply unavailable. This effort will result in several recommendations. While Berks County will not have the resources to implement every recommendation, the Broadband committee will prioritize the recommendations so Berks County can address the recommendations with the greatest community benefit first.

Expanding high-quality, affordable Internet service is a major undertaking. The County is pleased to be partnering with several community organizations in this effort:

- Berks Alliance
- Berks County Community Foundation
- Berks County Intermediate Unit
- City of Reading
- Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center
- Reading Public Library
- Reading School District
- United Way of Berks County
- UPMC *For You* Health Plan
- Wyomissing Foundation

Dedicated to public service with integrity, virtue & excellence

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The multiple stage process of expanding access begins with accurately identifying areas within Berks County that have no Internet access or unreliable and inadequate service. To do this, data will be gathered from many technical sources, including carriers. However, we also believe it is important to understand the impact to daily life and want to hear from residents and businesses about their experiences with gaps in service and their concerns about the cost of service.

Please consider helping with this important part of the process by completing the survey available at this link: https://www.jotform.com/broadband_survey/berks-county. The survey has two parts and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. It is best to complete both parts at the same time, if possible.

PART A

Questions focus on: (1) Information about the Internet connection you used for this survey, including its actual location/address. This will ensure that when we are documenting the need for federal or state funding requests, we are not duplicating data. (2) Information about your current use of and satisfaction with your Internet service. You may choose to provide your email address to allow for data verification, but this step is not required.

PART B

The survey will ask you to run a short Internet connection test that is important for us to document the actual strength of your connection.

Thank you for helping us gather the critical information we need to develop and implement a plan to expand high-quality Internet service throughout Berks County.

Sincerely,

Berks County Board of Commissioners


Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair Kevin S. Barnhardt, Vice Chair Michael S. Rivera, Commissioner

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