



Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
Rural Economies Workgroup Report
September 23, 2013

To: Jon Laria, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

From: Ryan Sigworth AICP, MDP, Rural Economies Workgroup Staff

Subj: Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities

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The Rural Economies workgroup continues to explore the issue of rural Maryland's access to broadband internet services. At our previous meeting, Tyler Patton from the Maryland Broadband Cooperative spoke with us about Maryland's backbone of fiber optic infrastructure across the state.

This month, Joanne Hovis, President of CTC Technology & Energy, spoke with the workgroup about strategies other states, local government, and the federal government have used to expand broadband infrastructure and access to businesses and individuals. Based on independent research and information from guest speakers, the workgroup has worked to identify the obstacles to expanding broadband access and policy areas to focus potential solutions.

Moving forward, the group will discuss the next steps in working towards possible solutions for making broadband internet services more accessible for economic development and health care. Possible solutions may include, but not be limited to, broadband internet service education program, best practices publications, legislative action, and/or public/private partnerships. In the next few months, the workgroup hopes to have a conceptual proposal ready for introduction to the Sustainable Growth Commission.

After addressing the rural broadband policy area, the workgroup will begin exploring agricultural issues such as the possibility of establishing agricultural enterprise zones, local food markets, value-added products, and aquaculture.