

**Recommendations**  
**Roanoke Valley Broadband /Fiber Taskforce**

Whereas we believe that the use and importance of the Internet will grow, and the Roanoke Valley region needs to develop a plan that addresses current and future needs in order to accelerate the growth of our regional economy and attract new residents. To this end, we recognize that access to high speed, reasonably-priced Internet services will enable:

- Business communities to be better positioned to incubate, attract, retain, and grow companies
- Educational institutions to be better equipped to prepare our students to enter the workforce
- Residential communities to improve the quality and variety of in-home entertainment options and to improve the economic viability of home-based businesses

In order to meet these objectives, we identify the following needs and associated action items:

Need: Develop local government policies and cooperative agreements that expand the infrastructure of broadband throughout the region.

Actions:

- Consider creating a more formal broadband committee structure or broadband authority to create assist with policy development, infrastructure development, partnership agreements, and asset ownership.
- Identify and reach out to large companies, institutions and broadband users to broaden stakeholder support.
- Develop a master plan for construction and operation of a high speed, redundant, Regional Network Ring with connection to available open access networks. The network should reach schools, industrial parks, large employers, and other economic centers.
- Develop cooperative agreements for localities with technical specifications and commercial terms for operating the network and for exchanging data across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Develop and implement “dig-once” requirements for construction projects, including the placement of open-access conduit for optical fiber cable.
- Explore the creation of policies and/or agreements with Carilion Clinic, Virginia Tech and other potential partners for open-access to high speed Internet in their adjacent communities.
- Work with the New River Valley and other adjacent localities that are supporting existing broadband/fiber deployments.
- Provide support to efforts to expand municipal fiber networks in the region.
- Communicate broadband related activities and technology to the public in a clear and efficient manner.

Need: Improve the availability of low-cost broadband for residents and business throughout the region.

Actions:

- Work with existing providers to streamline regulations/permitting, encourage affordable service options, and expand network coverage.
- Encourage the rapid deployment of DOCSIS 3.0 by cable operators in the region to increase the bandwidth at an affordable cost to cable subscribers.
- Streamline permitting of towers for Long Term Evolution (LTE), marketed as 4G LTE, to increase the availability of wire-less broadband, with emphasis on rural parts of the region.
- Promote open-access solutions to encourage competitive and diverse offerings of Internet services in the region.
- Work with Virginia Tech, CIT, the Western Virginia Water Authority and other entities to conduct a vertical asset inventory relating to wireless technology deployment.
- Identify wireless opportunities and partnerships to provide broadband opportunities to underserved areas.

Need: Explore the need and economic feasibility of one or more data centers in the region

- Research the development and operation requirements of a data center to establish the benefits for the Roanoke Valley. Assess the value of a data center for recruiting new businesses to the region and for incubating new businesses, as well as support for existing businesses and institutions.
- Survey potential users of data centers, including local governments, state agencies, educational institutions, and existing businesses, and assess their collective needs and potential partnerships.
- Develop a preliminary business plan for the data center to assess its economic feasibility.
- Concurrently identify site requirements and/or potential sites for a data center.