

Baltimore Broadband Campaign Update – July 20, 2014 - Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

This week: Baltimore Broadband Campaign (BBC) backer numbers increased to nearly 800; another neighborhood, Keswick, reached its goal; commercial stakeholders now joining the campaign.

With a number of new backers joining the BBC, we thought it useful to review answers to common questions.

Why ask backers to pay \$10? To cover the low-budget marketing costs of our all-volunteer campaign. Paying even a small amount shows commitment to potential fiber investors whom we wish to attract. We do pay Amazon, who we use to collect donations, 55 cents for the \$10 transaction.

What do I get for my \$10? Immediately nothing except becoming another red dot on our map of backers. The campaign strategy is based on what has been true in multiple other cities. Investment comes to those cities showing sufficient market demand. We believe that will be true in Baltimore. So far, three fiber providers have contacted the campaign (two directly and one indirectly through an intermediary). We make no promises to backers but putting in \$10 is a good bet unless one is satisfied with the status quo. Our backer numbers also attract interest from our political leaders and this is already happening. Our partnership with elected officials is essential in bringing changes to public policy related to Internet services.

What is CrowdFiber's role? We use the web site CrowdFiber as a platform to sign up campaign backers and as a means to organize our broadband advocacy and funding. BBC is the campaign owner and has been entirely responsible for the community organizing aspects of the project. CrowdFiber is not using the platform to determine demand in any area of the country – only to support its campaign owners' efforts to improve broadband in their areas.

Are campaign funds being used to pay CrowdFiber (or its parent, Civitium) for use of the platform, consulting or other services? No. As an early beta customer for CrowdFiber, BBC has had use of the platform at no cost. Neither CrowdFiber nor Civitium has been paid any fees for the use of the platform or for consulting or other services. CrowdFiber has provided extensive advice, guidance and support to BBC as part of its product development and beta efforts. We thank them.

What can I do to help? Campaign backers remain our best way to spread the word. Talk up the campaign in the neighborhood, at work and wherever you get together with friends. This link provides other ways you can help.

We welcome any questions and will answer common or important issues on these updates.

When important national issues relevant to the BBC occur, we will alert backers. This week Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn) secured an amendment to the Financial Services Appropriation Bill that would prevent the FCC from using its authority to facilitate community owned broadband. [Read about the issue from the International Business Times](#) and from a [press release from Congresswoman Blackburn](#). Chattanooga, in the Congresswoman's home state, has a community owned fiber utility, [ChattanoogaGig](#), an example of a municipal broadband utility. The amendment has not yet been considered by the Senate.

Tell friends to join the campaign at <http://crowdfiber.com/campaigns/baltimore-broadband-coalition/>

Follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BaltBroadband>

Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BaltimoreBroadband/>

The message is "Bring Competition for Internet Services to Baltimore – Stop Paying More for Less"

If you prefer to join by mail please send a check to the Baltimore Broadband Campaign and along with your check, provide your name, address, email, phone number to: RPCL Office, 5115B Roland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21210. A minimum contribution of \$10 is required to back the campaign but additional contributions are appreciated.

If any trouble enrolling, ask for help at BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com

Should we be concerned that there are not many other active campaigns community-led campaigns on the site?

The CrowdFiber platform was designed to support two types of customers; Communities who want to organize their demand to affect positive change in the market, and Service Providers who want to aggregate customer demand to guide investments they are making

During the beta period, CrowdFiber has learned that many communities do not have the level of organization and leadership to embrace a grassroots campaign of this type. Baltimore/BBC is different. It is leading the nation in the way it is innovating in this area. Despite the modest uptake of the community edition, CrowdFiber has had great success in applying its platform for service providers who want to use the platform to aggregate customer demand in their markets, and expand fiber services based on that demand. These service provider campaigns are not visible on the public site, as they are hosted by the service providers. You can see an example for how CrowdFiber is used for these service provider campaigns at <http://register.trailwave.com/campaigns/habersham-emc-trailwave-service>

BBC has been assured by CrowdFiber that they will continue to support and enhance the platform for community projects. It is their hope that other communities will be inspired by and learn from the pioneering efforts in Baltimore/BBC, and the community edition of the platform will see greater adoption.

