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Update on Broadband Expansion Efforts as of June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023

On June 20, 2023, the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office announced its initial recommendations for the [Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks](#) (ROBIN) program. This program will potentially bring reliable, high-speed broadband service to over 6,300 residents and businesses in Van Buren County, 3,476 of which currently lack access.

Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC) submitted a \$56.4 million application for ROBIN funding to expand internet service in Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties. The application included a \$15.5 million investment from MEC and requested \$27.6 million from the State. Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties, along with townships and villages in the proposed counties committed over \$13 million.

If granted the full award, MEC will bring fiber internet to rural areas in Van Buren County. This would include approximately 92% of the homes in Van Buren County that currently lack access to high-speed internet. If fully awarded, the County will commit over \$4.1 million, and 12 townships will commit nearly \$1.4 million. MEC will begin construction in the fall of 2023 and will finish by the end of 2026. Customers will get activated once construction in their specific area is complete, and those exact plans have yet to be determined.

The ROBIN program now enters a 45-day objection period, and final awards will be determined after objections have been validated. The State expects to make final award announcements in August 2023 and stresses that not all applications will receive full funding due to the objections.

Learn More About This Announcement:

- **Local Press Release:** To see a full press release from Van Buren County and MEC on this new development, click [here](#) to access a PDF copy.
- **Statewide Press Release:** To see the State of Michigan's press release on this announcement, click [here](#) to access an online copy.
- **Map of Initial Award Locations:** To explore the addresses awarded to MEC as a part of the initial award announcements, click [here](#) to open the ROBIN award maps. Once the link has opened, select "Approved Addresses" from the map key on the right side of the screen.
- **List of Initially Awarded Projects:** To explore the projects throughout the State that were initially awarded and learn more about the grant program itself, click [here](#) to review the State's ROBIN webpage.

The County will provide an update to this information following the final ROBIN award announcement in August 2023.

Efforts to expand internet access to the remaining parcels that will not be served by this grant program are ongoing. To learn more, you may review previous updates available below.