

## **RURAL BROADBAND 2021 UPDATE 10/27/2021**

This fall Polk County IT re-sent over 5000 surveys to rural property owners outside the city limits of Dallas, West Salem, Monmouth, and Independence. This survey is a follow-up to the 2019 rural broadband survey. Property owners were asked to complete the updated survey and mail it in or go to the county website and complete the on-line survey. The survey was completed to accomplish two goals:

1. Identify if rural internet services have improved over the past two years.
2. Identify areas where the County, in partnership with local Internet Service Providers (ISP's), should focus future rural broadband projects.

The number of survey respondents was good. Over 28% of the property owners responded as compared to 32% in 2019.

[This summary and associated maps is available as a PDF document.](#) Using this information Polk County created a [Rural Broadband Project Request For Proposals](#) to assist Rural Internet Service Providers to improve service to these rural residents. (the above is also a link).

### **HAS RURAL INTERENET SERVICE IMPROVED**

Relative to 2019 the respondents reported that speeds and reliability have improved but respondents are paying more for this improvement. Even so, speeds and service remain far below national standards and state averages and continue to disagree with state and national service provider maps. As in 2019 the internet continues to be very important for households. The following summarizes the survey results and compares them to the original survey follow the reported results, improvements are colored green, deteriorations in red, and no changes in blue.

#### **1. Internet speeds remain far below national standard and the state average.**

- Over 30% of respondents have speeds less than 5Mbps (**up from 26% in 2019**)
- Almost 69% have service that is well below the federal definition of broadband service (**down from 90% in 2019**)

#### **2. Cost of service remains high and more respondents are paying more for service.**

- Over 28% of the respondents pay over \$100/mo for services (**up from 20% in 2019**)
- Over 82% of the respondents pay over \$50/mo for services (**up from 75% in 2019**)

#### **3. The level of service or reliability is not great but has improved**

- Almost 28% of the respondents rate their services as being bad or less than reliable (**down from 40% in 2019**) • 47% rate their service as better than OK (**up from 30% in 2019**)

#### **4. More respondents have service they are happy with but still the percentage that want better is very high**

- Almost 79% want better services (**down from 87% in 2019**)
- 63% felt there was nothing better (New Question)
- 19% cost of better service was a barrier (New Question)
- 17% felt installation costs were a barrier (New Question)

- 44% of respondents felt their service did not meet their needs during the pandemic last year

## 5. Respondents continue to use the internet for much more than entertainment.

- 80% of the respondents use the internet for personal business (about the same as 81% in 2019) •
- 43% of the respondents use the internet for education (up from 40% in 2019)
- 40% of the respondents use the internet for employment (new question)
- 65% of the respondents use the internet for health services (new question)

## 6. Changing Services

- 15% of respondents selected a new provider in the last year or two.

## 7. The number of internet providers available in rural Polk County continues to expand

The survey respondents identified 28 ISP's now providing services in Polk County as compared to 17 identified in the 2019 survey results. Most of the new ISP's provide services based on 4g/5g cellular service and were identified by only 1-2 respondents. They are not included in the list. The only provider that had a large expansion in services was Alyrica.

### Major Providers Small Providers (1-2% or Less)

- 36% - CenturyLink (36% in 2019) • AT&T
- 15% - Alyrica (up from 6% in 2019) • Adaptive
- 9% - OnLineNW (10% in 2019) • Dish
- 7%- Viasat (6% in 2019) • Minet
- 6% - Comcast (5% in 2019) • TMobile
- 5% - Charter(4% in 2019) • Viser
- 5% - HughsNet (down from 7% in 2019) • Wave
- 4% - Verizon (down from 7% in 2019)

### New Rural Fiber Providers

- Peak Fiber - SW County
- Ziple Fiber - North Central County
- Minet – NW/SE Monmouth/Independence

## Question Response Rate

Not every survey question was answered by each respondent. The following lists the percentages that each question was responded to.

1. Speeds and Service - 97%
2. Cost of Service - 95%
3. Reliability or Level of Service - 95%
4. Happy with Service - 95% (88% responded to the questions regarding COVID)
5. Internet Use - 99%
6. Changing Service - 94%

7. Service Provider - 96%