

https://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/north/american-fork/american-fork-looks-to-build-million-broadband-infrastructure/article_7d426929-53e5-509c-becc-9500bdbe6cf3.html

American Fork looks to build \$25 million broadband infrastructure

By Carley Porter Daily Herald Jun 18, 2019



American Fork City Hall in spring 2018.

Daily Herald

[Buy Now](#)

Roughly 96% of American Fork residents have internet access, according to Mayor Brad Frost. But Frost believes the city can do better.

"We really want to have some good connectivity within our city limits," he said.

Which is why American Fork has commissioned a market study and feasibility report presented in a Tuesday afternoon work session, as well as surveys to get resident feedback on the proposed idea of a broadband infrastructure being built throughout the developed parts of the city.

According to the market study and feasibility report, out of 840 residents who responded to a broadband survey, 89% indicated interest in having access to "Gigabit fiber," and 87% of respondents agreed the city should help facilitate better internet access. Almost half of residents said internet accessibility affected where they chose to live.

"We've noticed that not all of our residents have access to broadband services, and it can be very detrimental to certain segments of our population," City Administrator David Bunker said. "We feel that every resident in our community needs and deserves to have access to broadband."

One of the needs both Bunker and Frost highlighted was internet access for students, many of whom download and submit assignments online or need to use the internet to do research or to collaborate with other students.

"Some students just don't have that access, and it can hold them back," Bunker said.

There is also a growing trend of people working from home.

"One of the things we've seen is that a large majority of our citizens either work from home part-time, full-time, or would work from home if they had connectivity," Bunker said. "And so part of what we're seeing as the growth is the need for this service so our (residents) can actually do work from their place of residency."

Initial estimates for the project suggest it would take a \$25 million bond to install the infrastructure. Bunker said that would supply it to the entire city, including residents and businesses. However, a final cost has not been approved because the city has not yet put the project out to bid to contractors, or finalized the design of the infrastructure.

Payment for the structure would come as a utility fee from residents, but Bunker said initial estimates show it would actually be less than what most residents currently pay for internet service providers, between \$60-\$70 a month.

"It would be a utility, because we feel like this service is needed for every home. It's equivalent to water or sewer or being able to get on the street and drive your car," Bunker said. "And so for a base fee, every home would be able to have that connectivity."

Once the infrastructure is in place, Bunker said it will be an "open access system" for any internet service provider to come in and offer different services. The city believes this will encourage internet service providers to offer competitive prices to residents and businesses.

"We really feel it will actually drive prices down with companies competing for business within the community," Bunker said. "So that's another advantage for a (resident) is they'll be able to shop and really dial in on what their needs are and what the best price would be for them."

Frost added that the infrastructure will hopefully be a draw for people to come work and live in American Fork, which currently has a population of 30,000. Bunker suggested the city could more than double that population. Final approval for the bond and the project itself likely won't happen until the fall, after residents are given ample time to provide feedback. Construction would start in 2020, unless, Frost said, Utah has a mild winter. Then, it will only be built in developed areas — future developments would also require the infrastructure to be built in.

"We certainly want to get going as quickly as possible," Frost said.

Bunker said the project could take between a year and a half to two and a half years to complete and would be done in phases, doing construction in different sections of the city in phases. The city had a website developed, <https://lighthubfiber.com/>, where residents can see dates of upcoming open houses for the proposal, as well as learn more about the project, such as its economic impact.

"We want it to be a very transparent process," Frost said.

Both Frost and Bunker expressed they believe this project will be an enormous benefit to the people living and working in American Fork.

"We're really excited about this project," Bunker said. "I think the biggest advantage for our residents is we really feel it will bring them better access and better economic freedom."

MORE INFORMATION



UTOPIA to complete Orem build out in 2022

Carley Porter