

# BROADBAND STATUS REPORT 2018

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# Broadband Committee ACTION PLAN



The Broadband Committee's goal is to connect our community - our students, our industries, our entrepreneurs - to the world beyond Oglethorpe County through reliable, high-speed internet for all. We will accomplish this by:



**1**  
**ATTRACTING ATTENTION.**  
We will draw attention to the digital divide in our community by meeting with providers and partners at every opportunity.



**2**  
**ELIMINATING FUTURE ROADBLOCKS.**  
Evaluate our current regulations and look for opportunities to streamline the approval process.



**4**  
**INVESTING.**  
Wisely allocate our own resources towards market research, engineering and even infrastructure to improve access.



**3**  
**LOBBYING GOVERNMENT.**  
Phone calls, letters and emails to our legislators and regulators letting them know we want serious solutions to the rural broadband gap.



To learn more or to help out, reach out to [planning@oglethorpecountyga.gov](mailto:planning@oglethorpecountyga.gov) or visit us on the web at [www.oglethorpebusiness.com/broadband](http://www.oglethorpebusiness.com/broadband)

# COMMITTEE SUMMARY

At their February 13, 2018 meeting, the Oglethorpe County Economic Development Authority created a sub-committee to focus on increasing access to broadband for Oglethorpe County residents. Lack of access to reliable high-speed internet was noted as a persistent issue for residents and one that prevented upward mobility for students, small business owners and farmers alike. The Broadband Committee met several times throughout 2018 to work towards creating an action plan and executing on the strategies developed as part of their formation.

Committee members met in-person with broadband providers including Relyant Communications, Windstream and Paladin Wireless. Staff held separate discussions with AT&T and Charter. These meetings were held to share concerns and roadblocks to access. As a result of these discussions, committee members elected to conduct a community survey to help to better understand the scope of the problem in Oglethorpe County.

The community broadband survey launched in October and concluded in December. An analysis of results begins on page 3 of this document. The results of this survey will be shared back to providers and the community and will be used to inform decision-making for broadband solutions.

Other tasks accomplished by this committee in 2018 include:

- Discussion with staff at Carl Vinson Institute of Government to understand how mapping and GIS impact deployment of broadband solutions
- Development of, and participation in, a regional "broadband roundtable" to discuss progress and issues in neighboring communities. Other participating communities include: Banks County, Clarke County, Jackson County, Barrow County, Franklin County, Madison County, Newton County and Oconee County.

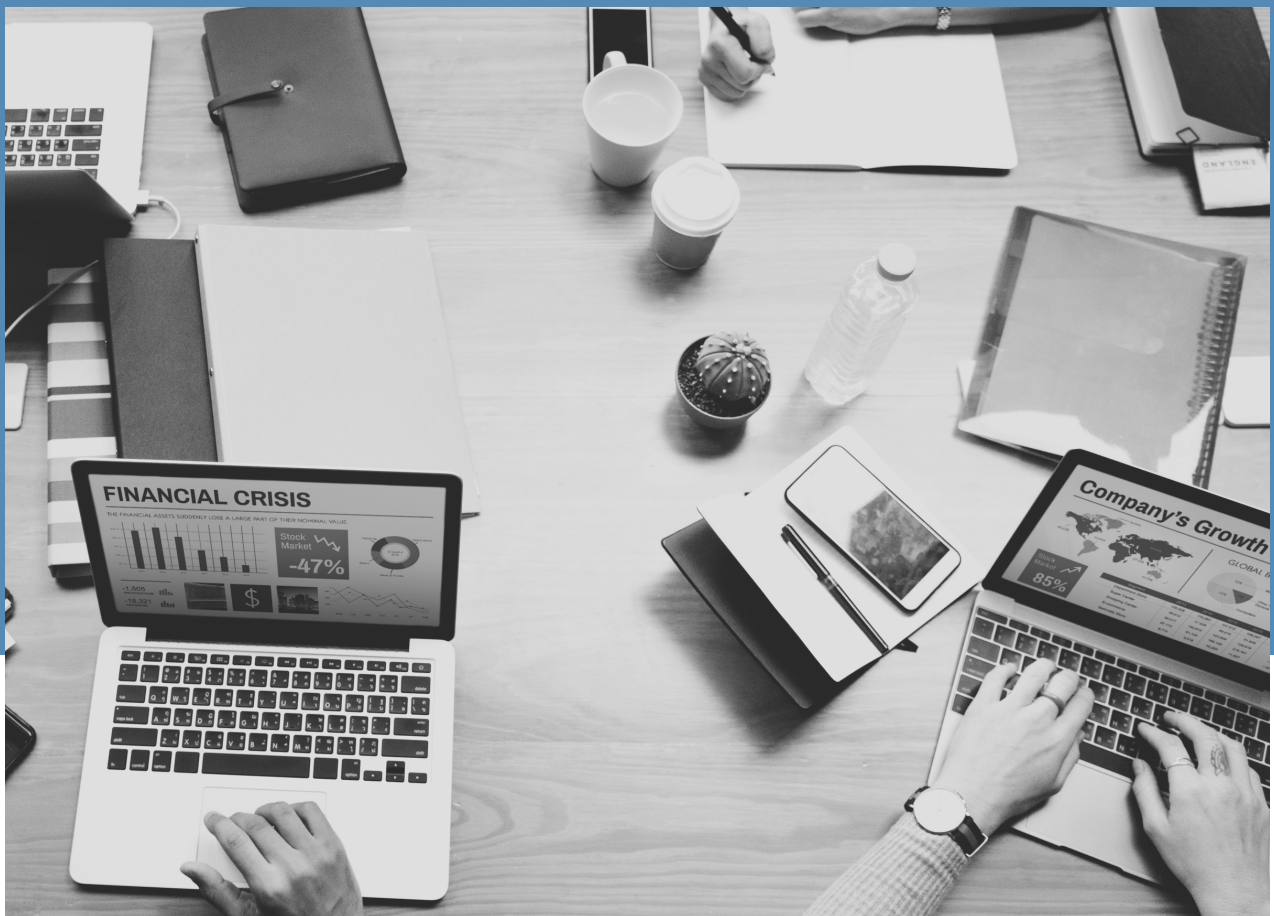
# BROADBAND SURVEY

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The Oglethorpe Community Broadband survey was distributed on October 2, 2018 and closed December 4, 2018. Effort was made to solicit responses from all residents. Efforts included:

- Online link survey shared via email listservs and social media,
- Paper copies available in the Echo, and at the Health Department, Board of Commissioners' office, Chamber of Commerce and the library,
- Direct solicitation from residents in the car line at Oglethorpe Primary and Elementary Schools.

There were 733 complete, individual responses. Of those, 74 were completed on paper with the remainder completed through an online link. There are 5,642 households in Oglethorpe County according to the 2017 American Community Survey estimates. The survey sample represents 12.9% of households. The survey included 10 questions meant to determine availability of internet access, provider data, satisfaction with current provider and financial interest in improved access. Location information was also requested.

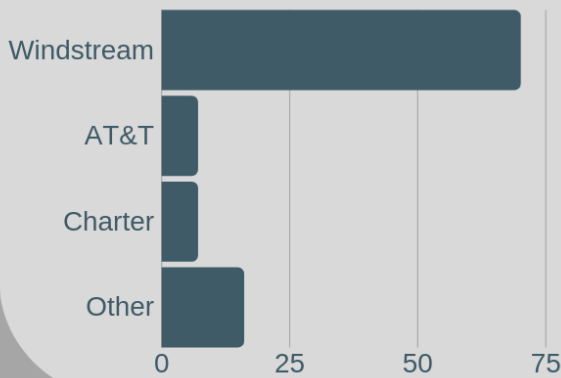


# BROADBAND SURVEY RESULTS

9 out of 10 households in Oglethorpe County report having internet access, either from a wired connection, a wireless provider (like a cell phone plan) or via satellite.



**WINDSTREAM IS THE SERVICE PROVIDER FOR 70% OF OGLETHORPE HOUSEHOLDS WITH INTERNET.**



**80% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED BEING DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR CURRENT SERVICE**



**64% REPORTED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE COST OF THEIR CURRENT SERVICE**

**77% REPORTED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE RELIABILITY OF THEIR CURRENT SERVICE**

**92% REPORTED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SPEED OF THEIR CURRENT SERVICE**

**88% OF RESIDENTS STATED THEY WOULD PAY \$50 OR MORE A MONTH IN ORDER TO GET RELIABLE 25 MB SPEEDS.**

# ANALYSIS

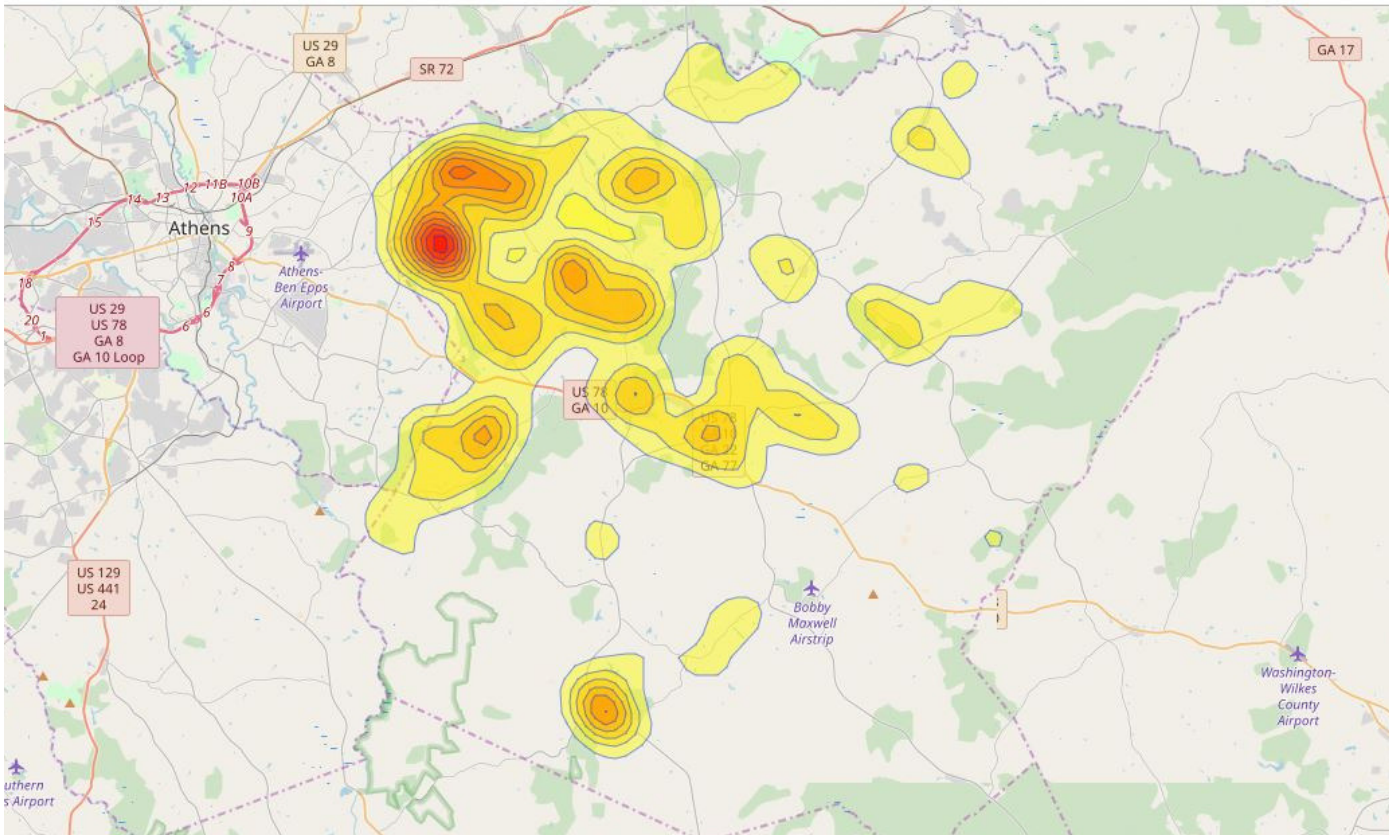
The survey instrument used was adapted from a survey created by Open Broadband, a fixed wireless provider and broadband consultant based in North Carolina. Based on the response rate and methods of distribution, the results are considered statistically significant.

Extrapolating the results, we can determine that 80% of Oglethorpe households are dissatisfied with their internet service. Cost, reliability and speed were noted in more than half of the responses for dissatisfaction, with speed being the primary complaint. Dissatisfied respondents were not asked what their current speeds were, but they were asked to list what activities they found their internet connection to be substandard. The number one complaint was an inability to stream video. Browsing the internet, loading webpages, working from home and checking email rounded out the top 5 complaints.

Respondents with internet were asked to share their current provider. 70% of respondents utilized Windstream, the incumbent local provider for most of Oglethorpe County. AT&T and Charter both share about 7% of the local market and other providers such as cellular services (Verizon, AT&T) at about 10% and satellite providers (Viasat, HughesNet) at 7%. The dissatisfaction rate was fairly consistent among AT&T, Windstream and satellite providers at between 85 - 90%. Charter customers were significantly more satisfied, with an overall dissatisfaction rate at only 20%. Wireless customers also reported a slightly better dissatisfaction rate than Windstream, AT&T and satellite with only 67% reporting dissatisfaction with their current service.

All respondents were asked about willingness to pay for uncapped 25 mb speed internet that would allow them to stream video without buffering. 43% stated a willingness to pay \$50/month for such a service, 29% stated a willingness to pay \$75/month and 16% stated a willingness to pay \$100/month. Overall, that is 88% of respondents willing to pay \$50 or more for 25 mb speeds.

Respondents were also asked to provide their address data. This data was compiled and converted to longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates and input into a geographic map. The response level based on this geographic data closely aligns with current population density.



## CONCENTRATION OF DISSATISFIED INTERNET SUBSCRIBERS

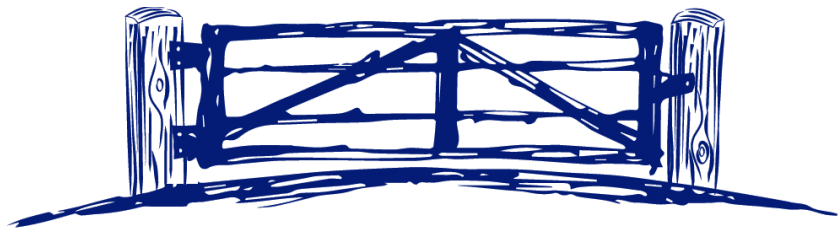
From there, the geographic data was filtered to determine which addresses reported dissatisfaction with their current service. A "heat map" was generated to show the concentration of respondents. Again, dissatisfaction rates closely aligned with population density with a concentration on the western portion of the county.

## NEXT STEPS

Staff and members of the Oglethorpe County Broadband Committee will meet with existing providers to share the collected data and discuss possible solutions.

Additionally, survey results will be shared with potential providers in an effort to increase competition and provider offerings to Oglethorpe County residents and businesses. Staff will continue to participate in the Northeast Georgia Broadband Roundtable alongside other

counties in the region to ascertain what regionally solutions may be viable. Staff and EDA members will closely monitor the 2019 legislative cycle and lobby local representation to push for increased funding for rural broadband deployment. As a result of this data, Oglethorpe County will be well positioned to apply for applicable grants and loans, from either the state or federal level, to install appropriate broadband infrastructure.



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