

Request for Decision

Title	Sturgeon County Broadband Initiative – Phase 1 Project Update and Future Planning
Proposed Motion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Council accept the Broadband Initiative Phase 1 Project Update as information. 2. That Council approve \$300,000 from the General Operating Reserve for design of future phases of Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative.
Administrative Recommendation	Administration recommends that Council receive the Broadband Initiative Phase 1 project update as information, and that Council approve \$300,000 in funding from the General Operating Reserve to complete the design of future phases of Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative.
Previous Council / Committee Direction	<p><u>March 22, 2022 Regular Council Meeting</u> Motion 115/22: That Council approve the Broadband Initiative Phase 1 Public Communications Plan as presented.</p> <p>Motion 116/22: That Council approve \$250,000 from the Corporate Support Capital Reserve for the Broadband Initiative Phase 1 project.</p> <p><u>February 22, 2022 Committee of the Whole Meeting</u> Motion 023/22: That the Committee receive the Broadband Initiative Project Update as information.</p> <p><u>September 14, 2021 Regular Council Meeting</u> Motion 448/21: That Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to execute the Broadband Initiative Phase One Agreement with the top-ranked proponent subject to the successful conclusion of contract negotiations.</p>
Report	<p>Background Information</p> <p><u>Phase 1 – Background Information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the February 23, 2021 Council meeting, Council directed Administration to proceed with the procurement of Phase 1 of the Broadband Initiative project. • Phase 1 includes the hamlets, subdivisions, business/industrial parks, and residences along the fibre path in the southwest portion of the County. This includes a number of strategic priority areas including Villeneuve Airport, ProNorth Industrial Park, and Heritage Industrial

Park as well as the hamlets of Villeneuve, Calahoo, and Rivière Qui Barre.

- On April 27, 2021, Council passed Bylaw 1530/21 to authorize a debenture of \$7.3 million for Phase 1 of the Broadband Initiative and subsequently authorized an additional \$250,000 of reserve funding for Phase 1.
- Following an extensive procurement process, at the September 14, 2021 Regular Council Meeting, Council authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to execute the Broadband Initiative Phase One Agreement with the top-ranked proponent subject to the successful conclusion of contract negotiations.
- Administration concluded contract negotiations in November 2021 and awarded the project to Canadian Fiber Optics Corporation (CFOC). CFOC is experienced in funding, designing, building, and operating fast and reliable rural internet networks.

Broadband Initiative Goal and Principles

- The goal of the Broadband Initiative is to build and operate a fast, reliable, and affordable broadband network through a partnership where the County and a private sector partner contribute financially to the creation of the network, the partner builds, operates, and maintains the network, and retailers offer services to residents and businesses.
- The principles of this initiative include:
 - Investing along with the private sector to expand fibre-based broadband service availability in the County,
 - Ensuring that taxpayer investments are protected,
 - Providing services that are reliable, fast, and affordable,
 - Encouraging innovation,
 - Allowing residents and businesses to obtain broadband services from their choice of competitive retail provider,
 - Providing fibre to the premise in hamlets, subdivisions, and business parks,
 - Connecting as many rural residents along the fibre route as possible, and
 - Enabling rural residents not serviced by fibre to the premises to benefit from improved backhaul and potential future fibre network expansion.

Phase 1 Update

- The construction team has been actively working following construction delays experienced in the spring due to an extended rainy season. There are currently 6 teams working, focusing on burying conduit prior to winter.

- To date, 722 of 996, or 73% of all premises in the Phase 1 area, have access agreements in place. The requirement to sign an access agreement has been communicated to residents through direct letter, through open houses held in the spring, on the County's website, and on social media. Crews are also going door-to-door to seeking landowner agreement to enter into access agreements to allow for fibre to be installed on their property.
- Administration has heard positive comments about the construction crew's quality of work to date. The County and CFOC are committed to minimizing negative impacts to residents' properties.
- The team is focused on completing conduit installation before winter. Depending on the weather, there is possibility that some construction may need to carry forward into 2023.
- A go-live date for service has not been confirmed. CFOC is coordinating the connection to the Internet Exchange in downtown Edmonton, an important step in making the service available.
- Once the connection to the Internet Exchange is complete, installation teams will still need to bring the fibre from the outside of the premise inside and make the final connection. Once that is in place, the home or business owner can subscribe to their retailer of choice.

Planning and Design of Future Phases

- Grant funding to date has been reliant on the National Broadband Internet Service Availability Map, which inaccurately reports speed tests in Sturgeon County, supported by data from the open-source Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA). Over 2,000 speed tests in the Sturgeon Region conducted to data demonstrate that most of Sturgeon County is not experiencing the 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload speeds that the Government of Canada has established as the minimum acceptable Internet service level in Canada.
- On September 20, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced the establishment of the Alberta Broadband Fund (ABF) of \$36 million, separate from the \$390 million over four years previously committed. Although grant program eligibility has not yet been announced, it is anticipated that the ABF will be accessible to municipalities using more flexible eligibility criteria, potentially including CIRA speed test data.
- Previous broadband grant programs required that municipalities partner with an Internet Service Provider and have a shovel-ready project to fund. Sturgeon County has established a strong working relationship with CFOC and is seeking Council's support for the design of future phases for Sturgeon County to be well-positioned to apply for ABF grant funding and any other grant funding that may become available in the short-term.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on learnings from Phase 1, Administration is seeking to undertake public engagement with the community prior to finalizing service locations for future phases. It is important for the County to understand the unique needs and service level expectations of various communities prior to committing significant funding for broadband infrastructure. Administration also seeks to understand existing services in the Sturgeon Valley and Cardiff areas, as well as engage with CFB Edmonton and businesses in the Heartland prior to including or excluding them from the scope of future phases. The specific scope of future phases will be presented at a future Council meeting for Council's approval. The \$300,000 in funding will signal to CFOC that Sturgeon County is committed to advancing the Broadband Initiative, while also allowing Administration to be nimble in applying for grant through the ABF or other grant programs. <p><u>External Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration held 4 open houses in the spring of 2022 for Phase 1 residents and stakeholders. Addressed letters were sent to property owners in the Phase 1 area providing information on the initiative and encouraging residents to sign access agreements. Sturgeon County has advocated for increased grant program eligibility and increased grant funding in order to accelerate the deployment of high speed internet in Sturgeon County, including to a number of provincial and federal cabinet ministers. Administration continues to update the Broadband Initiative information on the County's website at www.sturgeoncounty.ca/getconnected. <p><u>Relevant Policy/Legislation/Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2018 Sturgeon County and Town of Morinville Broadband Analysis 2020 Edmonton Metropolitan Region Broadband Situation Analysis 2021 Budget Bylaw 1530/21 – Debenture for Broadband Infrastructure – Phase 1
<p>Implication of Administrative Recommendation</p>	<p><u>Strategic Alignment:</u></p> <p>Planned Growth – Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative supports modern broadband and digital capabilities.</p> <p>Operational Excellence – Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative demonstrates future focused thinking to proactively respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.</p>

	<p><u>Organizational:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is sufficient administrative capacity to support public engagement and design of future phases of the Broadband Initiative. <p><u>Financial:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of funding will enable the design of future phases of the project, enabling Administration to be nimble in preparing Sturgeon County in applying for grant funding.
Alternatives Considered	Council could decide not to approve the \$300,000 required to design future phases of Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative.
Implications of Alternatives	<p><u>Strategic Alignment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design of future phases of the Broadband Initiative would not proceed, and momentum on the County's Broadband Initiative may stall. <p><u>Organizational:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. <p><u>Financial:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
Follow up Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Canadian Fiber Optics Corporation (CFOC) on the design of future phases of Sturgeon County's Broadband Initiative (Information Services, Q4 2022 – 2023). Plan 2023 Broadband Initiative public engagement activities (Information Services & Corporate Communications, Q4 2022 – 2023).
Attachment(s)	1. Attachment 1: Broadband Initiative Update Presentation
Report Reviewed by:	<p>Rob Schneider, Manager, Information Services</p> <p>Jesse Sopko, General Manager, Corporate Services</p> <p>Reegan McCullough, County Commissioner – CAO</p>

Strategic Alignment Checklist

Vision: *Offering a rich tapestry of historical, cultural, and natural experiences, Sturgeon County is a municipality that honours its rural roots and cultivates desirable communities. Uniquely situated to provide world-class agricultural, energy, and business investment opportunities, the County prioritizes responsible stewardship and dreaming big.*

Guiding Principles: Collaboration | Accountability | Flexibility | Excellence | Safety | Future Readiness | Affordability | Innovation

Community Outcome	Not consistent	Consistent	N/A
Planned Growth			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internationally competitive to attract, grow and sustain diverse businesses; tenacious focus on new growth and innovation 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern broadband and digital capabilities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost, minimal red-tape regulations 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable and effective infrastructure planning; comprehensive land use and infrastructure planning 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thriving Communities			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautiful, surprising places with high standards; integrated natural spaces & trail systems; healthy and resilient 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging cultural, historical, and civic amenities; strong community identity and pride 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe, welcoming, and diverse communities; small community feel and personal connection; commitment to high quality of life 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Stewardship			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean air, land, and water; Carbon neutral municipal practices; circular economy opportunities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation of natural areas and agricultural lands; enhanced greening and biodiversity; safekeeping ecosystems 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable development; partnerships with industry and others to drive emission reductions 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Collaborative Governance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predictable and stable external relationships; volunteer partnerships 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful connections with Indigenous communities 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing community consultation and engagement; transparent and action-oriented decision making based on sound rationale 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respectful and informed debate; clear and supportive governance processes 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Operational Excellence			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged and effective people – Council, Admin and Volunteers; continuous learning and improvement mindset; nimble and bold, with strong leadership 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality cost-effective service delivery; robust procurement and operational practices and policies; asset management and performance measurement; careful debt and reserve stewardship; long-term financial planning and sustainability 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future focused thinking to proactively respond to emerging opportunities and challenges 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative revenue generation and service delivery models integrated strategic and business planning 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>