

Mackinac Economic Alliance (MEA) **“Bridge the Tech Divide” FAQ**

Q: Hang on...why are there TWO broadband surveys?

A: If you live in Brevort, Clark or Portage township, you likely received two different broadband surveys in your tax bill mailing. They are not identical, but both are important.

EUPRPDC's survey has been in the works for some time, and is intended to collect and map underserved areas of broadband connectivity in the **entire EUP region**. MEA's **"Bridge the Tech Divide" broadband survey** is the first step in the organization's Gigabit Community broadband pilot project, and this survey is being distributed within **only three townships in Mackinac County: Brevort, Clark and Portage**.

Q: What is the Gigabit Community pilot project?

A: MEA's Gigabit Community broadband pilot project seeks to construct a community-wide broadband network in one of three townships located in Mackinac County (Brevort, Clark and Portage). These 3 townships were chosen as potential sites for the pilot project based on two important factors: existing in-ground fiber, and concentrated populations currently underserved, or unserved, by private internet providers.

It is MEA's hope that the Gigabit Community pilot project will provide a successful model for rurally located community broadband networks, which will then encourage private internet companies to complete similar service upgrades in other UP communities lacking reliable internet connectivity.

For more information on the Gigabit Community pilot project, visit our website:

www.mackinaceconomicalliance.org/survey

Q: Should I fill out both surveys?

A: YES. Only residents of Brevort, Clark and Portage Twp's have the opportunity to fill out the "Bridge the Tech Divide" survey, as only these three communities were selected as possible sites for MEA's Gigabit Community broadband pilot project.

Q: How are these two surveys similar/different?

A: Both surveys seek to map areas of need (relative to internet connectivity) in order to build a business case to private providers, which providers require as a prerequisite before committing to servicing, or upgrading service, in rural communities.

The major difference between the surveys is that MEA's survey seeks responses from a narrow spread of participants in Brevort, Clark and Portage Twp's, specifically in connection to the Gigabit Community pilot project. Through MEA's discussion with representatives from the EUP Intermediate School District and private internet providers in our region, we learned that providers will not consider building or upgrading rural, community-wide fiber networks unless there is documented evidence that at least 50% of residents in a community are willing to pay for upgraded service. For this reason, MEA's survey is more simplified than EUPRPDC's and primarily seeks confirmation that at least 50% of residents in the three townships desire upgraded internet service.

Q: How will MEA's "Bridge the Tech Divide" survey data be used?

A: MEA's survey data will be mapped, and then used for engineering and feasibility studies, which are also required by private internet providers in the UP before committing to service an area. These studies will help to determine cost estimates and timelines for planned upgrades in each area, all of which is information that MEA will then be able to pursue grants to help cover initial build out and connection costs in the township selected as the site for the pilot project.

It is MEA's hope that the Gigabit Community pilot project will provide a successful model for rurally located community broadband networks, which will then encourage private internet companies to complete similar service upgrades in other UP communities lacking reliable internet connectivity.

Q: Where do I send my completed "Bridge the Tech Divide" survey?

A: You can drop off completed surveys at your local library or Chamber office. If you need help locating a drop-off location, call the Mackinac Economic Alliance at: **(573) 631.9080**
You may also mail your survey form directly to us at:

**Mackinac Economic Alliance
P.O. Box 361
Cedarville, MI 49719**