

From: [Laura Loe](#)
To: [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)
Subject: Topic: King County Broadband, Government Accountability and Oversight Committee - Public Comment
 10/12/2021
Date: Monday, October 11, 2021 10:44:05 PM

Dear County Councilmembers,

First of all, I want to thank King County Council for all you've done for digital equity, internet access and addressing community digital gaps.

We know that you're prepared to comprehensively address this issue and we applaud the county's efforts to study this in the 2020 Broadband Access Study.

Upgrade King County is an all-volunteer working group that supports the work of Share The Cities Action Fund -- our legislative advocacy nonprofit.

Publicly funded fiber should be owned by a public entity. This way the public owns control of how the fiber is used.

The entity can lease the fiber to non-profits, cooperatives or private companies in the same way King County leases fibers from Wave and Comcast for I-Net.

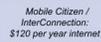
We've attached a few more references that inform our thinking about why fiber built alongside the EasTrail should become a public broadband spine for East King County.

For example, \$212 per month for internet (see Renton School study info attached) is a significant burden that Renton families are bearing -- the outcome of not having a public option for high speed internet.

Low-income digital access programs are rarely used

About half (47%) of those who qualify* are unaware of ANY low-income internet and technology assistance programs

Among those living at or below 135% FPL
 Awareness and Usage Tested as of Summer 2018/2019

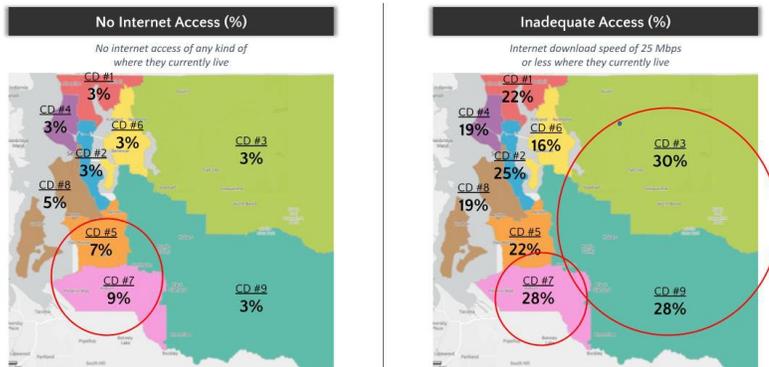
Low Income Internet Access Programs	Aware	Use
*Any of the Five Programs Tested (net)	53%	32%
 internet essentials <small>FROM COMCAST</small>	51%	28%
 Lifeline Phone Discount <small>provides smartphone service discounts</small>	32%	10%
 CenturyLink CenturyLink Internet Basics <small>Computer and Internet Basics</small>	27%	4%
 Mobile Citizen / InterConnection <small>\$120 per year internet</small>	20%	3%
 Simply Internet by wave	21%	2%

*Federal Poverty Level is determined by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) based on household income and size. The Federal Poverty Levels used for this study were based on the 2019 HHS Poverty Guidelines for King County residents outside the City of Seattle and 2018 HHS Poverty Guidelines for City of Seattle residents.

We need to get those costs down and the market won't do it. Also, 47% of people being unaware of discount programs is a dramatic problem. We are seeing this right now with the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit by for profit companies that isn't trickling down to community members. The money is

sitting there unspent. It is terrible.

Households in South and East King County are the most likely to lack or suffer from inadequate internet access



Pacific Market Research 5

This is something the government would do a much better job at -- helping people get connected to the discount programs they deserve to be connected to -- **lowering their utility burden, which will make stronger communities across our county!**

I believe this is a consumer protection issue. **We have waited too long and too much harm has come from the current exploitative systems.** We can't ignore it anymore - because of the pandemic. We have an opportunity **now** to do better for our communities.

Renton School District Families

Internet / Device Access



Renton School District families spend more per month on their *internet subscriptions*, compared to King County residents.



Average \$212/mo.*

Significantly higher than the general population at \$182/mo.

* Sig higher/ ** Sig lower than the general population

Despite most Renton School District families **considering their internet to be adequate**, there is a sizable group that relies on internet connections that are less than completely adequate.



1 in 5 find their internet connections and speeds to be less adequate



4.4 Average number of types of devices owned in the household (County average - 3.5)

Although most families in Renton School District have multiple devices in the household, many are dependent on fewer devices (1 in 5 households own 3 or fewer devices).



* Sig higher/ ** Sig lower than the general population

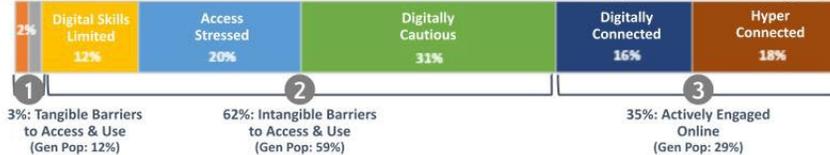
Digital Connectedness of Residents*

Many families in the Renton School District struggle with barriers to being fully digital: 1 in 8 face issues with inadequate digital literacy and over 1 in 5 struggle with limited or no access to the internet where they live.

Access Limited
Purposefully Disconnected
Device Limited

2 in 3 face barriers to access and use, primarily *intangible* barriers.

*See next page for more detail on these groups.



King County
Technology Access & Use Study 2019



Please be creative and future-thinking and move the county towards public broadband. Our communities deserve faster speeds and public broadband options.

Publicly funded fiber should be owned by a public entity. This way the public owns control of how the fiber is used.

(I'm writing today on behalf of the 40+ volunteers in Upgrade King County, but I'm also a renter in 98119 who has experienced a lot of internet challenges while living in Seattle).

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Laura Loe
She/Her
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Share The Cities Action Fund