

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: November 20, 2019

SUBJECT: Request to Allow the WestNGN to Inventory Existing Towers in Henderson County for Broadband Expansion

PRESENTER: Keith Conover, North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT)

ATTACHMENTS: 1. PowerPoint Presentation

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Broadband is one of the regions highest identified priorities due to its connection to education, healthcare, economic development, business, emergency management, and entertainment. The WestNGN broadband initiative is working through final pieces of the PHASE II project. This phase includes identification of demand aggregation and asset identification to help drive broadband deployment in Henderson County, with an emphasis on getting unserved areas better connectivity. These efforts are separate, but in conjunction with the efforts of the PHASE I project which was focused on driving investment into more urban centers.

At this point Henderson County had nearly 1,400 responses with nearly 6% saying they have no access (actual unserved populations are anticipated to be 18-20%) and over 55% of survey responses claim service does not meet their needs. The draft broadband plan is complete and final work for the project includes vetting the publicly own towers for fixed wireless opportunities and hosting a provider meeting where collected data will be presented as business opportunities to Internet Service Providers. This process follows the state's process of broadband deployment, accounts for neutrality, and will be hosting by NC DIT.

In order to complete these final steps will need to work with county staff to assist in location and viability of the towers as well as help coordinate the provider meeting. Additionally, we welcome additional comments to add to the draft broadband plan to best present Henderson County's broadband picture.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

The Board of Commissioners is requested to allow the WestNGN representative to work with county staff to assess exiting towers in Henderson County for the potential of Broadband expansion.

Suggested Motion:

I move that the Board direct staff to work with Land of Sky and the WestNGN to conduct and inventory of the existing towers in Henderson County for the purpose of Broadband expansion.

WestNGN

Henderson Broadband Project



WestNGN

Attract investment in broadband infrastructure for economic development, education, health, and opportunity to North Carolina.

WestNGN Phase II Project Outputs

01	Community Survey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete with over 1395 responses- spot street level assessment at community level may be implemented for further data gathering
02	Vertical Assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tower inventory complete- staff scheduled to investigate towers for broadband capability
03	Community Assets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maps of public spaces have been created with differing layers to maximize efficiency in funding opportunities
04	Community Profile	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profile created and ready to be put into place
05	Provider Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host a provider meeting



Land of Sky Regional Council of Government Broadband Survey

Thank you for taking time to share your experiences regarding internet availability and the quality of service you receive in your home. This survey is to help Land of Sky Regional Council better understand and support the Internet needs of its communities.

Please answer this survey based on the availability of broadband service you receive (or are able to receive) at your home.

1. What is the physical address of your home?
(This project is for Madison, Buncombe, Transylvania, Haywood, and Henderson counties)

We promise your address will only be used to help us determine broadband needs in the region. We must be able to show where service is underserved or not currently served to improve provider participation.

Street Address:

City:

Zip Code:

2. Does your household currently have Internet access?
 Yes No

If you answered "no" please answer questions 3-5 and then skip to question 15* to complete survey. If you answered "yes" please continue survey at question 6.

3. Why doesn't your household subscribe to Internet services? Select all that apply.

- Service not available at my home
- Available service too expensive
- Available service too slow
- Other (please specify)
- Don't need it
- Access to Internet elsewhere (school, library, etc.)
- Rely on Internet access through mobile phone

4. If high-speed Internet access were available, how much would you be willing to pay for the service?

- Not affordable at any price
- Up to \$25 per month
- Up to \$50 per month
- Up to \$75 per month
- Over \$75 per month for the right service
- Not interested in broadband services at my house

WestNGN Phase II Project Outputs

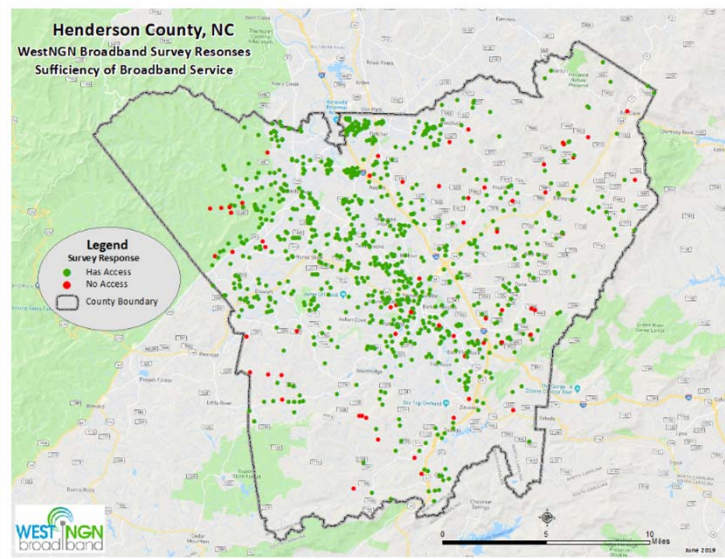
Demand Aggregation-

Quality data is critical to getting new providers to service underserved areas by showing a business model.

Identifying unserved areas may help with opportunities for grant funding. The survey and provider meeting will help Henderson County expand broadband resources.

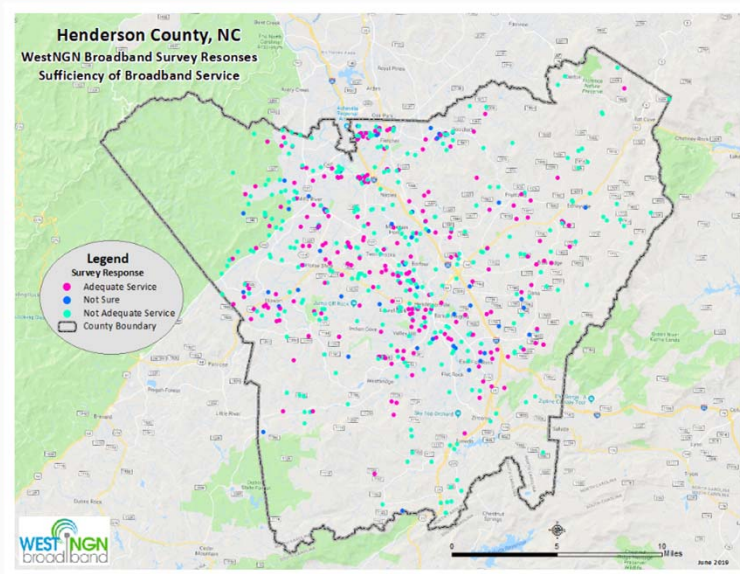
Henderson County Access

Survey respondents show that 5.9% of the population do not have access to Internet



Henderson County Sufficiency

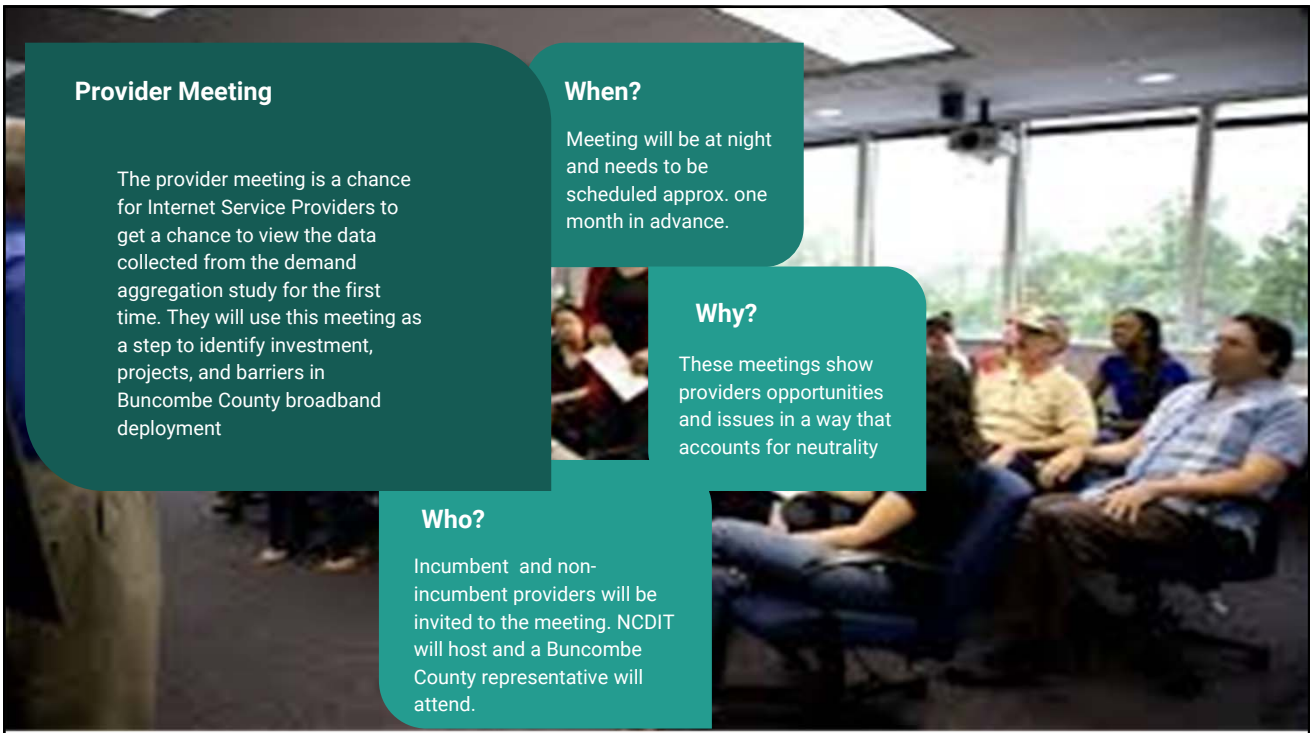
55.1% of Henderson County residents claim their service does not sufficiently meet their needs. 8% said they were unsure.



55.1%

The number of Henderson County residents currently responding that their internet provider doesn't not sufficiently meet the needs of their household.

5.9% of survey responses claim to have no access at all.



Provider Meeting

The provider meeting is a chance for Internet Service Providers to get a chance to view the data collected from the demand aggregation study for the first time. They will use this meeting as a step to identify investment, projects, and barriers in Buncombe County broadband deployment

When?

Meeting will be at night and needs to be scheduled approx. one month in advance.

Who?

Incumbent and non-incumbent providers will be invited to the meeting. NCDIT will host and a Buncombe County representative will attend.

Why?

These meetings show providers opportunities and issues in a way that accounts for neutrality

Provider Meeting Preparation

NC DIT Role

- Facilitate the meeting
- Contact providers
- Account for neutrality
- Present data
- Facilitate future conversations with providers

County Role

- Provide space for meeting
- Confirm list of providers
- Facilitate organization of meeting

Land of Sky Role

- Facilitate data communication to NC DIT.
- Assist county and state with meeting preparation

Questions

