“Public-Private Partnership Brings Gigabit-Enabled Solution to Sumter County”

Georgia Planning Association Spring Conference
Decatur, GA
03.27.19
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)
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
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

Data Speed
- Adequate: 70%
- Needs Significant Improvement: 30%

Cost of Service
- Adequate: 70%
- Needs Significant Improvement: 30%

Reliability
- Adequate: 60%
- Needs Significant Improvement: 40%

Overall Satisfaction
- Adequate: 55%
- Needs Significant Improvement: 45%
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
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.
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
TYPICAL PROCESS

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

Citizens Telephone Building in the Industrial Park Now

24 count new service fiber along Industrial Blvd

Network 2 Americus

a) Business only
b) All

2.4 GHz network propagation model from downtown water tower
AMERICUS’ UNIQUE STRENGTHS

- One Sumter and Sumter County Development Authority
- Georgia Power, Sumter EMC, and other business support
- Community Leadership
- Persistence
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.
PINELAND TELECOMMUNICATIONS: BPs & IMPLEMENTATION
THE HISTORY OF PINELAND TELEPHONE COOPERATIVE, INC.

1951 Pineland Telephone Cooperative established by citizens of Emanuel and Camden Counties. E.R. Britt named first General Manager.

1987 First Fiber Optic Cable installed.

1980s Single line service available to all Pineland Telephone customers by the end of party lines.

1996 Dial Up Internet service introduced.

2000 DSL Internet service introduced.

2011 Began developing Swainsboro service area.

2015 Increases 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
AMERICUS GROUND BREAKING – 08.07.18
AMERICUS FIBER BUILD

35 miles of fiber

$2.1 million investment
Partnerships include: Altamaha EMC, Jefferson Energy, Washington EMC, Sumter EMC, Georgia Transmission Corp.
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THANK YOU!