

BERRIEN COUNTY BROADBAND INTERNET TASK FORCE

[BCBIT](#)

February 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 Commissioner **Rayonte Bell**; Berrien County Administrator **Brian Dissette**; Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) Executive Director **K. John Egelhaaf**; Berrien County GIS Director **Erika Espeland**; Berrien County Economic Development Specialist **Kimberly Fedison**.

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

MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP ATTENDEES: New Buffalo Township Supervisor **Michelle Heit**.

- 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 [February 2026](#). The detailed update is available at the end of this [document](#) and on the BCBIT website. Take-rates 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.

Camp Madrin Lake Road. Jennifer also provided an update about the roughly [45 parcels](#) on Camp Madrin Lake Road that are seeking MEC fiber but are not included in the current (or future) grant funding. MEC plans to extend fiber to these parcels while their crews are mobilized in the area, as long as there is a full commitment from homeowners to subscribe to MEC's service.

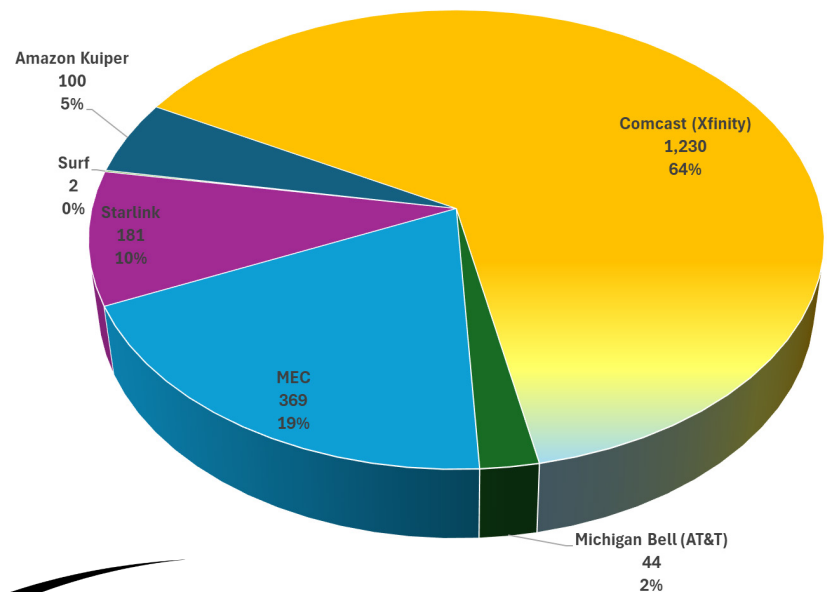
New Buffalo Township MEC Fiber Construction Upcoming Buildout. New Buffalo Township Supervisor Michelle Heit inquired about the start date for MEC's high-speed internet construction in New Buffalo Township. Jennifer responded by referencing the updated MEC construction schedule, confirming that New Buffalo Township is next in line. According to the revised [February 2026](#) MEC fiber construction schedule, New Buffalo Township is included in the "Three Oaks" zone, along with Chikaming Township and Galien Township.

Dan Fette, Community Development Director, inquired about the status of 2025 invoicing and whether any outstanding invoices remain that Berrien County needs to pay. Jennifer confirmed that MEC submitted invoices in 2025 for construction work completed that year. Dan is currently establishing a

budget within the county’s financial system for the remaining work, which includes the ROBIN project grant and ARPA funds allocated for broadband expansion. The county has committed \$675 in ARPA funds per parcel, with a total contribution not to exceed \$4.5 million.

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 BEAD¹ Program. The [Michigan High-Speed Internet Office](#) (MIHI) is in the final stages of securing an agreement with the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) (NTIA), aiming to utilize over \$1.5 billion in federal funds to connect over 200,000 unserved and underserved homes. Below is the current list of known BEAD awardees for Berrien County. Awardees have been notified and provided with their sub-recipient agreements, which include the finalized list of locations. However, MIHI has not yet released a comprehensive list or map of awardees and service areas. Following the meeting, on February 9th, NTIA announced the approval of 50 proposals.

ISP	LOCATIONS
Amazon Kuiper	100
Comcast (Xfinity)	1,230
Michigan Bell (AT&T)	44
MEC	369
Starlink	181
Surf	2
TOTAL	1,926



¹ BEAD: The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, funded by the IJJA, is a \$42.45 billion federal grant program that aims to connect every American to high-speed internet by funding partnerships to build infrastructure.



	Initial Proposal Correction Letter Submitted to NTIA	Benefit of the Bargain Round Started	Final Proposal Submitted to NTIA	Final Proposal Approved by NTIA
Alabama	✗	✓	✓	✓
American Samoa	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Arizona	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Arkansas	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
CNMI	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Colorado	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Connecticut	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Delaware	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Florida	✗	✓	✓	✓
Georgia	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Guam	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Hawaii	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Idaho	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Indiana	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Iowa	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Kansas	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Kentucky	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Louisiana	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Maine	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Maryland	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Massachusetts	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Michigan	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Minnesota	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Missouri	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Montana	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Nevada	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
New Hampshire	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
New Jersey	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
New Mexico	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
New York	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
North Dakota	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Ohio	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Oregon	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Pennsylvania	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Rhode Island	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
South Dakota	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Tennessee	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Texas	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Utah	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Vermont	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Virginia	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
West Virginia	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Wisconsin	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Wyoming	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Alaska	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
California	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
District of Columbia	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Illinois	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Washington	🇺🇸	✓	✓	✓
Puerto Rico	🇺🇸	NA	✓	✓
U.S. Virgin Islands	🇺🇸	NA	✓	✓



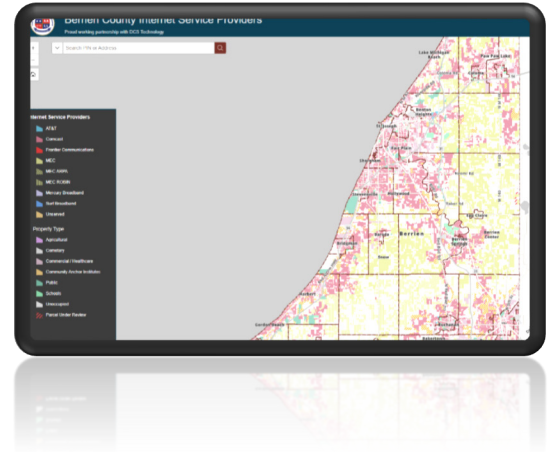
Broadband Map Transition from DCS to County Function. Chris Scharrer discussed with BCBIT an email that he had sent about transitioning the broadband map from DCS to Berrien County GIS. **Transition Plan Discussion :**

1. Transition Overview

- The county is (most likely) moving management of the broadband map from DCS to Berrien County GIS.
- Discussion included the need for GIS to obtain the required (free) FCC Fabric License from [CostQuest](#)², as DCS currently holds it.

2. ISP by Parcel Data vs. Location Points

- **ISP by Parcel:** Current county data shows internet provider status by parcel, not by structure. This simplifies inventory but can lack detail, especially where multiple buildings exist on a parcel.
- **Location Points (BSLs):** Government agencies require reporting by “[Broadband Serviceable Locations](#)” (specific structures), using licensed “[fabric](#)” data as the reference for ISPs’ reporting and updates.
- The county needs to weigh continuing with parcel-based mapping versus aligning with the nationally adopted [BSL](#) approach.



3. Data Maintenance and Use

- Only the main (incumbent) ISP is tracked per parcel, though the database can accommodate more. Maintaining up-to-date, multi-provider data is labor-intensive.
- Long-term value and purpose of maintaining a public, parcel-based map need further discussion.

4. Stakeholder Use Cases (for DCS parcel map):

- Map is a reference for homebuyers, realtors, local governments, and other stakeholders.
- There is a question of how much ongoing activity by ISPs needs to be tracked, especially after major funding programs conclude (most by the end of 2026, BEAD pending).

² CostQuest provides data, software, and consulting to map, value, and plan broadband internet networks. They are best known as the creator of the [FCC's Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric](#), which identifies every U.S. building that can receive internet, helping governments and companies target where to build and fund infrastructure.

5. Public Information Strategy

- Should the county maintain its own detailed map and ISP relationships, or simply direct residents to the FCC's National Broadband Map and other agency resources?
- Balancing comprehensive local information with the effort to maintain it versus deferring to state and federal data sources.

6. Process and Ownership Questions

- Deciding who within the county manages licensing, updates, and public inquiries.
- Ensuring new developments³ and parcel changes are incorporated into broadband availability data—possibly linking to permitting processes.

³New developments, including newly constructed residential, commercial, and mixed-use, are continuously being integrated into the FCC's National Broadband Map through an iterative process designed to improve accuracy for targeting federal funding.

Key Updates and Processes for New Developments:

- **The "Fabric" Updates:** The map is based on the Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric, a dataset that is updated regularly to include new construction. As of late 2024, the map has seen several iterations, with new data added semi-annually.
- **Location-Based Tracking:** Unlike old, less precise maps, the current [National Broadband Map](#) uses a location-specific model, allowing for the addition of new, specific addresses as they are built.
- **Provider Data Submissions:** Broadband providers are required to report updated availability data, including new service areas, to the FCC, which then validates and publishes this information.
- **Challenges and Corrections:** The system allows for challenges, meaning that if a new development is not yet showing as served, **residents, developers, or local governments** can submit data to correct the map.

Recent Trends (2025–2026)

- **Increased Accuracy:** As of May 2025, the map shows that over 95% of homes and small businesses have access to high-speed, terrestrial fixed service (100/20 Mbps or higher).
- **Specific Rollouts:** Major fiber expansions, such as those by [Midwest Energy & Communications](#) (MEC) in Michigan, are adding thousands of new locations to the map in real-time as construction progresses.
- **BEAD Funding Impact:** Data from the map is being used to direct \$42.45 billion in Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding, ensuring new, previously unserved, or newly constructed areas are accounted for.

DCS Technology review of address inquiries. Chris reviewed with BCBIT the following addresses with unique situations that require research on behalf of the homeowner inquiry that has been brought to his attention as a concern:



- 📍 **6921 Scottdale Road, Berrien Springs. Parcel ID 11-17-0032-0020-00-1.** No Internet. May be BEAD eligible. It is [funded](#) on the Michigan Broadband Map. Funding is granted to “Space Exploration Technologies Corp.” (aka, Starlink). Owners: Karen Kietzer & Loretta Kolberg. This 80-acre property has an Agricultural-Improved Classification (101) vs a Residential-Improved Classification (401), the classification associated with an address with a residential house as part of the parcel.

Area: 6921 Scottdale Road

6921 S SCOTSDALE RD, BERRIEN SPRGS 49103
Non-Residential
ELIGIBLE

Provider	Tech	Speed	Biz/Rez	Status
Surf Internet	Licensed Fixed Wireless	25/3 Mbps	Mixed	Available
VERIZON	Licensed by Rule Fixed Wireless	10/1 Mbps	Non-Residential	Available
T-Mobile US	Licensed by Rule Fixed Wireless	25/3 Mbps	Non-Residential	Available

Broadband Funding
FUNDED

Fund: BEAD
Provider: Space Exploration Technologies Corp.

* 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.

BSL Eligibility Status

- Eligible: Should be in a project
- Ineligible: Not eligible for BEAD funding
- Eligible Under Review: Eligible but under further review
- No BEAD: Eligible but won't be in a project

* Halo indicates review status

- 📍 **1117 North Shore Drive, Benton Harbor. Parcel 11-03-0007-0021-04-7.** The property is serviced by Comcast. Comcast will not connect the service. Chris is working on this one by going directly with Comcast. Owner: Barbara & Kenneth Berry, Jr.
- 📍 **232 Kensington Lane, Benton Harbor. Parcel 11-03-4120-0004-00-8.** A property owner contacted Community Development seeking information about why his parcel was not receiving high-speed internet despite seeing MEC trucks in the area. He wanted to understand how properties were chosen for fiber service. He mentioned that he had reached out to MEC, who informed him that fiber would

For the most up-to-date information, the FCC encourages users to check the official broadbandmap.fcc.gov website to view the latest availability at specific, newly developed addresses. Source: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) National Broadband Map.

not be installed along his street (off of Gold Rd). It was explained that fiber installation depends on grant funding. Chris investigated the parcel and also contacted MEC, while Jennifer is currently reviewing the property. After extensive discussion, the owner provided his name, phone number, and email to facilitate follow-up by BCBIT representatives. The following is the response sent via email regarding the owner's inquiry about the selection process for fiber installation, as his property was not included (not to mean the property would not ever receive fiber, just for the time being, as buildout is mainly focused on completion of grant-funded parcels):

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Re: How properties are selected for broadband grant funding.

There have been several government funding programs that have become available over the last several years to address the rural broadband issues. All of them have been based on FCC data that is accumulated from all of the various internet service providers. The qualification today for a location to be considered "serviceable" is 100 Mbps download speeds and 20 Mbps upload speeds. These speeds have to be reliable and consistent, and only two wired technologies can provide that. Hybrid Fiber Coax, or HFC, which is your typical Cable TV services that also offer broadband internet, and the second is Fiber to the Home (FTTH), which comes in a few different variations. Both HFC and FTTH are capable of and are available 10 to 20 times the FCC minimum of 100/20, so any areas that have existing HFC or FTTH do not qualify for government funding. And in all cases, areas that do qualify for funding can get either FTTH or HFC to fulfill the minimum technology requirements.

The most recent funding that will soon be released has softened the rules and now allows some unserved areas to receive Low Earth Orbit Satellite (e.g., Starlink, Kuiper, etc.) and some fixed wireless services. However, none of the wireless-type services will provide the long-term benefits that HFC and FTTH can offer.

Again, all of the decisions made are based on the data that is collected and managed by the FCC, and the service providers have the option of providing either HFC or FTTH, and in some cases, are now being allowed to offer Satellite and Fixed Wireless services.

III. NEXT MEETING, Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 12:30 PM. The [BCBIT webpage](#) has been updated.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS.

- John Egelhaaf, Executive Director of the [Southwest Michigan Planning Commission](#) (SWMPC), explained how his agency was invited to participate in the [Michigan Infrastructure Council](#) (MIC). The goal is to map infrastructure data across regions, allowing for better alignment of strategies to manage Michigan's infrastructure assets more effectively and efficiently. This coordinated mapping effort helps move the familiar 'dig-once' concept beyond guesswork during pre-construction activities all to familiar Miss Dig, reducing the risk of incidents such as accidentally striking gas lines, water mains, telecommunications cables, or fiber optic internet lines.
- Ben Miller introduced Mike Marzan as the new Comcast/Xfinity government contact for Berrien County. Email: Michael_Marzan@comcast.com Cell: 517-748-3337.

WHAT'S ON THE NATIONAL BROADBAND MAP?

The National Broadband Map consists of 2 datasets, both of which can be challenged:

FABRIC LOCATIONS

- **What is it?**
 - The Fabric is a dataset of all locations in the United States and Territories where fixed broadband internet access service is or could be installed.
- **Who creates it?**
 - The Fabric is developed by CostQuest in consultation with the FCC and in accordance with FCC rules.
- **Challenges and updates timeline?**
 - The Fabric is updated twice per year.
 - Fabric challenges are accepted on an ongoing basis and successful challenges will be reflected in future Fabric releases.
- **What's on the current map?**
 - The June 2025 version of the Fabric is the base of the current map.

BROADBAND AVAILABILITY

- **What is it?**
 - Broadband availability data shows what broadband services, if any, are available at locations included in the Fabric, as reported by internet service providers every 6 months.
- **Who creates it?**
 - Internet service providers report their availability data to the FCC every 6 months.
- **Challenges and updates timeline?**
 - Broadband availability data is updated every 2 weeks to reflect challenge outcomes.
 - Challenges are accepted and resolved on an ongoing basis.
- **What's on the current map?**
 - The map shows availability data as-of June 30, 2025, and reflects resolved availability challenges.



BroadbandMap.gov



Rev. 11/25/2025

BroadbandMap.gov

Rev. 11/25/2025



NATIONAL BROADBAND MAP BY THE NUMBERS

JUNE 2025



[broadbandmap.fcc.gov](https://www.broadbandmap.fcc.gov)

116.4
MILLION
LOCATIONS



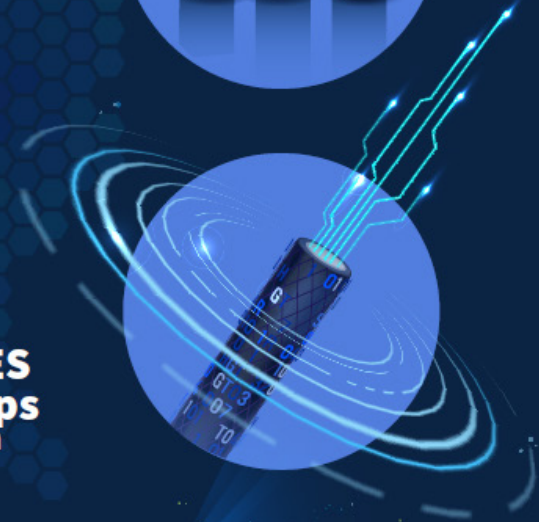
BUILDING OUT:
10.1
MILLION
locations gained
access to 100/20 Mbps
terrestrial services
SINCE JUNE 2022



5.3
MILLION
AVAILABILITY
CHALLENGES
served on providers



95.5%
of HOMES AND
SMALL BUSINESSES
HAVE A 100/20 Mbps
terrestrial service option

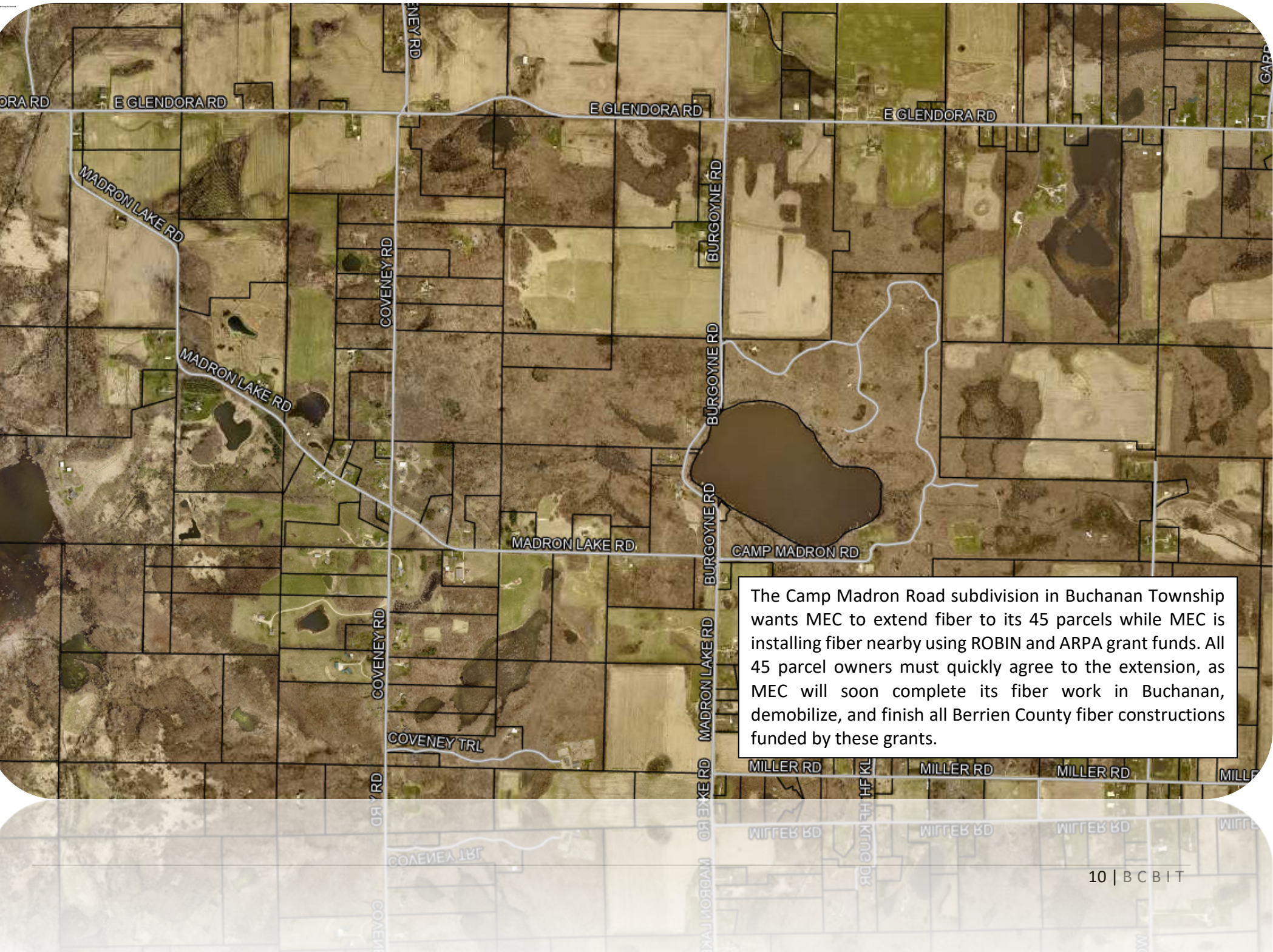


99.7%
of locations have a
100/20 Mbps
SATELLITE
SERVICE OPTION



96.4%
of locations have
5G MOBILE
COVERAGE





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 - FEBRUARY 2026- 74% COMPLETE!

381.6 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% 22%	
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	Q4-2025 Q1-2026	95% 99% COMPLETE!	Q1-2026	CONSTRUCTION STARTING! Both Zone Fiber Construction and Connections to Customers are currently on schedule.95% complete!	1% (JUST STARTED SIGN-UP)	
HAGAR	Benton, Coloma & Hagar Townships	36	RDOF & ROBIN	Q4-2025	CONSTRUCTION STARTED!	Q1-2026	CONSTRUCTION STARTED. ON SCHEDULE!		
COLOMA	Coloma, Covert & Hagar Townships	15.2	ROBIN	Q1-2026	PENDING	Q1-2026	PENDING. START Q-1 2026		
SOUTH COVERT	Coloma, Covert & Watervliet Townships	5	ROBIN	Q2-2026*	PENDING	Q2-2026	PENDING		
TWELVE CORNERS	Benton, Coloma & Hagar Townships	12.3	ROBIN	Q2-2026	PENDING	Q2-2026	PENDING		
NORTH HARTFORD	Hartford & Watervliet Townships	17.3	ROBIN	Q2-2026	PENDING	Q2-2026	PENDING		
TOTAL MEC FIBER MILES		516.5	<i>As of February 5, 2026</i>						
COMPLETED MILES		381.6	74%						

*Potential to move to Q1 - depending on our winter weather!