

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Media Contact: Acacia St. John
Forward Wayne County, 765.259.3327
acacia@forwardwaynecounty.org



Taskforce Launching County-Wide Broadband Survey

Wayne County, Indiana– The Wayne County Broadband Taskforce, in partnership with Purdue University Center for Regional Development, is launching a county-wide broadband survey online on March 1st. It is open to all residents and we encourage completion by the head of households throughout Wayne County.

The survey is designed to study the usage, actual speeds, opportunities, and lack of access around the county. Participants are encouraged to take the survey at home to test actual upload/download speeds. In addition, the taskforce is asking residents to opt in to the mapping portion of the survey.

“We know that there are areas in our county that lack access to internet options, but we need a way to prove it to providers, legislators, as well as State and Federal officials,” said Ken Paust, President of the Wayne County Commissioners.

“By providing this confidential information, we will be able to produce hard-evidence data and mapping to prove our point. It will help us seek out appropriate funding to make Wayne County better connected.”

The online survey will be live March 1st through March 19th at https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2s33XlwdQzmr3Cu. It will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. A limited number of paper copies will be available at Morrisson-Reeves Public Library, Centerville Public Library, Cambridge City Public Library, and Hagerstown Public Library during the same time frame for individuals that want to use that option. Paper copies must be returned to the mentioned libraries on or before March 19th. Anything received after that date will not be included.

“Our Steering Committee has been spearheading the broadband conversation for the past several months and were excited to see their work lead to the revival of the Wayne County Broadband Taskforce,” said Acacia St. John, Program Manager with Forward Wayne County.

“Last year showed us that, as a county, it is imperative that we address the lack of accessibility and/or address the actual internet speeds for our residents. It affects every aspect of life; school, work, business, healthcare, and perhaps more than anyone, our most marginalized populations. We know there are some large disparities throughout the county, so this will help us make progress forward.”

Katie Alyea, Board Chair for the Wayne County Area Chamber of Commerce, agrees. “Businesses faced many challenges during the pandemic, including transitioning their workforce into remote workers. One of

the biggest challenges to that is internet access for people that had never worked from home. And then throw in a spouse that also had to work from home and then their children trying to do school, it was a mess. Internet speeds and lack of access became a county-wide issue quickly. We don't foresee that changing."

"The Indiana Chamber recently reported that 36% of employers say their workers will continue to work remotely at least sometimes post pandemic. That reinforces the fact that accessible internet is needed for everyone."

Residents will start seeing the online survey link pop up on social media accounts of all of the taskforce members on March 1st. In addition, all six public and parochial school superintendents will be sending the survey link out in electronic communications to parents and guardians of their students, as well as their employees.

"It's important to offer our students and families, especially in our rural areas, the opportunity for broadband access," said Dr. Matthew Hicks, Superintendent for Northeastern School Corporation. "During COVID it was a priority for our students, but a struggle as those in our outlying areas had to find access. Post pandemic it will be more important so that our students can expand their learning and increase their opportunities for success."

The Wayne County Area Chamber of Commerce will also send out the survey link to all of their members and encourage them to send the link on to their employees. Community partners, faith-based organizations, and others are encouraged to share the online survey link on their social media accounts and in other key communications from their respective organizations.

For more information, please contact Forward Wayne County at 765.259.3327.

About the Taskforce

Members include Wayne County Government, Economic Development Corporation of Wayne County, Wayne County Area Chamber of Commerce, Forward Wayne County, Wayne County Convention & Tourism Bureau, and the Wayne County Foundation.

-END-