



# Rural Broadband Task Force

February 4, 2020

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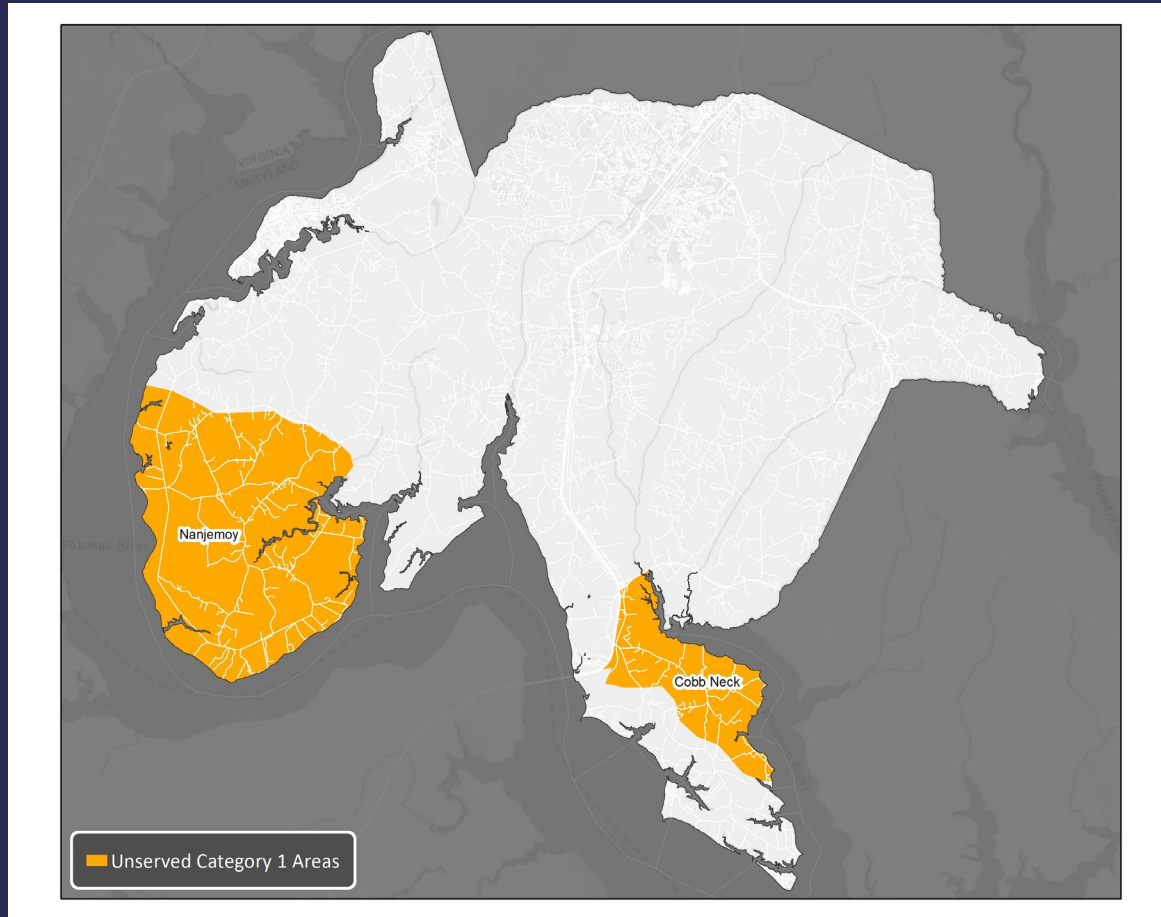
# Updates

- ▶ Received formal correspondence from SMECO in response to the County's letter from December 20, 2019.
  - ▶ SMECO is still “running various financial, market, and feasibility analyses” via their consultant.
  - ▶ Therefore, it is not viable to partner with SMECO as an ISP at this time.
  - ▶ SMECO is still participating on the Rural Broadband Task Force and is actively engaged.
- ▶ Received draft of the final Broadband Feasibility Study from CTC.
  - ▶ The report has been reviewed and accepted by the Rural Broadband Task Force.
  - ▶ Our consultant is here today to present their final recommendations.

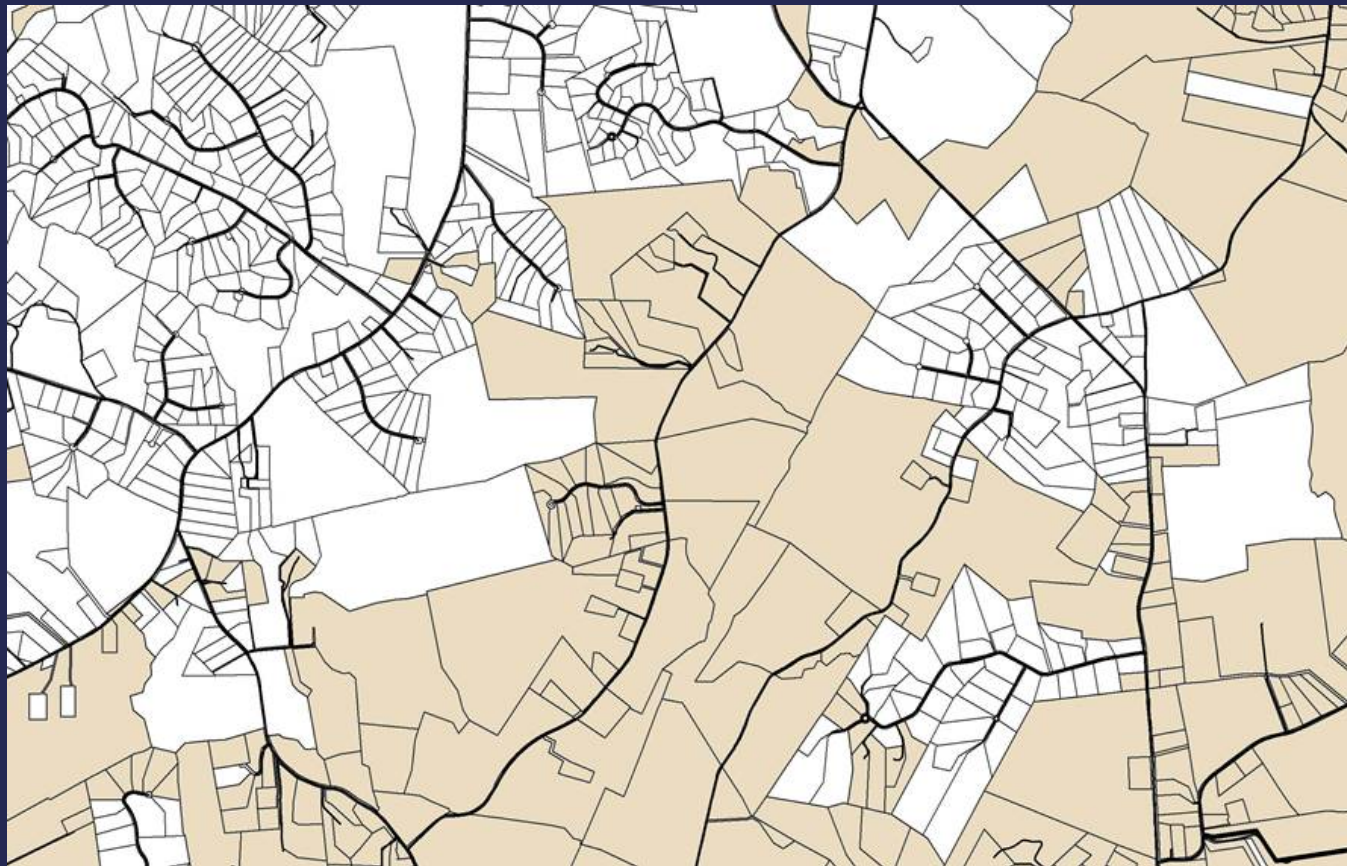
# Three Categories of Unserved Locations Identified in Charles County

- ▶ **Category 1:** Contiguous areas where no infrastructure exists capable of delivering broadband
- ▶ **Category 2:** Isolated pockets and roads that don't have broadband infrastructure that are located within otherwise-served areas
- ▶ **Category 3:** Locations at the end of long setbacks/driveways requiring customers to contribute to the cost of installation of the “service drop”
  - ▶ Federal & state governments do **not** consider Category 3 to be “unserved” and do not make grants for this category.

# Category 1: Contiguous areas of the County where no infrastructure exists capable of delivering broadband



**Category 2:** Isolated pockets and roads that don't have broadband infrastructure that are located within otherwise-served areas of the County



**Category 3:** Locations at the end of long setbacks/driveways requiring customers to contribute to the cost of installation of the “service drop”



Category 3: Long Setback/  
Driveway Requiring  
Customer Contribution to  
Network Drop Installation

# Category Comparisons

	Description	Estimated Unserved Homes & Businesses
1	Contiguous geographic areas	Approximately 2,300
2	Addresses on isolated roads / unserved pockets	Approximately 1,000
3	Addresses with long driveways (not considered “unserved” by state and federal definition)	Approximately 1,500

# Recommendations to Address Each Category

- ▶ **Recommendation 1:** Multi-year strategy of state & federal grant support to private partner to service contiguous areas (Category 1).
- ▶ **Recommendation 2:** Encourage Comcast, Verizon and/or other ISP to apply for state & federal funds to fill in isolated roads within their service areas (Category 2).
- ▶ **Recommendation 3:** Long-term strategy to fill gaps in areas where grant funding is not available (Category 3).



# Recommendation 1: Work with private partner to address Category 1

- ▶ CTC recommends partnership with ThinkBig Networks.
  - ▶ Identified by CTC as lowest risk of potential private partners
  - ▶ Small but experienced company
  - ▶ Strong management team
  - ▶ Track record as ISP in Kent County and Baltimore City
- ▶ Collaboration between Charles County and ThinkBig to apply for state grant in February.
  - ▶ ThinkBig to apply for funds with County support
  - ▶ ThinkBig will own & operate network, reducing County risk
  - ▶ CTC recommends County negotiate for access to fiber
- ▶ This effort will be the first step in a multi-year strategy to secure state (and potentially federal) funds to build infrastructure in Category 1 areas.

## Recommendation 2: Encourage Comcast, Verizon & other ISPs to apply for state & federal funds to address Category 2

- ▶ Comcast & Verizon are uniquely positioned to address isolated roads/pockets because they have infrastructure in surrounding areas.
- ▶ Their current interest is unclear, but both companies have applied for public funds in other areas for similar efforts.
  - ▶ Verizon bid for FCC funds for isolated MD areas (2018)
  - ▶ Comcast applied for Virginia state grant funds (2019)
- ▶ Charles County can work with both companies and other providers and encourage efforts.
  - ▶ FCC rural broadband funds to be auctioned in mid-2020
  - ▶ State grant funds for these purposes to be made available (likely in 2021)

## Recommendation 3: Long-term strategy to address Category 3

- ▶ Federal & state governments do not consider locations where the cost of building the “service drop” on a long driveway is unaffordable as “unserved.”
  - ▶ Therefore, grant funds are not available for this use.
- ▶ In the long-term, this gap would have to be filled by the County and residents where feasible.

# Next Steps / Discussion

- ▶ Evaluate CTC's recommendations.
- ▶ Finalize the CTC Broadband Strategic Plan Report.
- ▶ Support ThinkBig in applying for the State of Maryland Grant - due February 21, 2020.
- ▶ Continue to pursue all options for all three unserved categories.
  
- ▶ ANY QUESTIONS / COMMENTS



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