

Broadband Committee: Report Findings and Next Steps

Utilizing the planning grant made possible through the Island Institute, the IAH Town Broadband committee was able to commission a review of our current assets and initial engineering design for potential solutions.

In June, we published an open Request for Information, (RFI), from current and potential internet providers. We asked them to help us evaluate our current infrastructure and to think through initial design options. TDS who is our current provider for phone and internet did not choose to participate. We commissioned AXIOM, an internet company based in Machias, Maine. For perspective, their company motto is “every connection counts,” and they are specifically interested in the needs of rural communities. They made more than one trip out to Isle Au Haut as part of their initial evaluation and recommendation.

What are the key findings?

- Current internet service is highly variable depending on proximity to TDS equipment
- Majority of residences cannot receive minimum federal standard of 25/3 speeds
- Topography of the Island literally shapes the options available for the future
- Solution will continue to require wireless link from IAH to mainland
- A fiber optic “trunk” around ~7 miles of town road may be a good way to create internet infrastructure like a “utility”
- Wireless hotspots along the town road may be a good way to reach from the trunk to most residences

What are key questions?

- Do we believe that internet is a vital utility for the future of the community?
- How would we make sure that adequate capacity is available in the wireless link between the Island and the Mainland?
- How would this infrastructure coexist with TDS phone/internet service?
- Can we add fiber to the existing utility poles on the Island?
- How many and where would hotspots actually be needed?
- How do we make sure the system is not outdated before it is complete?
- What are potential ways to fund the infrastructure costs?

We invite you to read the full report generated by Axiom in this initial phase and be in touch with us about any feedback, ideas or questions! We welcome your thoughts and feedback!

The IAH Broadband Committee

Donna & Charlie Hopkins, Sue & Stew Foelix, & Roz Santospago