



COUNTY OF DELAWARE

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County Launches Survey to Identify Areas with No or Limited Access to Broadband Internet

Delaware County is seeking to collect additional data regarding residents' access to broadband internet by surveying residents and business owners. The County has created a survey to identify residential and commercial locations that don't have access to broadband internet or that have limited access in order to identify places where broadband infrastructure does not exist or places that do not meet the minimum speed suggested by the FCC for appropriate service.

14% of Pennsylvania households do not have an internet subscription, and 3.1% of Pennsylvanians live in areas where, under the FCC's benchmark, there is no broadband infrastructure. Even where infrastructure is available, broadband is too expensive for some residents and small business owners.

Access to broadband internet is not just a luxury and a convenience but is a necessity for many residents and business owners. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated just how dependent we are on reliable high-speed internet for work, education, healthcare, and goods and services. During the pandemic students attended school remotely, many people worked from home, meetings were held virtually, jobs interviews were held online, telemedicine appointments replaced in-person checkups and appointments, and groceries and other household goods were ordered online and delivered. Those who had access to broadband internet were able to adjust to these changes without disruption. Those without reliable internet access suffered and were at a significant disadvantage.

"Council's goal is to bridge the digital divide that we know exists in the county," said Delaware County Councilwoman Christine Reuther. "Reliable internet access is necessary for our children to learn and thrive, for many residents to work, and for our small businesses to be competitive and succeed."

Under the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pennsylvania will receive millions of dollars to help provide broadband coverage across the state and 23% of people in Pennsylvania will be eligible for the Affordability Connectivity Benefit, which will help low-income families afford internet access.

"Delaware County residents and businesses struggling with broadband affordability and access now have an opportunity and we will need to work together to help ensure that Delaware County receives its fair share of funding," said Reuther.

A critical next step is to identify gaps in broadband coverage and affordability. Delaware County has launched a survey to collect data about the availability of internet service for both residential and business addresses in Delaware County. The survey is now live and can be accessed at <https://delcopa.gov/broadband>

All residents and business owners are urged to take the “Broadband Access” survey. More responses will lead to more accurate data to help the County bridge the digital divide.

A technical note regarding the survey: We ask that respondents do *not* take the survey using cellular data. You can complete the survey on your phone, but only if connected to your residential or workplace internet Wi-Fi.

Those without internet access at home can visit any Delaware County library, municipal building, State Senator’s office, or State Representative’s office to connect to wifi to complete the survey or request a paper copy of the survey.

The survey is expected to be available through January 14, 2022.