



**“PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP BRINGS GIGABIT-ENABLED
SOLUTION TO SUMTER COUNTY”**

GEORGIA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

SPRING CONFERENCE

DECATUR, GA

03.27.19



ONE
SUMTER

WHAT IS ONE SUMTER?

THE CONCEPT

- ▶ 2014-2015 – Planning & Fundraising
 - ▶ Community-Driven, Public-Private Partnership
 - ▶ Over 100 Donors
 - ▶ \$2.2 Million in Pledged Funding
 - ▶ Over 100 Targeted Individuals & Organizations Engaged
 - ▶ 5-Year Business Action Plan
- ▶ 2016 – Launch Implementation
- ▶ Priorities
 - ▶ Economic Development (\$650,000)
 - ▶ Workforce Development (\$250,000)
 - ▶ Marketing & Communications (\$500,000)
 - ▶ Transportation (\$600,000)

**this
is your
world.
shape it or
someone
else will.** -gary
lew

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VALUE OF THE APPROACH

- ▶ Engages the community, Creates community
- ▶ Supports collaborative planning and collaborative action
- ▶ Cultivates ownership of the future in which we all work, live, and recreate
- ▶ Fosters an intentionally inclusive and action-oriented outcome
- ▶ Reaffirms trust, buy-in and transparency
- ▶ Establishes a platform to respond to current and future challenges in a dynamic and evolving way



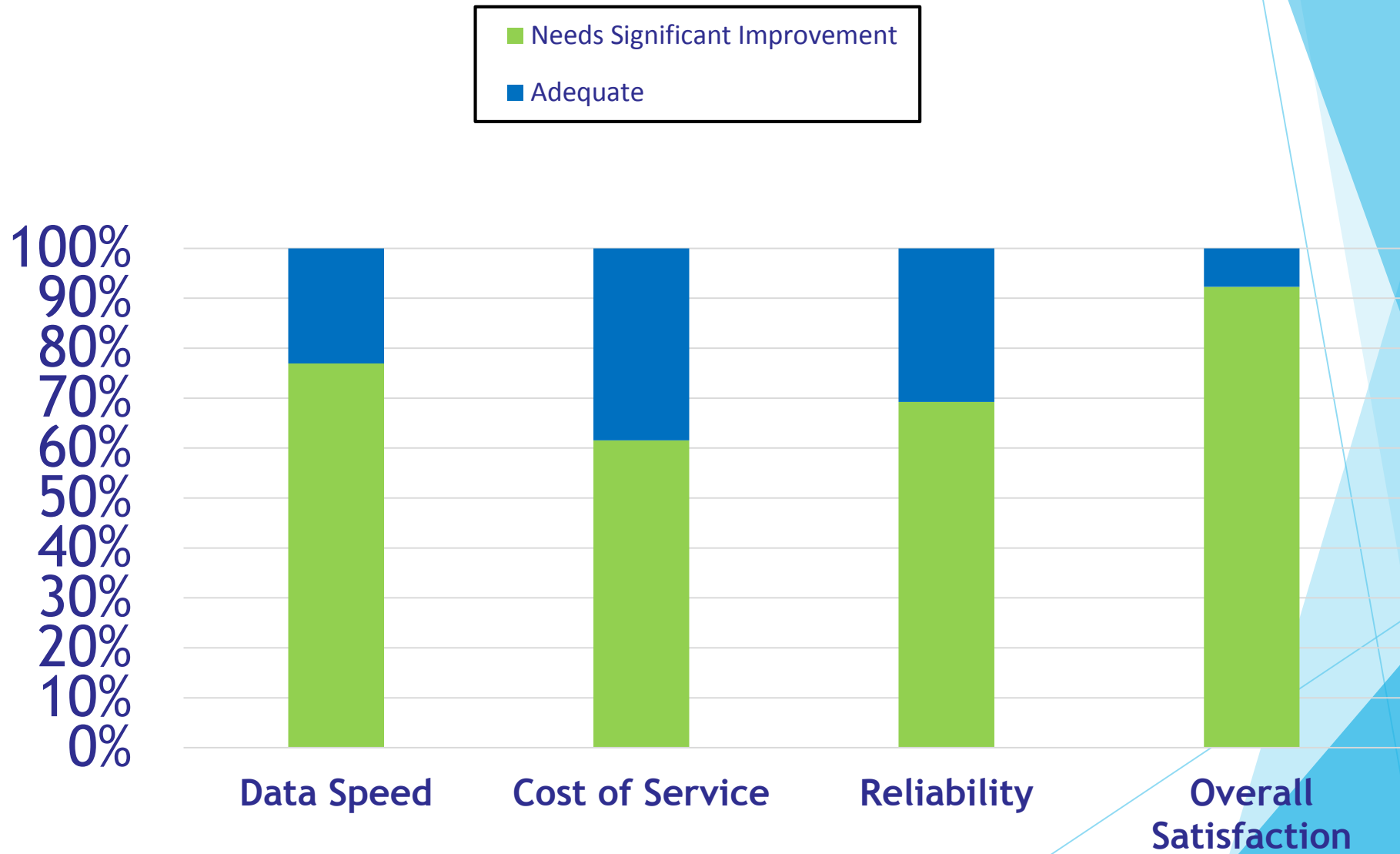
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ENGAGING THE EXPERTS

INITIAL SURVEY OF BROADBAND NEEDS

- ▶ Conducted interviews with a subset of One Sumter donors about their broadband concerns and requirements
 - ▶ Small business
 - ▶ Large business
 - ▶ Government
 - ▶ Community partners

Initial Broadband Satisfaction Results and Critical Needs





Will Ferrell

@Will__Ferrell

Follow



Before you marry a person you should first make them use a computer with slow Internet to see who they really are.

6:10 PM - 4 Nov 2013

2,196 Retweets **1,209** Likes



SIGNIFICANT COMMENTS

- ▶ “Our business is ready to expand but cannot do so with the existing data/redundancy capacity”
 - ▶ May have to turn away new business and jobs because of broadband issues
- ▶ “Remote manufacturing sites (out of state) cannot function when broadband fails at Americus HQ”
 - ▶ Too much pressure may force relocation of headquarters from Americus
- ▶ “Our customers think we are in the stone age because they can’t pay with a credit card when our internet service is not working properly”
 - ▶ Problems paying at area restaurants and hotels

SIGNIFICANT COMMENTS

- ▶ “We are very concerned that we cannot function if the existing broadband connection is lost – it would be a very significant business disruption – data source is over a radial fiber cable several miles in length”
- ▶ “New small businesses looking to locate downtown will need high speed data”
- ▶ “What about providing Wi-Fi downtown?”
- ▶ “We need to help the colleges grow by expanding data access for students and parents visiting from larger cities”

BROADBAND STUDY COMMITTEE

- ▶ One Sumter formed a broadband study committee consisting of 6 persons from the two local power companies
 - ▶ Georgia Power
 - ▶ Sumter EMC
- ▶ The two power companies have many decades of experience in community development, community service and infrastructure deployment
- ▶ As pole owners, they were a natural fit to lead the broadband efforts

STUDY COMMITTEE TASKS

- ▶ Research the underlying causes of broadband deficiencies
- ▶ Develop possible solutions and encourage the existing providers to take action
- ▶ Bring subject matter experts to the table
- ▶ Pursue willing partners
- ▶ Make recommendations to One Sumter
- ▶ Our consultant, Bailey White with Civitium (now CrowdFiber), came highly recommended and was selected to identify possible solutions for our broadband problems

The logo for 'ONE' features the letter 'O' in a light blue color, the number '1' in a dark blue color, and the letter 'E' in a medium blue color. The '1' is positioned between the 'O' and the 'E', and its vertical stroke extends downwards.

ONE
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CROWD FIBER:

FEASIBILITY & WHY IT MATTERS

I CANNOT IMAGINE MY LIFE WITHOUT....

My Mobile Phone



97%

The Internet



84%

A Car



64%

My Current Partner



43%

14 - 29 year old population



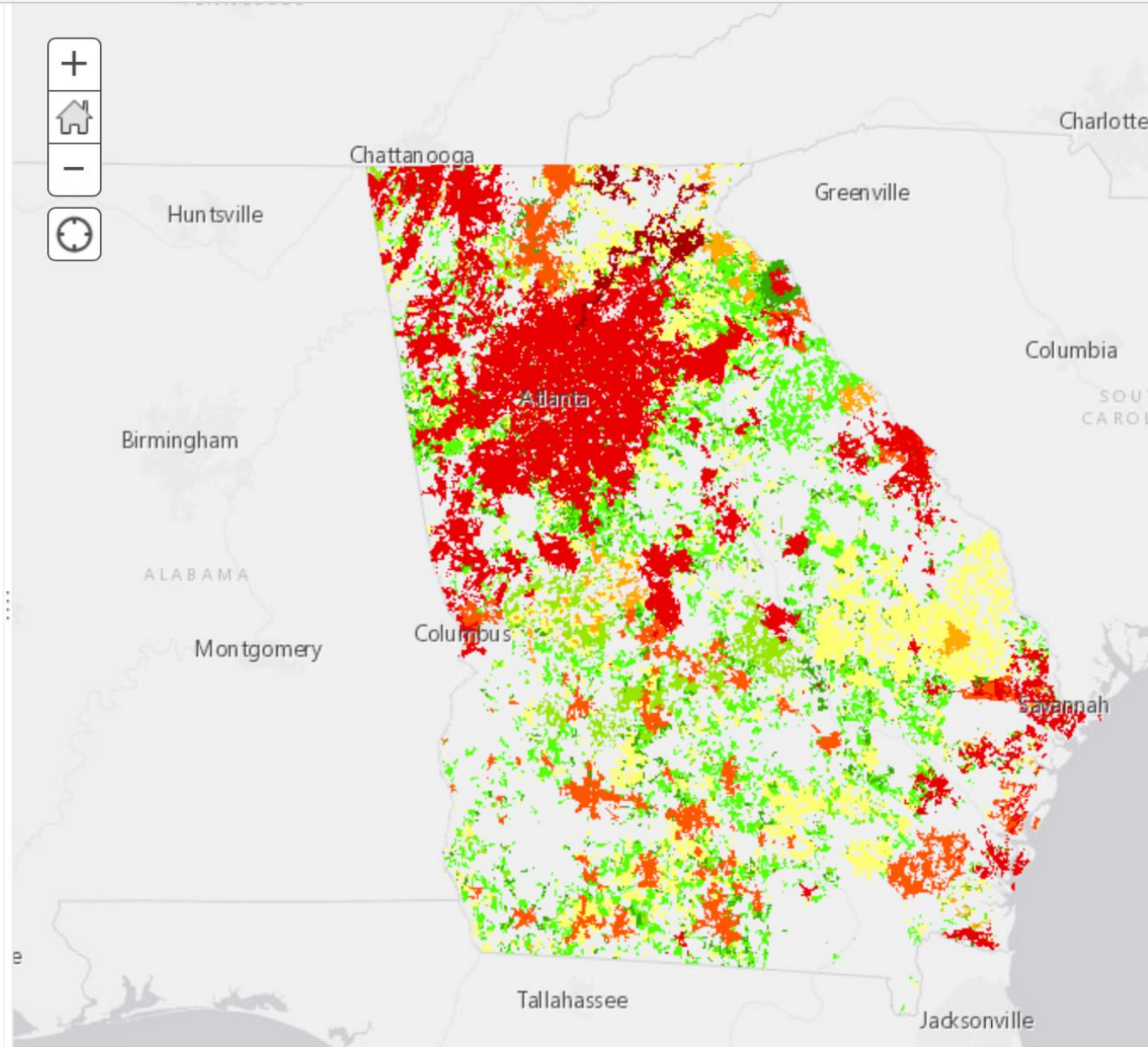
Legend

Broadband Speed Layers

Wireline Max Download Speed Layers

Wireline (Business & Residential)

- 3 mbps or less
- 3 mbps - 6 mbps
- 6 mbps - 10 mbps
- 10 mbps - 25 mbps
- 25 mbps - 50 mbps
- 50 mbps - 100 mbps
- 100 mbps - 1 gbps
- Greater than 1 gpps



TYPICAL PROCESS

- ▶ Stakeholder interviews and discussions
- ▶ Infrastructure data gathering
- ▶ Funding opportunities
- ▶ Summary of Needs
- ▶ Options to Satisfy
- ▶ Analysis of the Options
- ▶ Recommendations



Tweet Share in Share @ E-mail

Enter Your Street Address

Apartment/Suite #

Enter your ZIP Code

Commercial

Talk About My Internet

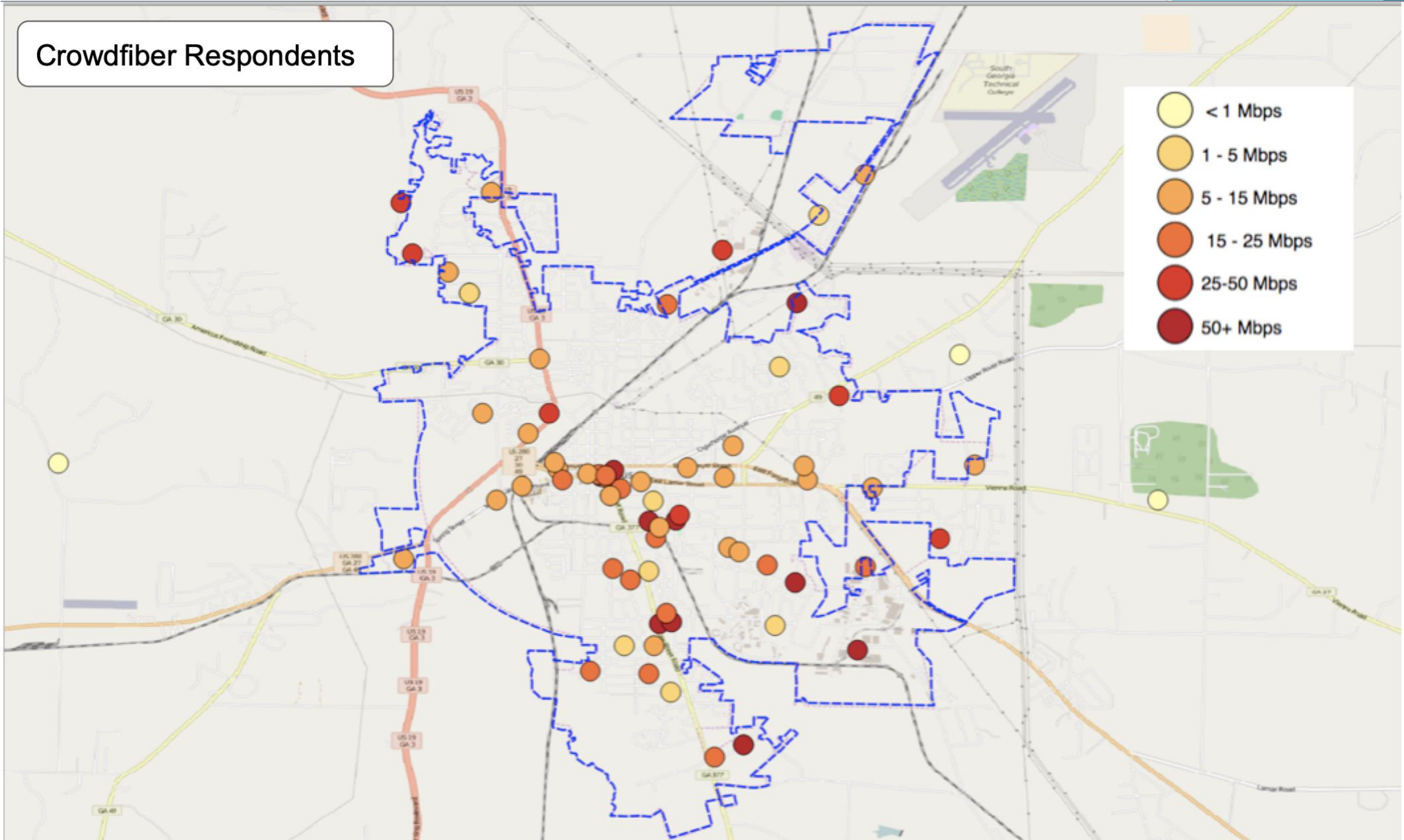
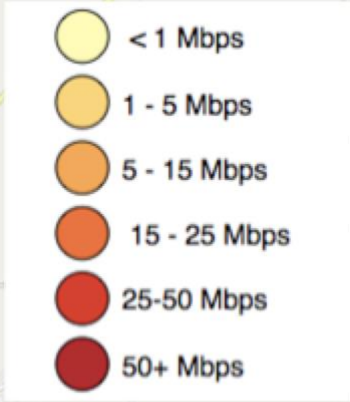
1 Area of Focus in pre-registration

0 Crowd

How Is Your Internet?

As you may know, the One Sumter Economic Development Foundation has been working diligently over the last several months to explore the feasibility of expanding our community's fiber optic infrastructure. We are working to better understand our current capacities and future needs for broadband connectivity. As our business and industry partners in Sumter County, and certainly users of the service, we see you as critical stakeholders in this effort—and as such, we greatly value your input into this process.

Crowdfiber Respondents



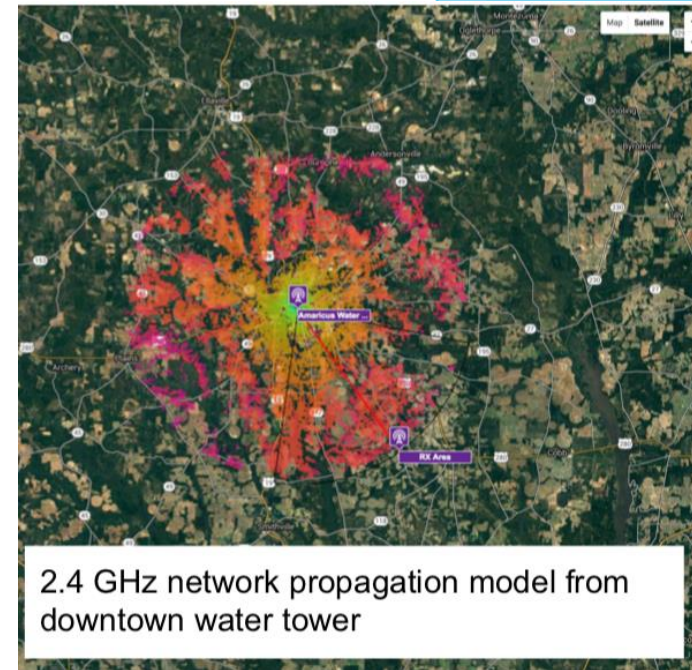
SOME INSIGHTS: WHAT PEOPLE SAY THEY NEED IN TERMS OF SPEED

- ▶ Largest response is “don’t know.”
- ▶ Of those who know, they tend to say 10, 50, or 100 mbps
- ▶ On average, they are willing to pay about \$100 though the number varies widely from \$10 per month to \$500 per month



AMERICUS INFRASTRUCTURE DETAILS

5 Internet Providers at the Water Tower on Southerfield Rd near Pharma Centra



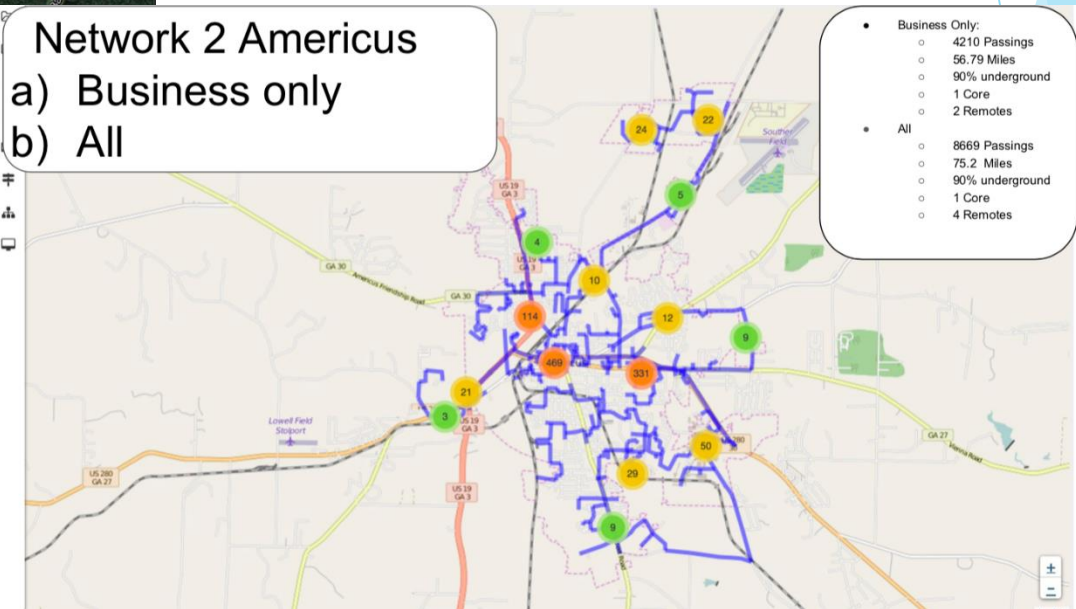
Citizens Telephone Building in the Industrial Park Now

24 count new service fiber along Industrial Blvd



Network 2 Americus

- a) Business only
- b) All



AMERICUS' UNIQUE STRENGTHS

- ▶ One Sumter and Sumter County Development Authority
- ▶ Georgia Power, Sumter EMC, and other business support
- ▶ Community Leadership
- ▶ Persistence





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**TALKING TO PROVIDERS &
THE ROLE OF STATEWIDE PARTNERS**

ONE SUMTER – TAKING ACTION

- ▶ Engaged the City of Americus and got their support and participation in meeting with existing providers
- ▶ Shared the results of the Civitium/Crowd Fiber community survey and broadband business cases with existing providers
 - ▶ One national telephone company
 - ▶ One local telephone company
 - ▶ One cable TV company
- ▶ Asked all three providers to consider addressing the concerns expressed by the One Sumter stakeholders

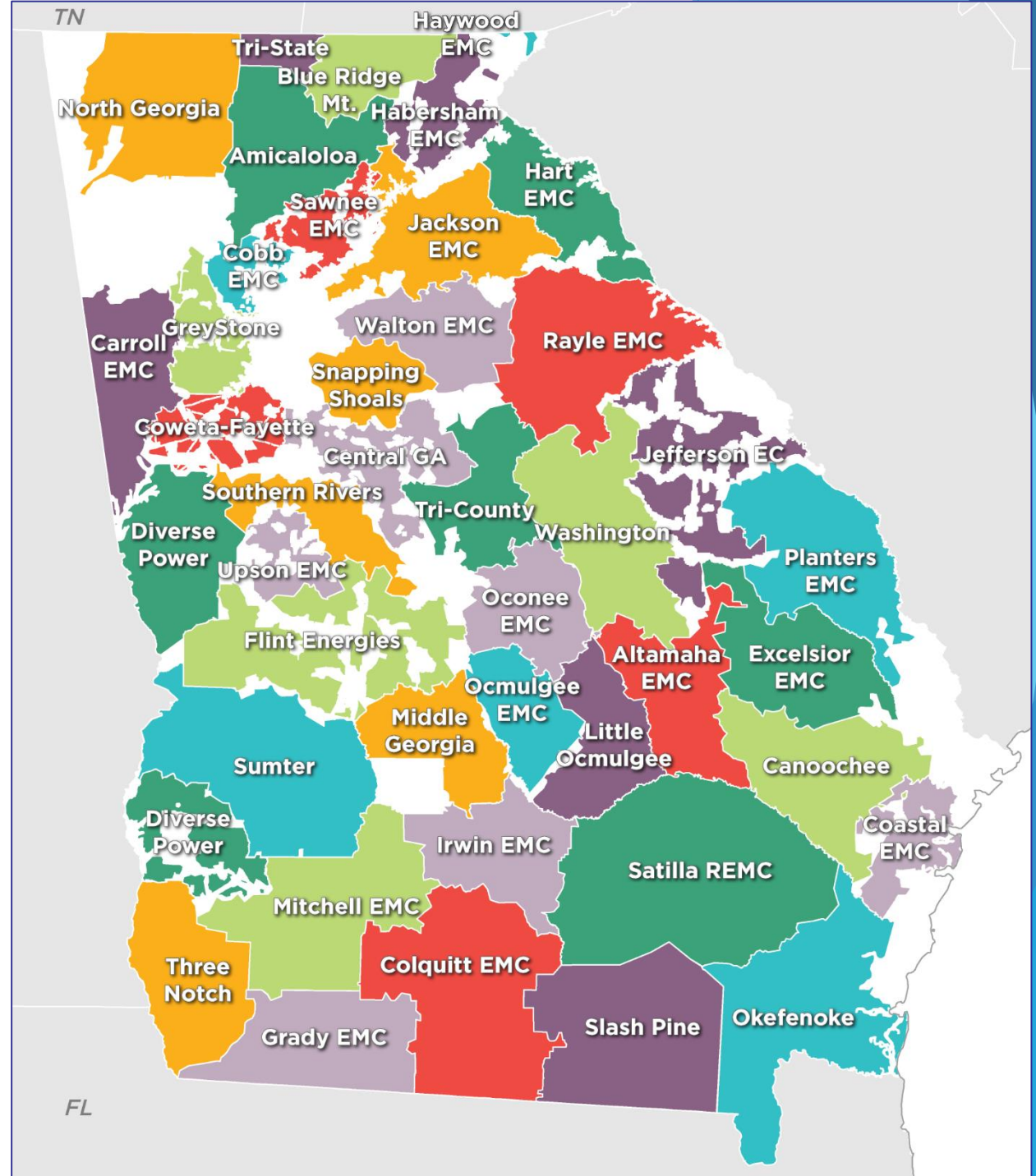


SMALL WINS ALONG THE WAY

- ▶ Fiber-ready designations for our industrial parks
- ▶ Limited fiber extension into one industrial park
- ▶ A proposal for a limited fiber deployment in downtown Americus to cover one city block
 - ▶ Would require local funding for infrastructure
- ▶ Helpful first steps, but a significant improvement was not immediately identified
- ▶ Several months of discussion with our statewide contacts followed....

GEORGIA'S EMC NETWORK

- ▶ Consists of 41 Electric Membership Corporations throughout Georgia
- ▶ Employs nearly 6,000 employees
- ▶ Provides electric service to 5 million Georgians
- ▶ Covers more than 70% of Georgia's land area



THE SOLUTION: PARTNERSHIPS!

- ▶ Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC), the EMC's statewide power transmission line provider, has significant fiber assets across the state
- ▶ GTC informed us about fiber projects in Georgia where a local telephone company was partnering with EMCs to expand broadband services
- ▶ GTC is using its fiber assets to help EMCs in their economic development & broadband initiatives
- ▶ Georgia System Operations Corporation (GSOC) is also involved in fiber projects with GTC

The logo features the word 'ONE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'O' is a light blue circle, the 'N' is a dark blue vertical bar, and the 'E' is a light blue horizontal bar. Below it, the word 'SUMTER' is written in a dark blue, spaced-out, sans-serif font.

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**PINELAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS:
BPs & IMPLEMENTATION**

Pineland

phone + internet + technology + security



A Program of:
NTEA THE RURAL BROADBAND ASSOCIATION®

PINELAND TELEPHONE CO-OP, INC.
QUALITY SERVICE
METTER, GEORGIA

Pineland
phone + internet + technology + security

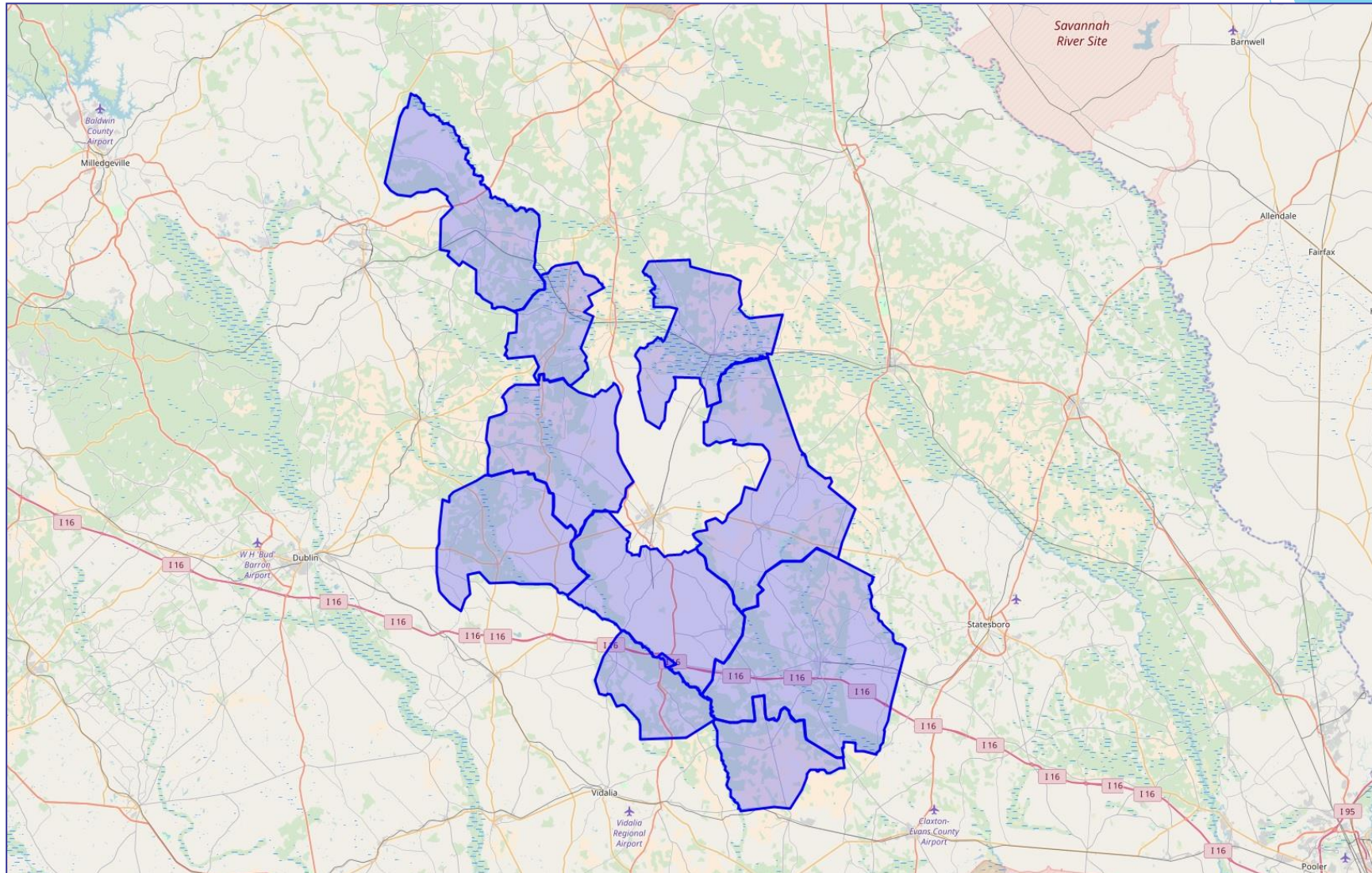
Pineland | *southeast* Fire & Burglar Alarm Co.
phone + internet + technology + security

THE HISTORY OF
PINELAND TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE, INC.



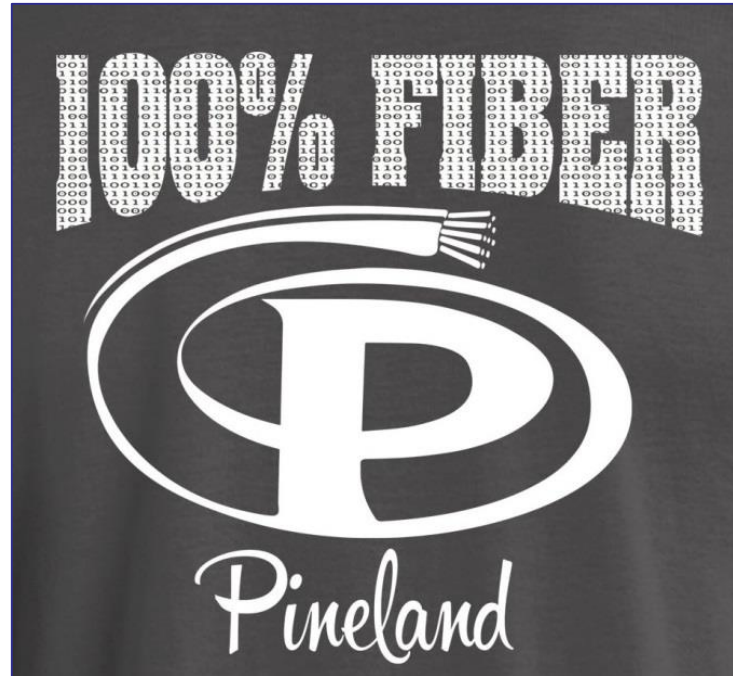
- 1951** Pineland Telephone Cooperative established by citizens of Emanuel and Candler counties. E.R. Britt named first General Manager
- EARLY 1980s** Single line service available to all Pineland Telephone customers – the end of party lines
- 1987** First Fiber Optic Cable installed
- 1996** Dial Up Internet service introduced
- 2000** DSL Internet service introduced
- 2011** Began developing Swainsboro service area
- 2015** Increase minimum Internet Speed to 10/1 mbps in all exchanges
- 2016** Began providing Commercial Services to Claxton
- 2017** Began providing Commercial Services to Lyons and Vidalia
- 2018** Began providing Commercial Services to Louisville & Sandersville
- 2018** Groundbreaking ceremony in Americus
- 2018** Pineland becomes a Certified GigaBit enabled Provider
- 2019** Began providing Commercial Services to Wrens and Americus (mid-year)

TRADITIONAL ILEC SERVICE AREA



Adrian, Bartow, Cobbtown, Davisboro, Kite, Lexsy, Metter, Midville, Oakpark, Twin City

100% FIBER GIG CERTIFIED!

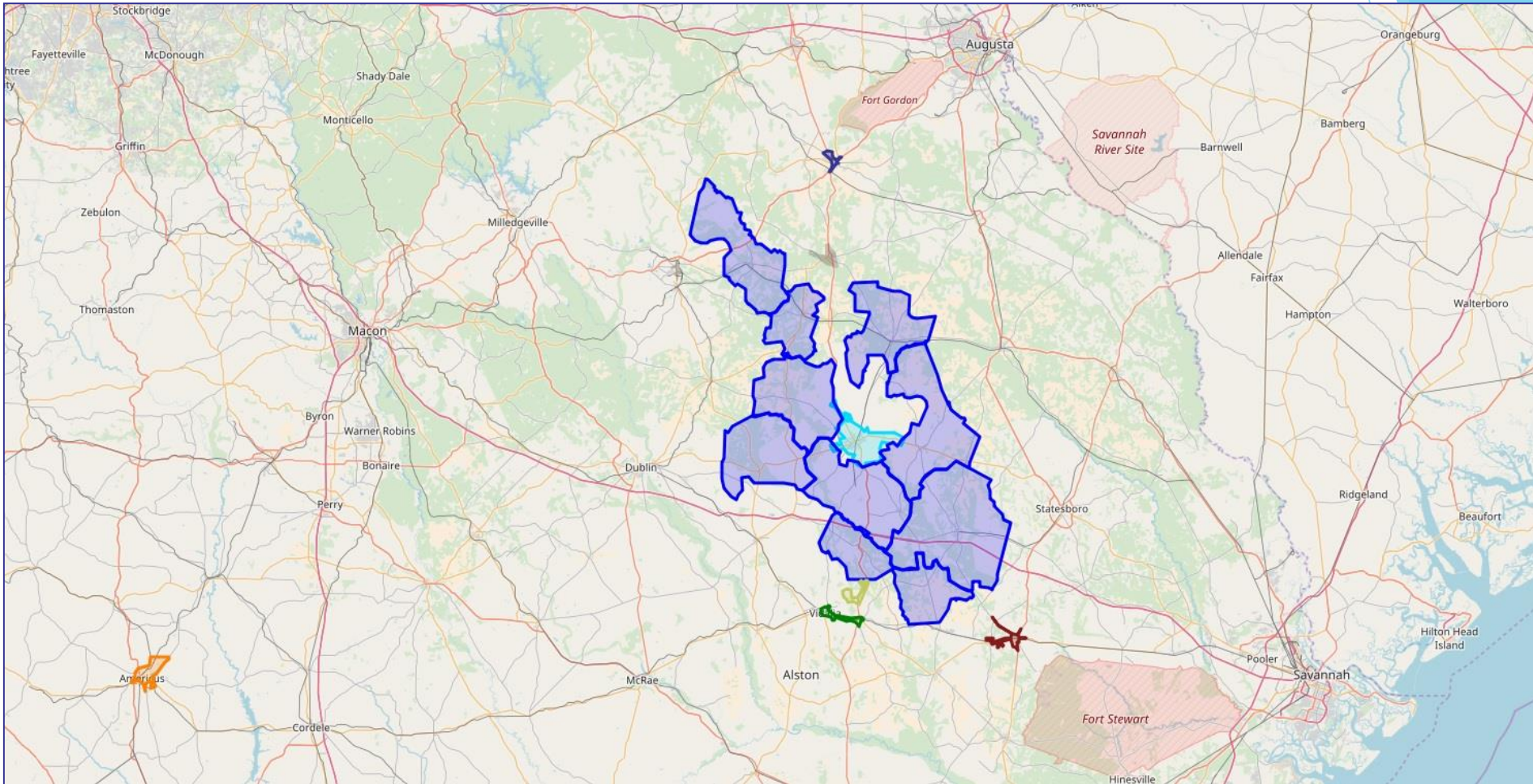


Fiber to the Home Project

- 12 years
- 17 exchanges
- 1,300 sq miles
- 3,750 miles of fiber
- 9,900 accounts
- Countless man hours
- \$60+ million investment



CLEC ADDITIONS

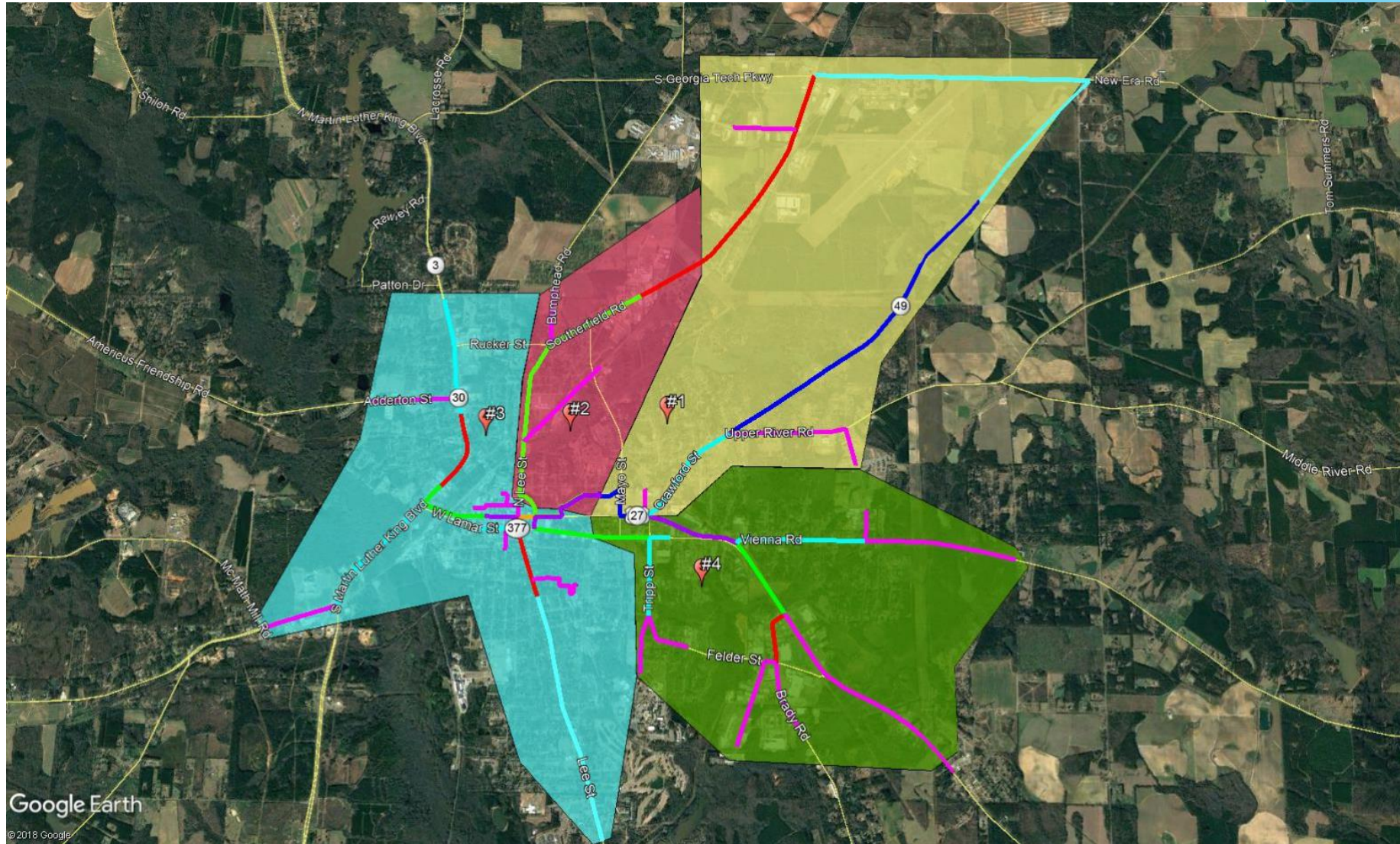


Swainsboro (2011), Claxton (2016), Vidalia/Lyons (2017), Pinewood (Vidalia) (2018), Louisville (2018), Sandersville (2018), Wrens (2019), Americus (2019)

AMERICUS GROUNDBREAKING – 08.07.18



AMERICUS FIBER BUILD



35 miles of fiber

\$2.1 million investment

GEORGIA EMC MAGAZINE (georgiamagazine.org)

Rural broadband in Georgia

Cultivating broadband expansion to underserved areas

By Jackie Kennedy



DAVID SENIOR

Sonny Perdue, secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), calls the internet “the digital superhighway of the 21st century” and wants every community in America to have an on-ramp.

That’s the word from Jannine Miller, senior adviser to Perdue, whose primary responsibility in the coming months is to roll out a new federal program for rural broadband. The Rural Utilities Service e-Connectivity Pilot Program has \$600 million designated for broadband in the nation’s underserved areas with populations of 20,000 or fewer.

“Secretary Perdue is excited about this new opportunity to expand broadband because he understands the importance of connecting rural homes, businesses and farms, health care facilities and schools,” Miller says. “He says we can’t let our rural communities get left behind. He wants every community to have access to the internet that is reliable and affordable.”

Here in Perdue’s home state, additional efforts to expand rural broadband are underway. Last year, Georgia lawmakers passed Senate Bill 402, the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act, establishing a state rural-broadband initiative.

So far, so good, according to state Sen. Steve Gooch and state Rep. Jay Powell, lead sponsors of the ACE Act.

“We are making progress,” says Gooch, a Republican representing Georgia’s 51st District. “The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) and other state agencies are working hard to implement initiatives in the bill.”

The first goal is to establish a comprehensive state map showing areas in most need of reliable broadband, Gooch says. That could be almost any area outside of metro Atlanta, Savannah, Macon and Columbus, adds Powell, R-Camilla.

Continued on page 18



Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega)



Rep. Jay Powell (R-Camilla)



COURTESY PINELAND TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE



COURTESY PINELAND TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE

Above: Dustin Durden, general manager of Pineland Telephone Cooperative, left center, and Chris Dillard, president and CEO of Jefferson Energy Cooperative, right center, cut the ribbon to open Pineland Telephone Cooperative in Louisville last July. Left: Pineland Telephone Cooperative representatives Steven Snell, far left, and Dustin Durden, far right, watch broadband cable being buried. They explain the process here to second from left, Jessica Hayes, deputy chief of staff/district director for Congressman Jody Hice, and Nicholas Brown, legislative assistant for Hice.

from one student to the next.”

According to Perry, 473 rural towns in Georgia have residents at risk of missing the economic benefits of high-speed internet.

“Rural counties need broadband for residents to remain in those communities,” she says. “It’s essential for quality of life, education, employment.”

Dustin Durden, general manager of Pineland Telephone Cooperative in Metter, is quick to share an example of the impact that having—or not having—broadband has in a community.

“There’s a subdivision on the outskirts of Vidalia,” Durden says. “A radiologist purchased a nice home there, assuming she’d have internet connectivity, but came to find out she didn’t have access to reliable broadband. She had to stay with her mother on weekends she was on call in order to have access to radiology images. She ended up selling her home and moving.”

Later, Pineland Telephone Cooperative announced it would build broadband into the subdivision, and houses that had sat empty began to sell, Durden says.

“The way our economy works—just the way

Continued on page 20

Continued from page 16

“Half the people I know don’t have internet at all or don’t have adequate service, in my district and outside it,” Powell says.

The need for expanding service

Deana Perry is executive director of the Georgia DCA’s new Rural Broadband Program; her position was created in response to the ACE Act. She is working with the GTA and other agencies to create a state broadband plan and a grant program to help communities achieve connectivity.

“It’s very personal for me,” says Perry, of Chattooga County, population 25,000. “In counties like mine, the closest hospital is 45 minutes away; to have high-speed internet connectivity to support health care and urgent care facilities is critical. And while most schools may have online resources for education, at home there may not be access to the internet, which creates disparity



Funds to connect

With federal funds from the USDA and state money through the ACE Act, rural Georgians are closer to receiving reliable, affordable internet connectivity.

On the state level, the ACE Act calls for establishing a grant program with funds allocated to rural governments or providers to help expand broadband. The federal program will allow the USDA to package low-cost loans and grants to fund broadband projects.

“We’ll leverage these dollars so the private sector, including local telephone and electric co-ops, can make the case to connect their communities,” Miller says. “It’s not a government program, but the federal government is part of it, just like the USDA was decades ago with rural electricity and rural telephone service.”

On April 25, 2017—his first day as the nation’s agriculture secretary—Perdue was tasked by President Donald Trump to evaluate needs for rural prosperity, Miller says. Rural broadband was deemed the top priority.

“The president asked for \$500 million, and Congress appropriated \$600 million,” Miller says. “All of Washington is behind this, which you can’t say about many things today.”

No silver bullet

Merriam-Webster defines “silver bullet” as “something that acts as a magical weapon, especially one that instantly solves a long-standing problem.”

Stakeholders are quick to say that there’s no silver bullet when it comes to expanding reliable broadband in rural Georgia.

While some electric cooperatives have helped improve broadband service in their areas, Gooch and Powell recognize that the EMCs have the ability to do more. They plan to introduce a bill in 2019 that permits EMCs to get into the broadband business.

“We want to put into law the statutory authority that allows EMCs to provide broadband service to their customers, if they so desire,” Gooch says. “We don’t believe this is the silver bullet, but we do believe it would encourage competition—and that the more competition we have, the better the product and the lower the price to consumers.”

Jackie Kennedy is a freelance writer living in LaGrange. Her first Georgia Magazine article on rural broadband appeared in the February 2017 issue. See “Life in the slow lane,” page 17: bit.ly/feb17bbd.

Continued from page 18

we live our lives now—it’s paramount that people have access to reliable, high-speed broadband,” he says.

Meeting the need

Over the last several years, Tucker-based Georgia Transmission Corp., which manages the transmission infrastructure of the state’s electric membership corporations (EMCs), has built out its fiber network—connecting the state’s EMC headquarters, control centers and substations—in order to ensure reliable operations of the electric grid, according to Tucker-based Georgia EMC Senior Vice President Bill Verner.

This fiber buildout has helped some broadband providers expand their service into rural areas, according to Durden, whose business has partnered with several electric cooperatives to enhance local internet connectivity.

“Altamaha EMC in Lyons had built fiber from their headquarters to substations and had wanted to use it,” Durden says. “We swapped out some of our fiber with some they had, which made them more efficient in their operations and opened a new market for us.”

Similar asset swaps occurred between Pineland and Jefferson Energy Cooperative in Wrens and Washington EMC in Sandersville, and a partnership is underway with Sumter EMC in Americus, according to Durden, who says that it’s only a start.

“We need federal and state dollars to build into unserved areas,” he says. “Various providers have proven they are not willing to invest in upgrading their network because there’s not enough return on investment, which leaves no other avenue outside of public dollars to make the business case work in rural Georgia.”

‘We need federal and state dollars to build into unserved areas. Various providers have proven they are not willing to invest in upgrading their network because there’s not enough return on investment.’

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—Jannine Miller, senior adviser to Perdue

Partnerships include: Altamaha EMC, Jefferson Energy, Washington EMC, Sumter EMC, Georgia Transmission Corp.

AMERICUS MAILER

**ZONE 1
APRIL**

**ZONE 2
MAY**

**ZONE 3
JULY**

**ZONE 4
AUGUST**

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QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!

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