

BALTIMORE BROADBAND CAMPAIGN

Bring Competition for Internet Services to Baltimore

Background

This campaign is in response to a survey and community meeting indicating resident dissatisfaction throughout Baltimore with currently available choices for broadband (how you connect to the Internet) and their associated prices. The campaign started in a church basement at a community meeting in Roland Park, it soon spread to multiple communities in north Baltimore and now is citywide. We desire broad based participation. This is a grassroots campaign open to all living or working in Baltimore.

Campaign Goals

Deploy fiber optic lines to homes, businesses and anchor institutions throughout Baltimore

Establish an open fiber infrastructure promoting competition by Internet service providers

Provide low cost connectivity options for those with low incomes

Build grassroots campaign in partnership with elected officials, anchor institutions and commercial stakeholders

Campaign Strategy

Use our crowdfunding campaign as a platform to sign up campaign backers and to organize our broadband advocacy and funding

Establish campaign zones using well recognized multi-neighborhood Community Statistical Areas

Establish zone goals calculated as 20% of owner occupied housing units plus 5% of occupied rental units.

Fiber optic investment comes to those cities and campaign zones showing sufficient market demand. We believe this will be true in Baltimore

Use the strength and pattern of campaign support to attract potential fiber providers

Motivating This Campaign

We pay more (as much as \$1000 over two years)

Services available are less

We face a monopoly leaving us with little choice

20-40% of city residents do not connect when connectivity is now essential

Poor fiber optic infrastructure impairs the economic growth of Baltimore

How Can You Participate

Back the campaign in your neighborhood zone by registering and donating \$10

Encourage others to join

Tell elected officials this is important to you

Volunteer to help

More Information and to Join: www.BaltimoreBroadband.org

Faster, cheaper, better city broadband

BY PHILIP SPEVAK, STAN WILSON
AND ANTHONY GILL

There is a monopoly for fast Internet services in Baltimore City. As a consequence, a new Comcast customer can pay as much as \$1,000 more over two years for standard "triple-play" service (telephone, Internet and cable television) than would a new customer in Annapolis, where competition exists. And the fastest Internet speed offered by Comcast in Baltimore is only one-third of what is currently available in Annapolis and most of the state.

We pay more for less in Baltimore because fast fiber optic technology — often called fiber to the premises (FTTP) — is not widely deployed to our homes and businesses like it is in every county surrounding the city and along much of the East Coast, and because Comcast does not operate in a competitive environment in the city.

Extending FTTP and allowing alternative Internet service providers the opportunity to compete in the city is why 14 communities in north Baltimore have partnered to create the Baltimore Broadband Campaign. We want to demonstrate that, through the intelligent use of existing fiber infrastructure and the installation of new fiber where necessary, an economically viable, competitive FTTP-based broadband service is possible in the city. And it need not come from Comcast or Verizon: there are over 800 fiber optic providers of various types in the United States. Apparently, though, none have yet seen adequate economic opportunity to invest extensively in Baltimore. We want to change that.

Our campaign's first phase involves a grassroots crowdfunding effort through which we hope to convince providers that there is sufficient demand to warrant the deployment of a competitive, fiber-based broadband service in Baltimore. Having residents demonstrate interest before fiber

deployment is committed is an approach that been used successfully in a number of places around the country including but not limited to Kansas City, Austin, Wake Forest and smaller cities in Mississippi. Grassroots support is building, particularly as residents come to understand that there are no legal barriers preventing new fiber optic deployment.

Demonstrating demand alone is unlikely to change the broadband landscape. By adding communities to our campaign and extending the campaign to include the entire city, we hope to engage our city and state leaders to a greater extent. We hope our campaign will lead to a second phase where, in partnership with elected officials, there is a change toward more proactive public policy. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Councilman William Cole understand that the availability of fast Internet is a necessity for economic revitalization. The mayor commented earlier this year that "you can't grow jobs with slow Internet." She also noted the economic injustice when 20 percent to 40 percent of Baltimore residents are not even connected to the Internet, slow or otherwise. The councilman has spoken to the necessity of effective broadband in attracting startups, particularly in the biotech area.

Good public policy requires a clear vision, a rational plan and effective execution.

First, we believe that vision must include extending fiber to the premises with connectivity for all. The best plan is not one size fits all. Where sufficient demand exists, fiber should extend to homes, business and public/private institutions. Where fiber deployment costs are extremely high or market demand is insufficient, other technologies may be more practical, including, for example, gigabit Wi-Fi.

Second, the city owns approximately 3.9 million feet of underground conduit (the passages through which our utilities run), and some of these contain city-owned fiber.

That conduit is valuable, but only if the city knows where it is and its condition. Right now, we do not know. Therefore, the city must accurately locate, but also articulate clear and predictable procedures for leasing its conduit.

Third, the city should establish "dig once policies," coordinating, if not requiring, fiber optic installation with other capital improvement projects such as road repaving or trenching for utility work.

Fourth, the city should convene and facilitate a monthly or quarterly broadband round table, involving existing service providers and fiber facility owners within the city, city personnel, interested citizens and other stakeholders.

Fifth, our state and federal officials are also critical in this effort. Sen. Barbara Mikulski was instrumental in the creation of the extremely important One Maryland Inter-County Broadband Network, which brought 1,000 linear miles of new fiber deployment, some of which is located in and owned by the city. Internet providers resist municipally owned fiber and in 20 states have successfully lobbied to restrict municipal ownership of fiber networks. We need the help of our state government leaders to prevent such a barrier from being erected in Maryland, and we need our federal officials to influence the Federal Communications Commission to remove such barriers in states in which they are present.

Many other cities throughout the nation are making rapid progress installing fiber broadband infrastructure and services. It's time for the citizens of Baltimore City to stop paying more money for less and work together to bring faster and cheaper Internet to our homes and businesses.

Dr. Philip Spevak, Stan Wilson and Anthony Gill are co-leaders of the Baltimore Broadband Campaign. They may be reached at BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com, on Twitter: [@BaltBroadband](https://twitter.com/BaltBroadband) and on Facebook: facebook.com/groups/BaltimoreBroadband.

Myth & Fact

Myth

Comcast has an exclusive contract for Internet services in Baltimore

Fact

Comcast has a nonexclusive franchise for TV only. No legal barriers prevent competition for Internet services. There are economic barriers.

Myth

Baltimore has competition for Internet services

Fact

For broadband services (speeds > 10 Mbps) most residents have no choice other than Comcast

Myth

Fiber only comes to Baltimore City with Verizon FIOS

Fact

There are over 800 fiber providers in the US and 7 in Maryland. Fiber can come with Verizon or Comcast but also with someone else. It could be another provider or with Baltimore City deploying fiber



Volunteers signing up new backers at Belevedere

Help Us Tell Our Story

Invite us to any good size gathering; business or community organization meeting, festival or at your school or faith based organization meeting

Send your request to:
BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com

Follow us on Twitter
@BaltBroadband

Join our Facebook page:
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Digital Divide

20-40% of city residents are not connecting

Access rates vary markedly by income, education, and race when the Internet is essential. We use the Internet to find jobs, to apply for jobs, to train for jobs. Children use the Internet to do their school work, many use it to connect with family and friends and religious organizations use it to connect with their community.

Our campaign is citywide and inclusive; we believe fiber should be deployed to all Baltimore neighborhoods and should occur with every city utility and work project along major corridors.

Fiber deployment is not one-plan-fits-all. We understand that fiber is expensive and where demand is sufficiently strong, we favor immediate fiber deployment; where market demand is less strong, fiber could extend along corridors (so-called middle mile) and then connect to individual homes and businesses (so-called last mile) with other technologies like high-speed wireless.

High priority for fiber deployment is to anchor institutions including schools and libraries

There must be low cost options for those with low income

What Comes Next

Community meetings will occur to allow residents to understand the options for fiber deployment in Baltimore. Many are familiar with Google fiber which is where a private company owns and chooses where fiber is deployed. Verizon and Comcast have said they have made their choice and it is not Baltimore. We will explore other alternatives including municipal broadband (public owned fiber), public/private partnerships, and the means to incentivize private investment by other providers.

We continue to partner with our elected officials and commercial stakeholders as we develop a broadband plan for Baltimore

We are eager to involve young people. Internet is not just for serious stuff and games are much more fun when not at slow motion.

Baltimore can be successful

We have the vision and we have the plan and we certainly have the need for bringing fiber to Baltimore resulting in competition for Internet services.

Bring competition for Internet services to Baltimore. Stop paying more for less.

Contact Us

Join online at Crowdfiber.com and choose Baltimore

By mail send check for \$10 made out to the Baltimore Broadband Campaign along with your name, address, email, phone number to BBC Office, 5115B Roland Avenue, Baltimore 21210

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