



## Dane County Broadband Task Force

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### **Welcome!**

Welcome to the first edition of the Dane County Broadband Task Force newsletter!

Over the last two-plus years the Task Force has worked to develop and begin implementing recommendations to expand broadband throughout Dane County. We've learned that broadband expansion is not a "nice-to-have", it's a need. We've heard from several residents regarding access and affordability issues. The Dane County Broadband Task Force will continue the work of engaging the public and various stakeholders to get high-speed internet access to every corner of Dane County.

The information in this newsletter will provide updates of the work of the Task Force as well as share information from other entities working on broadband expansion.

If you have questions or comments regarding broadband expansion, we invite you to contact the Task Force, or attend one of the monthly meetings.

County Board Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff (District 36), Chair  
Dane County Broadband Task Force

County Board Supervisor Jeff Glazer (District 8), Vice Chair  
Dane County Broadband Task Force

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## About the Dane County Broadband Task Force

The Dane County Broadband Task Force was established in 2021 to study access and affordability of broadband in the rural areas of the County, and to make recommendations to the County Board about how to increase broadband access to those households that lack or have inadequate broadband access. Throughout 2021 and 2022, the Task Force held public hearings, surveyed members of the public, and heard several reports and presentations providing information on the state of broadband throughout Dane County. Following this work, the Task Force created a list of over 30 recommendations to improve broadband infrastructure. These recommendations fall under five key areas:

- Promote Internet service provider collaboration and identify criteria for infrastructure development;
- Expand outreach, education, and alliance building to inform leaders and the public about the importance of comprehensive broadband;
- Support interim methods to provide internet service to households that lack access to broadband;
- Identify funding opportunities and assist communities in applying for funding; and
- Engage in advocacy to improve the regulatory and policy landscape that dictates how broadband is developed and funded throughout Wisconsin.

Find the full list of recommendations in the [Dane County Broadband Task Force 2021-2022 Report](#).

[Dane County Broadband Task Force 2021-2022 Report](#)

More information about the Task Force can be found on the Dane County Broadband Task Force's website.

[Learn More](#)

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## Task Force Accomplishments

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## **Broadband Engineering Assessment**

In September 2022, Dane County entered an agreement with AECOM Technical Services to complete a broadband engineering assessment and to coordinate implementation of fiber throughout Dane County. Since beginning their work, AECOM has worked with Dane County staff, the Dane County Broadband Task Force, and met with various stakeholders in an effort to meet the goals of the study, including:

- understanding what is currently available, and where the existing infrastructure serves;
- determining the capacity and who owns the infrastructure;
- identifying voids or deficiencies in service;
- recommending options for providing service in both the short and long term.

Over the last few months, AECOM has provided updates to the Task Force that included an initial review of what broadband throughout Dane County would like, including costs broken down by municipalities, and has also met with municipal leaders both one on one as well as at a listening session. AECOM is expected to complete their work on the engineering assessment in the next month.

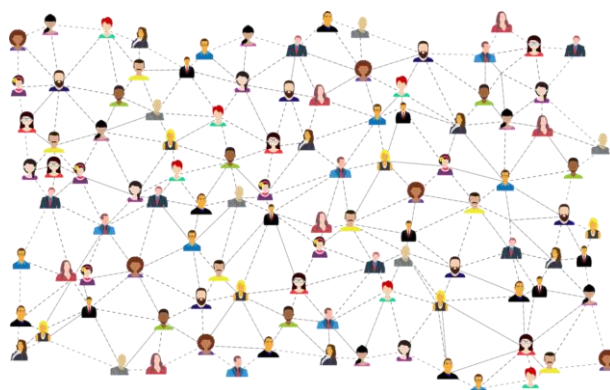
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## **Hiring update for Broadband Coordinator**

The 2023 Dane County Budget included a Broadband Coordinator position. This position will work on implementing the recommendations of the 2021-2022 Dane County Broadband Task Force Report and the 2023 Dane County Broadband Infrastructure Engineering Assessment to be completed by AECOM. The Coordinator will coordinate Dane County's broadband expansion, track and support local government implementation efforts, and serve as a community point of contact and source of information, provide grant writing support to local communities and Dane County, and promote digital equity and digital literacy.

The process to hire the Coordinator is well underway, and should be posted in the next few weeks, with an anticipated start in July 2023.

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### **Affordable Connectivity Program Outreach Grant**

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is a program that provides a discount of up to \$30/month to qualifying households to reduce the cost of internet service. It also provides up to \$75 per month for qualifying households on Tribal lands. In addition to the internet service discount, the program allows for a one-time \$100 discount to purchase a computer, desktop computer, or tablet from a participating provider provided the household contributes more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

In early 2023, Dane County Planning Development applied for the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program Outreach Grant in an effort to increase the awareness and sign-up to this program. Dane County was recently awarded a grant for \$86,500 to do this work. The outreach will include a multi-prong outreach effort including holding sign-up events in the rural areas of the county, working with Spanish and Hmong community organizations to reach non-English speakers, and utilizing the existing service infrastructure that Dane County already has in place to increase sign-up and awareness.

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### **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program**

The federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program provides \$42.45 billion to expand high-speed Internet access by funding planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption programs in all 50 states, and US Territories as well.

Dane County recently joined a regional partnership participating in the State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission's BEAD local Planning Grant, which will support broadband

planning activities that will inform the state's Five-Year Action Plan to guide broadband deployment and implementation of the BEAD program.

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## Happening Elsewhere

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### **FCC Affordable Connectivity Program**

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC program that provides eligible households with a discount on internet service and connected devices. It is estimated that only approximately 20% of eligible Dane County households are enrolled.

More information about the Affordable Connectivity Program can be found below:

[Federal Communications Commission - ACP](#)

[Education Superhighway ACP Toolkit](#)

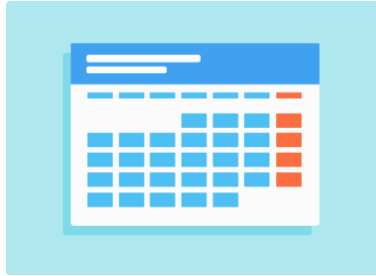
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### **Digital Equity**

#### **Tablet Lending at Stoughton Area Senior Center**

Dane County Broadband Task Force member Joyce Tikalsky worked with the Stoughton Area Senior Center to set up a tablet lending program. The goal of the program is to make internet services available to people who need them to access services on the internet.

[Example Plan](#)



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### **Upcoming Dane County Broadband Task Force Meetings**

Hybrid meetings (in person and virtual) will occur on the following days:

June 1 - 8:30am

July 6 - 9:00am

August 3 - 9:00am

For the most up to date schedule as well as agendas and minutes, information to connect or register to speak, please visit Dane County's Legislative Information Center.

[Legislative Information Center](#)

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**Sign up to receive the Broadband Task Force  
Newsletter!**

Questions? Contact the Dane County Broadband Task Force by emailing [Dane.Broadband.Task.Force@countyofdane.com](mailto:Dane.Broadband.Task.Force@countyofdane.com) or calling the Office of the Dane County Board of Supervisors (608) 266-5758.