Next Century Cities

Low population density in rural Michigan raises the cost of broadband deployment. According to the Michigan Moonshot Initiative, some rural areas house as few as 2 to 20 people per square mile.

MICHIGAN
POPULATION: 9.99 MILLION
COUNTIES: 83

Over the past few years, community leaders in Michigan have transformed the digital landscape of their community by more accurately documenting broadband availability. The Michigan Moonshot Initiative *"aims to act as a catalyst in the broadband ecosystem by informing policy makers, fostering public-private partnerships and convening collaboration between citizens and organizations in our state."*

According to Michigan Moonshot, *"at least 380,000 homes in Michigan lack access to broadband. This equates to 27% of households in the state with school-age children."* Low population density in rural Michigan raises the costs of deployment with as few as 2 to 20 people per square mile.

FCC data differs from local accounts. The agency evaluated nearly 10 million Michigan residents and found that 9.6 million people (95.8%) had access to a fixed broadband connection at 25/3 Mbps speeds. In rural Michigan, the FCC concluded that 2.2 of 2.6 million people (86.3%) had fixed broadband access. FCC data reports that 7.3 of 7.4 million (99.1%) of urban residents had access to a fixed connection at minimum speeds.

In NCC member municipality Washtenaw County, the Commission evaluated approximately 368,000 people and found that, of those evaluated, 92.2% had access to a fixed connection at minimum FCC speeds. In May 2020, the Washtenaw County Broadband Task Force released its Data Collections Executive Findings Report. The report found that:

64% of households in participating townships do not have access to fixed broadband at the FCC threshold of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. Areas lacking broadband access are concentrated in the southwest corner of the County, but all participating townships have at least some areas that lack access.

Michigan's state broadband map is available through Connected Nation includes a GIS map showing the locations of Wi-Fi hotspots, static Alcona county maps, and both interactive and static state maps last updated in September 2020. Connected Nation invites Michigan residents who would like to provide feedback to improve the maps.

Local officials in Ottawa County have been working to identify the barriers to broadband access and adoption. In December 2020, Ottawa County announced that it was seeking proposals for a vendor who will strategize the County's data collection plan in furtherance of Phase I of its Comprehensive Digital Inclusion Strategy. The County plans to design surveys to send to homes and businesses in local townships to determine if high-speed Internet access is available, the current level of Internet services utilized, and whether additional Internet services are needed. One of its municipalities, the City of Holland, launched a Broadband Taskforce that recently completed a listening tour, and is now developing a city-wide broadband survey.

Additional Resources:
- The Michigan Moonshot
- Connected Nation Mapping Initiative
- Midland organizations look to improve county broadband coverage
- Next Century Cities Case Study: Detroit, Michigan