

BERRIEN COUNTY BROADBAND INTERNET TASK FORCE

[BCBIT](#)

March 5, 2026 12:30 PM

Berrien County Administration Center
Kenneth Wendzel Conference Room, and Zoom

MEETING NOTES

MEETING ATTENDEES: Berrien County Commissioner **Teri Freehling**; Berrien County Commissioner **Jim Curran**; Berrien County Interim Administrator **Mike Sepic**; Community Development Director **Dan Fette**; Berrien County GIS Director **Erika Espeland**; Berrien County Economic Development Specialist **Kimberly Fedison**.

INDUSTRY ATTENDEES: Midwest Energy & Communication (MEC) Business Development Manager **Jennifer Gilliam**; Midwest Energy & Communication (MEC) President and CEO **Terry Rubenthaler**; DCS Technology Design (DCS) President **Chris Scharrer**; Comcast (Xfinity) Business Regional Account Manager **Ben Miller**; Comcast (Xfinity) Account Manager **Michael Morzan**.

- I. **UPDATE from MIDWEST ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS (MEC): Construction Efforts: BERRIEN COUNTY.** Jennifer Gilliam, Business Development Manager at [Midwest Energy & Communications](#) (MEC), has provided [BCBIT](#) with an update on the progress of broadband deployment construction throughout Berrien County for [March 2026](#). The detailed update is available at the end of this [document](#) and on the [BCBIT website](#).

Take-rates¹ are continuing to rise in every completed zone. Please note that the winter construction schedule may be adjusted depending on weather conditions; these potential changes are reflected in the zone-by-zone matrix. Overall, construction is anticipated to be finished by the end of the second quarter of 2026. Sign-ups for MEC internet service in the Hagar Zone have been lower than expected. MEC is considering hosting an open house and will continue outreach efforts, such as distributing door tags. The lower participation may be due to the time of year, but the reason is not yet clear.

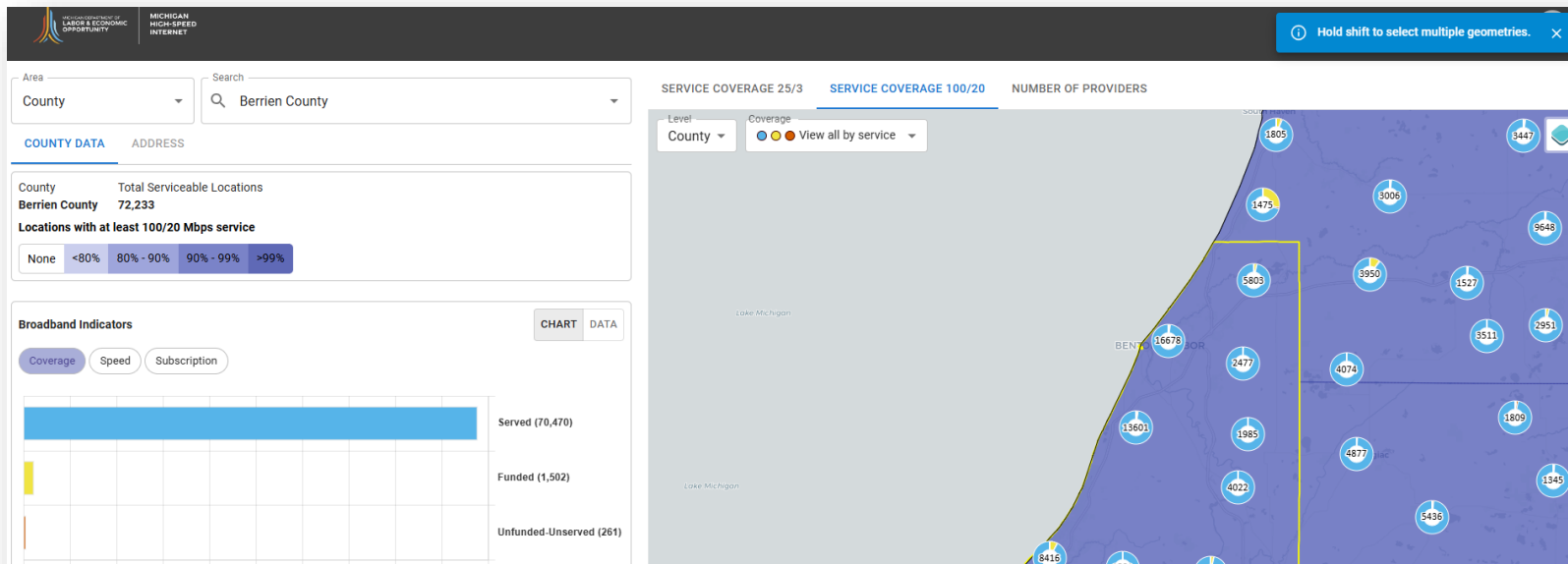
Dan Fette, Community Development Director, asked for clarification on MEC's billing status. MEC's billing is current, with the first quarter invoice expected on April 10th when billing is processed. Jennifer Gilliam confirmed she will provide Dan with the necessary reports to submit to the treasury, ensuring they include the required format: address, location ID, latitude/longitude of locations now served with high-speed internet, and compliance with the broadband construction grant terms.

¹ Take Rates refer to the percentage of potential customers (households or businesses) in a specific service area who choose to subscribe to the ISP's broadband offering. The take rate is a key metric for ISPs to measure how many eligible customers actually subscribe to their broadband service. ISPs use take rates to assess the success of a network rollout and forecast revenue.

II. Update from DCS Technology Design, Chris Scharrer. Summary of the latest information related to BEAD applications and/or awards. Chris Scharrer, President of DCS Technology Design, provided BCBIT with an update on the BEAD² Program. ISPs (Internet Service Providers) are currently in the process of finalizing agreements with the [Michigan High-Speed Internet](#) (MIHI) office and the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA) as part of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant program. These agreements will outline the terms, funding allocations, and project requirements for broadband expansion projects across the state.

The collaboration between ISPs, MIHI, and NTIA is a critical step in ensuring that BEAD grant funds are distributed effectively and that projects meet both state and federal guidelines. Once finalized, these agreements will pave the way for infrastructure buildout aimed at increasing high-speed internet access in unserved and underserved communities throughout Michigan.

Dan Fette requested clarification regarding the previous meeting notes, noting that while there were initially 1,926 BEAD-eligible locations in Berrien County, the current Michigan Broad Map now shows 1,763 eligible locations. Chris explained that MIHI updated the award numbers after reviewing the 1,900+ parcels and determined that 163 of these parcels are now considered served through other grant-funded broadband projects, and are therefore ineligible for BEAD funding. Since our meeting, the number of broadband parcels in Berrien County, Michigan, that are eligible for BEAD funding is [1,502](#).



Michigan Broadband Map for BEAD Funding: 1,502 parcels in Berrien County funded as of March 31, 2026. Source: Michigan Broadband Map: <https://www.michiganbroadbandmap.com/map?theme=Service+Coverage+100%2F20&coverage=View+all+by+service&level=County&zoom=10¢er=-9631768%2C5161277&selection=26021>

² BEAD: The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, funded by the IJA, is a \$42.45 billion federal grant program that aims to connect every American to high-speed internet by funding partnerships to build infrastructure.

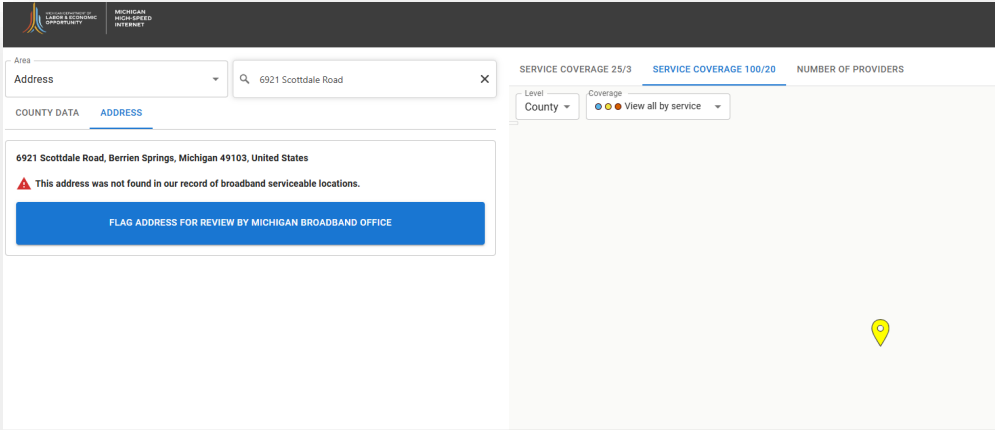
Individual Broadband High-Speed Internet Inquiries:

Camp Madron Road Update. Jennifer Gillian from MEC discussed the company’s proposed construction of a high-speed internet line to a subdivision in Buchanan Township, [Camp Madron Road](#), following requests from local residents. MEC will survey the area and evaluate whether existing fiber infrastructure, installed by a previous internet service provider, can be used to simplify and expedite the project. If the existing fiber cannot be accessed, MEC will need to install new fiber lines to serve the subdivision. To proceed, MEC is seeking agreement from all 45 parcel owners—some with homes, others with vacant lots—that they will subscribe to MEC fiber service. Constructing the line without customer commitments is not currently considered viable.

Danneffel Road/County Line Road & Empire Avenue, Bainbridge Township. Approximately 18 residential addresses on Danneffel Road & County Line Road and 9 residential addresses on Empire Avenue (near County Line Road) in Bainbridge Township have expressed interest in high-speed broadband service since May 2025. Although these addresses are considered served at the 100/20 Mbps standard by [Michiana Supernet](#), a resident has reported experiencing slow service. In response, Chris requested speed tests from residents to assess actual service levels.

1117 North Shore Drive, Benton Harbor. There is an individual residential inquiry involving a home at 1117 North Shore Drive in Benton Harbor that requires a Comcast service line installation for internet access. The installation process has been delayed because the work order is still being processed by Comcast’s regional office in Chicago. Mike Morzan, Comcast’s representative for this area, will discuss the status of this installation with Chris offline to help expedite the process.

6921 Scottdale Road, Berrien Springs (Royalton Township). Chris drove out to the address, which is currently unserved. Chris mentioned that the address will most likely receive funding through the grant awarded to Amazon Kuiper under the BEAD Program. However, after the meeting, the Michigan Broadband Map for BEAD funding indicated that the address, [6921 Scottdale Road](#), has been flagged for review by the Michigan Broadband Office.



6921 Scottdale Road, Berrien Springs (Royalton Township). Source: Michigan Broadband Map

232 Kensington Road, Benton Harbor (Benton Charter Township). MEC currently has ROBIN grant funding available for this area. The property owner at [232 Kensington Road](#) noticed MEC trucks installing lines nearby and has expressed interest in subscribing to MEC service. Jennifer said she will investigate whether MEC can extend service to this address, and if so, a line will be dropped to the property once the owner signs up. However, MEC will apply the standard installation fee, as this address is not covered by existing ROBIN³ funding. According to the Michigan Broadband Map, the location is considered served by Comcast and is therefore ineligible for BEAD funding. This situation highlights another instance where an individual desires MEC service in an area already classified as served by another ISP, with speeds that disqualify it from current grant opportunities intended for unserved locations. Rather than repeatedly funding the same areas, grants should prioritize truly unserved regions that genuinely need support. MEC’s effective promotion of high-speed internet has generated significant interest—perhaps even more than anticipated.

The screenshot shows the Michigan Broadband Map interface. At the top, there are logos for the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity and Michigan High-Speed Internet. Below that, there is a search bar with the address "232 Kensington" entered. To the right of the search bar, there are tabs for "SERVICE COVERAGE 25/3", "SERVICE COVERAGE 100/20", and "NUMBER OF PROVIDERS". The "SERVICE COVERAGE 100/20" tab is selected. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "COUNTY DATA" and "ADDRESS". The "ADDRESS" tab is selected. On the left side, there is a panel for the address "232 KENSINGTON LN, BENTON HARBOR 49022". It shows the address is "Residential" and "SERVED". Below this, there is a table of service providers:

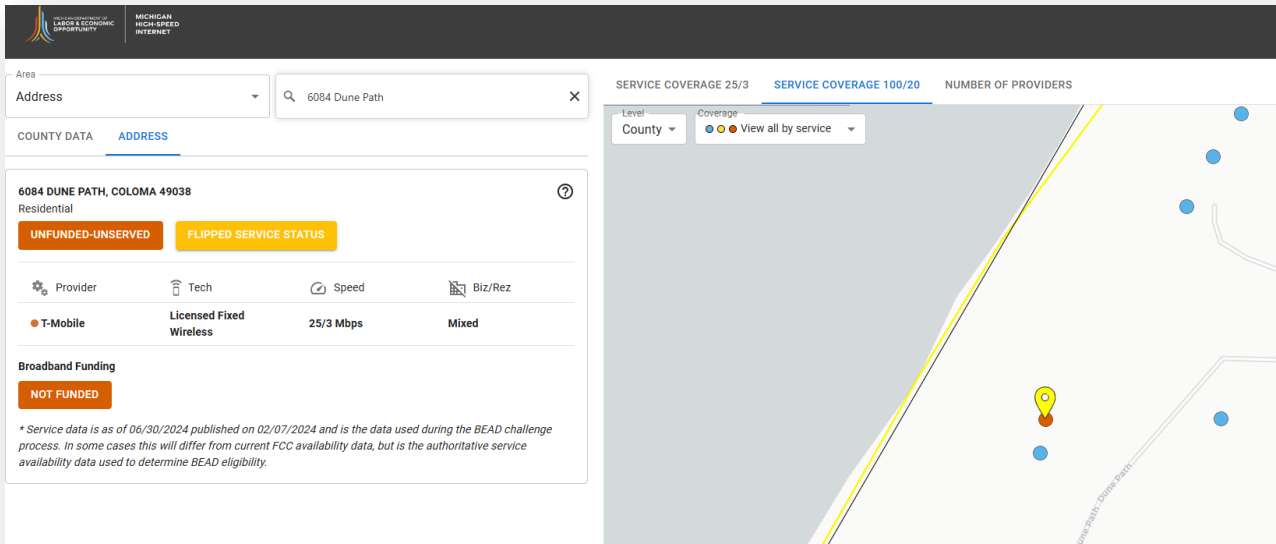
Provider	Tech	Speed	Biz/Rez
Xfinity	Cable	1200/35 Mbps	Mixed
T-Mobile	Licensed Fixed Wireless	25/3 Mbps	Mixed

Below the table, there is a "Broadband Funding" section that shows "NOT FUNDED". A note at the bottom of the panel states: "* Service data is as of 06/30/2024 published on 02/07/2024 and is the data used during the BEAD challenge process. In some cases this will differ from current FCC availability data, but is the authoritative service availability data used to determine BEAD eligibility." On the right side, there is a map showing the location of 232 Kensington Road. The map has a yellow pin on the location and several blue dots representing other service locations. The map also shows "Kensington, Kensington" and "Golf Road".

232 Kensington Road, Benton Harbor (Benton Charter Township). Not eligible for BEAD funding – Served. Source Michigan Broadband Map: <https://www.michiganbroadbandmap.com/map?theme=Service+Coverage+100%2F20&coverage=View+all+by+service&level=County&zoom=18¢er=-9624608%2C5181279&selection=1310405148&address=1310405148>

³ ROBIN: Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks Grant Program. ROBIN is a high-speed internet last mile and middle mile infrastructure competitive grant program with \$238M in project funds from the US Treasury as part of the Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. ROBIN provides funds to internet service providers and public-private partnerships for the expansion of broadband infrastructure to unserved areas.

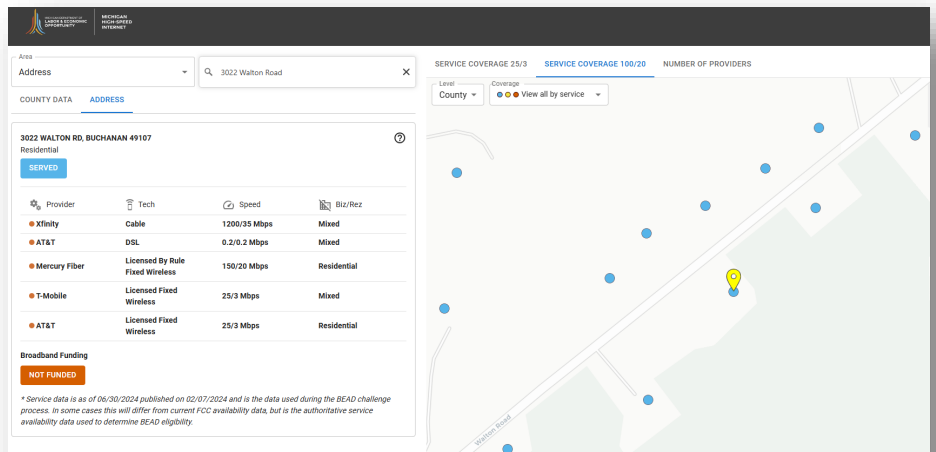
Commissioner Freehling had two recent inquiries from residential homeowners, which will be addressed by the ISPs MEC and Comcast. The first property in question is [6084 Dune Path Road](#), Coloma (Hagar Township). Although this address is surrounded by Comcast service, it is currently listed as unfunded and unserved on the Michigan Broadband Map. Comcast indicated that they could extend service to this residence for approximately \$2,000, noting the cost reflects the long drop and the challenging terrain, as the house is located on the lake.



6084 Dune Path, Coloma (Hagar Township). Source: Michigan Broadband Map:

<https://www.michiganbroadbandmap.com/map?theme=Service+Coverage+100%2F20&coverage=View+all+by+service&level=County&zoom=18¢er=-9615934%2C5194118&selection=1310436330&address=1310436330>

The second address is [3022 Walton Road](#), Buchanan (Niles Charter Township). The owners are interested in obtaining high-speed internet service. Comcast will investigate further, as this address is within Comcast's service area and is listed as served on the Michigan Broadband Map, making it ineligible for BEAD funding.



3022 Walton Road, Buchanan (Niles Charter Township). Source: Michigan Broadband Map:

<https://www.michiganbroadbandmap.com/map?theme=Service+Coverage+100%2F20&coverage=View+all+by+service&level=County&zoom=18¢er=-9610700%2C5137668&selection=1310417672&address=1310417672>

III. Next Meeting April 2, 2026



The Camp Madron Road subdivision in Buchanan Township wants MEC to extend fiber to its 45 parcels while MEC is installing fiber nearby using ROBIN and ARPA grant funds. All 45 parcel owners must quickly agree to the extension, as MEC will soon complete its fiber work in Buchanan, demobilize, and finish all Berrien County fiber constructions funded by these grants.

MEC FIBER CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE - MARCH 2026- 83% COMPLETE!

430.8 out of 516.6 FIBER MILES ARE COMPLETE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



MEC ZONE NAME	MUNICIPALITY	MEC FIBER MILES	PROJECT FUNDING	CONSTRUCTION START DATE	STATUS	CONNECTION START DATE	NOTES: Design Work Complete on ALL Zones!	SUBSCRIPTION TAKE-RATE	
BERTRAND*	Bertrand, Buchanan, & Niles Townships	54.7	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	20% 21% 23%	
GALIEN	Village of Galien, Bertrand, Galien, Three Oaks, & Weesaw Townships	48.2	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	25% 26% 27% 28%	
BARODA	Baroda, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, & Weesaw Townships	69	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	37% 38% 39% 40% 41%	
EAU CLAIRE B**	Village of Eau Claire, Berrien, Buchanan, Niles, Pipestone & Sodus Townships	61.5	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	18% 19% 20% 21%	
WEESAW	Chikaming, Galien, Three Oaks, & Weesaw Townships	51.2	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	17% 18% 20% 21% 23% 23%	
BRANDYWINE***	Niles Charter Township	13	RDOF & ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	5% 6%	
BUCHANAN	Buchanan & Weesaw Townships	54.2	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	20% 23% 26% 29%	
NORTH KEELER	Keeler, Bainbridge, Hartford, & Watervliet Townships	29.7	RDOF & ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	9% 11% 12% 14% 16%	
THREE OAKS	Chikaming, Galien, Three Oaks, & New Buffalo Townships	49.2	ROBIN	COMPLETE	COMPLETE	Connecting Customers	COMPLETE! Connecting Customers!	1% 10%	
HAGAR	Benton, Coloma & Hagar Townships	36	RDOF & ROBIN	Q4-2025	DONE - WAITING FOR FINAL RR CROSSING. SHOULD BE ACTIVE 3/2026	Q1-2026	COMPLETE!!WAITING FOR FINAL RR CROSSING. SHOULD BE ACTIVE 3/2026		
COLOMA	Coloma, Covert & Hagar Townships	15.2	ROBIN	Q1-2026	STARTED	Q1-2026	STARTED		
NORTH HARTFORD	Hartford & Watervliet Townships	17.3	ROBIN	Q2-2026 - Q1-2026	UP NEXT	Q2-2026	UP NEXT		
SOUTH COVERT	Coloma, Covert & Watervliet Townships	5	ROBIN	Q2-2026	PENDING	Q2-2026	PENDING. START Q2-2026		
TWELVE CORNERS	Benton, Coloma & Hagar Townships	12.3	ROBIN	Q2-2026	PENDING	Q2-2026	PENDING. START Q2-2026		
TOTAL MEC FIBER MILES		516.5							<i>As of MARCH 5, 2026</i>
COMPLETED MILES ⇨		430.8	83%						