Chapter Five

Broadband Services

Introduction

The governor of Georgia has emphasized internet access throughout the state, and especially in the state's rural areas, to provide access to important information, education, and the ability to work from home. The five elements of digital connectivity are access to affordable, reliable internet connections at home and work, access to a computer, opportunity to learn and apply digital skills, knowledge to safely engage online, and accessible online government and community resources for all abilities.[1] The state's vision for digital connection is intended to ensure reliability, affordability, and opportunity to access economic, education, health, social resources to support growth and success.

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1   Georgia Technology Authority. 2024. "Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan."
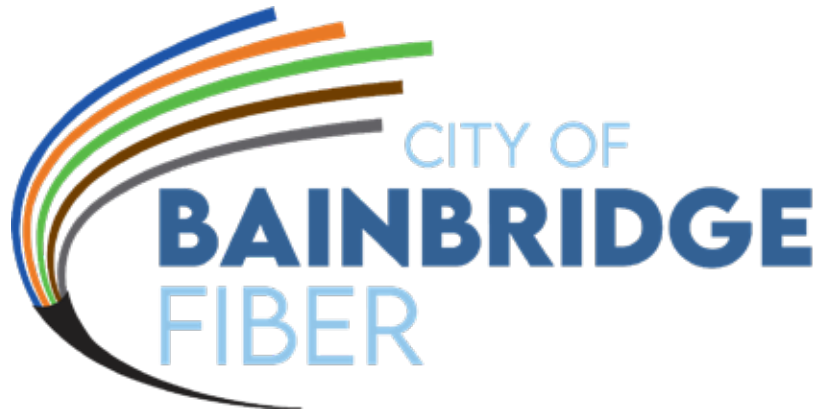
Figure 5.01: City of Bainbridge Logo

Key Community Concerns about Broadband

The city has established a broadband utility called "Bainbridge Fiber" and is extending fiber cables throughout the city, with plans for full coverage by the end of 2025. Currently, fiber is available in parts of the city and continues to expand, while other internet services—such as cable, fixed wireless, and DSL—remain available to residents. Broadband access has been identified as an important resource for communication, work, and recreation in many Bainbridge homes.

Only a few questions were brought to the public meetings or posed in communications to the planning team:

- Will broadband access be provided throughout the city?

- Will access to broadband be affordable?

- What can be done to support poor persons that cannot afford the cost of a computer or the monthly costs of internet service?

- Can the city provide wireless internet connections to downtown and along the Flint River to serve visitors?

Broadband Strategies

Current Service Areas & Providers

Provider	Download Speed	Availability	Connection
City of Bainbridge Fiber	1000 Mbps	In Progress to City-wide coverage	Fiber-Optic
Mediacom (Xtream)	1000 Mbps	67.9%	Cable
Viasat	150 Mbps	100%	Satellite
HughesNet	100 Mbps	100%	Satellite
EarthLink	25 Mbps	55.3%	DSL
AT&T	25 Mbps	55.5%	Wireless
Verizon	300 Mbps	5.1%	5G Internet
AlwaysOn	25-100 Mbps	20.4%	Fixed Wireless
Starlink	50-220 Mbps	100%	Satellite

Table 5.01: Current Broadband Services
Source: Broadbandnow.com/Bainbridge (referenced June 21, 2024, updated January 29, 2025)

The Georgia Broadband Service Availability Map (dated 2023) shows most of the area within the Bainbridge city limits is served by broadband providers although several specific locations within the city were identified as unserved when the map was published.

These findings are based on a fixed, terrestrial broadband definition of 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up, and where the broadband service is available to more than 80% of locations in a census block. Census blocks that did not meet this definition are delineated as "Unserved."

Unserved areas included the angle on the west side of US84 between the railroad and Bethel Road and parts of the Spring Creek Industrial Park south of Butler Ferry Road and to the Flint River. The Downrange Industrial Park around the Anovion development site north of the city was recently connected. Other census block areas just outside the city limits were also identified as unserved at the time the map was created by the State.

City of Bainbridge Fiber Utility

The City of Bainbridge Fiber system is a city utility responsible for installing fiber-optic cables to transmit data to provide faster speeds and higher bandwidth capacity than metal wire cables. At the current time, Bainbridge Fiber is limited to a small area north of the bypass along South West Street and South Scott Street. Standard service provides 1000 Mbps download/upload speed with unlimited data and options to purchase plans for faster upload and download speeds.

Federal & State Assistance

Programs To-Date

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is the Federal agency principally responsible for advising the President on telecommunications and information policy issues and leads national efforts to connect everyone to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet. The NTIA website https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/ provides information on resources, funding programs, and news.

The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Program provides funding for planning, infrastructure deployment and adoption programs and coordinates activities with the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) to expand broadband across the state. GTA has allocated $1.3 billion in grant funds to support remaining unserved and underserved locations in Georgia. The state's plan for connectivity is provided in two volumes published by GTA entitled Let's Connect Georgia Volumes I and II. Georgia's BEAD Initial Proposal Volume II was approved by NTIA in September 2024.[2]

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) helped connect thousands of households with affordable internet access needed for work, school, healthcare, and recreation through discounted services, and assistance in computer purchases. That program ended June 1st of 2024 when Congress decided not to continue funding it. The new federal administration will determine what assistance for broadband will be pursued at the national level. However, there has been broad bipartisan support at the federal and state level, and some form of federal assistance may still be forthcoming with more specific protections in place to govern how money is spent.[3] [4]

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2   Georgia Technology Authority. "BEAD Program." https://gta.georgia.gov/policies-and-programs/broadband/funding/bead-program.

3   Route Fifty. 2025. "States Urge Supreme Court to Save Affordable Internet Access Program." https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2025/01/more-20-states-states-ask-supreme-court-save-affordable-internet-access-program/402315/.

4   Route Fifty. 2025. "New BEAD Guidance Leaves States Searching for Answers." https://www.route-fifty.com/digital-government/2025/06/new-bead-guidance-leaves-states-searching-answers/405986/.

The State of Georgia launched the Georgia Broadband Program in 2018. The primary funding support has been through the BEAD program, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Connect program, FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) grants, and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Capital Projects Fund grants. A more recent program was funded by the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act BEAD program which funded $1.3 billion to fund service to remaining unserved locations.
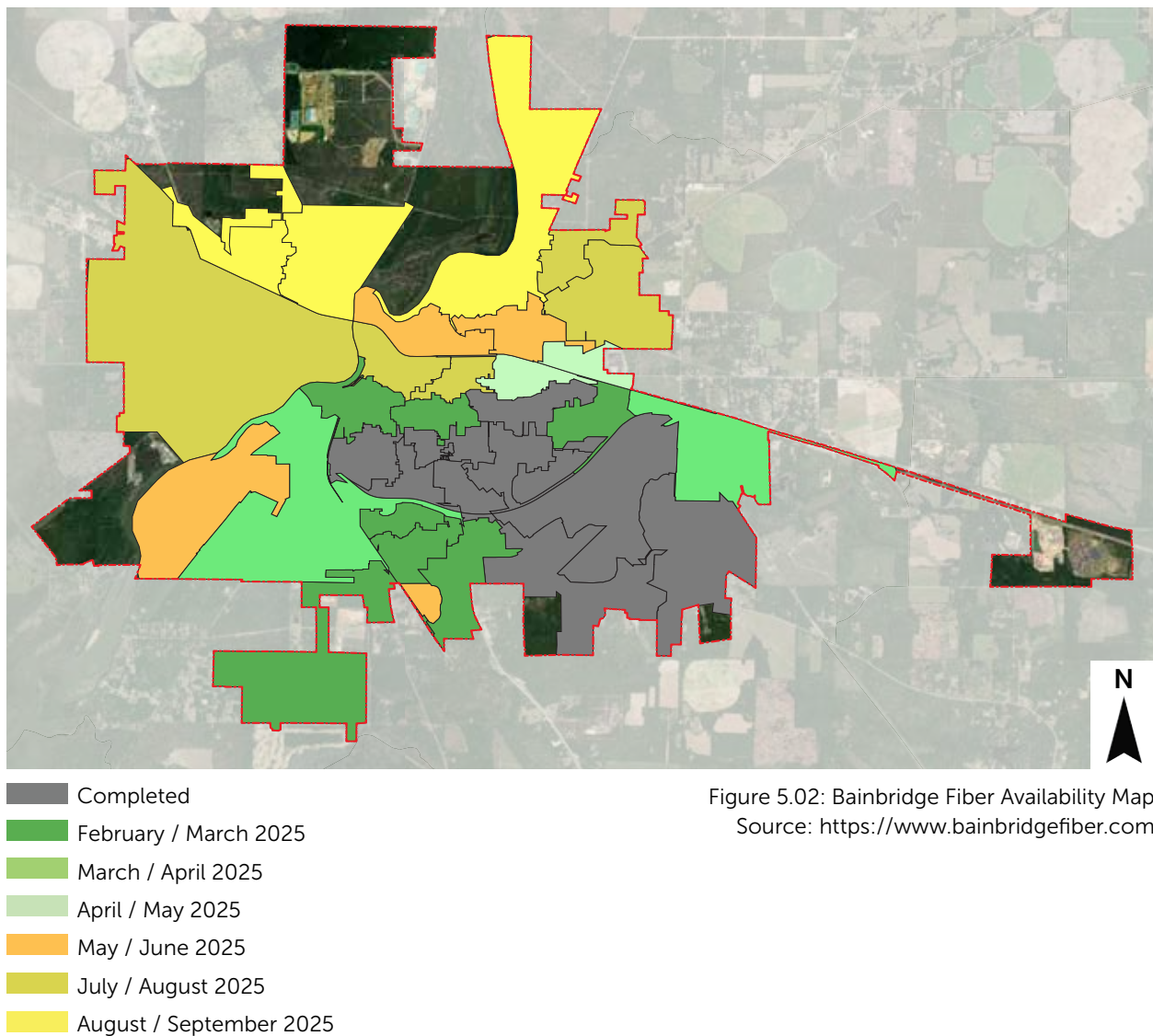

Legend:
- Completed
- February / March 2025
- March / April 2025
- April / May 2025
- May / June 2025
- July / August 2025
- August / September 2025

Figure 5.02: Bainbridge Fiber Availability Map
Source: https://www.bainbridgefiber.com

Going Forward

Federal assistance may be more likely to shift from infrastructure to availability. Satellite based systems such as Starlink and Amazon's proposed Kuiper project may be able to reduce the costs of deployment in areas that continue to be underserved. A report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation states that federal support may be more likely to shift to ensuring availability through a financial benefit to households at or below 135% of the federal poverty level or in the first three months of receiving unemployment insurance.[5]

The Digital Equity Act dedicates $2.75 billion to establish three grant programs to promote digital inclusion and ensure that all individuals and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to reap the full benefits of a digital economy. These programs are subject to executive and legislative branch decisions regarding funding.

Broadband Priorities

The city is working to expand broadband service throughout the city with potential expansion to areas outside the city at a later date. Expansion plans are identified by the live coverage map online at the City of Bainbridge fiber utility website.[6]

Public Access

Expanding access to free public internet in key areas where connectivity supports resident and visitor needs could offer significant community benefits. Locations such as Downtown, the Flint Riverwalk, Bill Reynolds Sports Park, the airport, and commercial corridors along East Shotwell Street and Tallahassee Highway present strong opportunities for investment.

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5   Information Technology & Information Foundation. 2025. "A Blueprint for Broadband Affordability."

6   City of Bainbridge Fiber. https://www.bainbridgefiber.com/.

Subscriber Access

The private sector is improving and expanding high-speed systems to compete for subscribers and keep telecommunications technology up to date. Additionally, the city will support extension of fiber-optic cable resources to areas unlikely to attract private investment.

Broadband Ready Community Certification

Broadband is considered an essential element of modern infrastructure. To position Bainbridge for continued growth and competitiveness, the City should pursue the requirements for the Broadband Ready Community Designation and identify eligible locations for the Broadband Ready Site Designation. Communities that amend their comprehensive plan to promote broadband deployment and adopt the state's model ordinance are eligible to apply for the designation (O.C.G.A. §50-40-40).

A second prerequisite is the adoption of an ordinance or code implementing the Georgia Streamlining Wireless Facilities and Antennas Act, using language from the Georgia Municipal Association Model Right of Way Ordinance or another resource acceptable to the City of Bainbridge.

Upon completion of these prerequisites, the City can prepare the certification application and support the expansion of efficient broadband resources and infrastructure.

Communications Strategy

Media messages may be communicated to available media outlets through traditional press releases, press conferences, public statement releases, or other methods. Social media including Facebook, X, Instagram or websites provide alternative means to get a message out to the residential and business communities, visitors, and other stakeholders.

The city should establish a plan to consider how messages are put together, how the city can be more transparent in releasing open information, and what measures are required to protect restricted personal, health, business, legal, or other information that may affect the ability of the city, its officials, employees, residents, property owners, or other stakeholders to successfully compete in a sensitive capacity.

Broadband Action Plan

Broadband availability is an important element in promoting community and economic development, educational attainment, and social engagement. The city will continue to explore ways to help expand high-speed internet service to underserved populations of the community and unserved areas. Bainbridge residents and businesses can subscribe to broadband through multiple private service providers, and access free Wi-Fi services available at the library.

Broadband Goals

1. Provide Broadband Fiber access throughout the City of Bainbridge.

   1.1: Compete the construction of the Bainbridge Fiber utility system to serve the city with fiber access to the internet and develop additional plans as needed to expand internet access as needed.

   1.2: On completion of the pre-requisites, prepare an application for certification as a Broadband Ready Community and support the continued development of efficient Broadband resources and infrastructure.

Economic Development Goals

2. Work with vocational training programs to ensure adequate supply of trained workforce.

   2.1: Work with the Industrial Authority, the Downtown Development Authority, and other organizations to Identify vocational training and technology courses that can be offered by internet to support anticipated needs for local industrial and services industry workers.

   2.2: Advertise internet-based vocational and workforce training courses to support industrial and services business needs and work with educational institutions and the business community to support successful completion of internet-based courses.

   2.3: Identify potential opportunities for local residents to participate in internet-based vocational training and support media and incentives for successfully completing training for local jobs and promotions.

3. Ensure Access to Internet and Continued Expansion of Broadband to support opportunities for education and enterprise.

> 3.1: Maintain and expand broadband resources to ensure access to communications and secure protection of important data.

Associated Local Emergency Preparedness Goal

4. Continue to coordinate with Decatur County, the State, and other agencies to manage public communications, warnings, readiness, and rapid recovery operations.

> 4.1: Provide resources to support online access for emergency operations and distribution of public information.

Associated Educational Opportunities Goals

5. Support local technical colleges and expanded local college course opportunities to increase workforce training and continuing education resources in the region.

> 5.1: Work with local colleges and technical schools to support online education and ensure that programs and services are available and affordable.

> 5.2: Provide support for online vocational training for emerging industries and technologies to supplement in-person programs.

6. Work with Decatur County Schools and private K-12 schools to support online classes and home study resources for students not able to attend in person.

> 6.1: Support online classes, study programs, school events, GED support, and vocational training for interested students that cannot attend in person.

> 6.2: Support programs to build basic life, business, and home management skills to help residents deal with day-to-day financial and personal challenges.

Bainbridge Tomorrow: 2025 to 2050 Comprehensive Plan