

Madison Gigabit begins paid service

Gracie Hart Brooks Jun 6, 2019

Some county residents are enjoying high-speed internet service.

Local startup Madison Gigabit hit the green light earlier this month, sending out its first bills to customers. Previously the service was in a testing phase, with approximately a dozen users. The paid service is \$75 per month for residents and \$125 per month for businesses and owner Clint Hyde said he doesn't expect that to change. What will change however is speed and the number of available locations.

Currently, service is limited to within approximately two miles from a radio receiver located at the business' office on Washington Street. However, Hyde has plans to expand to Wolftown and Rochelle this year, followed by other locations in the county in the future. Some locations have already been identified as spots for potential radio antennas, including a grain silo. The business will continue to run off of wireless radios, which limits the speed and capacity, until additional fiber can be installed at which time both speed and capacity can increase. Hyde said currently, the speed is 100mbps which is enough for most internet-related functions including web browsing, video and audio streaming, gaming, live streaming and video calling.

Among the core goals of Madison Gigabit is to have internet available throughout the county in five years or less. Hyde had hoped to win a grant from the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) to support that goal. The grant required a public-private partnership and with Madison Gigabit and Madison County teaming up, an application was submitted in December.

The application requested \$75,000 with Madison Gigabit putting up \$56,000 and the county providing \$12,000 with a large portion being in-kind through the use of various structures.

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In February, it was announced that Madison was not chosen as a grant recipient. Approximately \$11 million in grant proposals were submitted for \$4 million in funding. Ultimately, \$4.9 million was awarded.

Last week, Hyde said he found out that Madison's grant application fell just below the cutoff for funding. It's unknown if the county and Madison Gigabit will reapply. The next pot of money has grown exponentially, up from \$4 million to \$19 million. Grant proposals are due in September.

For more information about Madison Gigabit, visit www.madisongigabit.com.

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