BERRIEN COUNTY BROADBAND INTERNET TASK FORCE

BCBIT

July 7, 2022 ~ 11:30 AM

Zoom+

MEETING NOTES

ATTENDEES: Berrien County Commissioner **Teri Freehling**; Berrien County Commissioner **Jim Curran**; Berrien County Commissioner **Ezra Scott**; Berrien County Administrator **Brain Dissette**; Berrien County Corporate Counsel **Thaddeus Hackworth**; Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) Executive Director **John Egelhaaf**; DCS Technology Design, LLC Director of Network Engineering **Chris Scharrer**; Wesaw Township Resident **James Pelletier**.

I. **DCS BRIEFING & STATUS UPDATE.** As with the previous meeting, this agenda item was moved to the start of the meeting. Chris Scharrer from DCS Technology gave a briefing and status update for the Countywide broadband mapping project. Project is moving along ahead of schedule. Mr. Scharrer screen-shared his team's GIS mapping progress thus far. Several clusters popped out without prompting, mainly, large clusters of areas throughout Berrien County that are unserved and underserved. Middle-mile infrastructure route possibilities supporting rural broadband accessibility were discussed at great length. Administrator Dissette tied this discussion to the pending 911-Dispatch and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) move from their current location at 2100 E Empire Avenue in Benton Township to 500 Circle Drive in Buchanan. The sale of this building is in the final negotiations stages with American Electric Power (AEP). A point-to-point fiber-line, connecting County buildings, along with alternative paths were discussed. Potential grant funding opportunities, both State and Federal, supporting broadband expansion and public safety priorities will put this project at the top of the funding list.

II. **ANCHOR INSTITUTION SUBCOMMITTEE.** Anchor Institutions discussed at previous meeting with be invited to join us at our July 21st meeting. The format for this meeting will be a roundtable discussion. Topics for the roundtable will be introductions of intuitional representative and how they connect to the internet, broadband synergies, middle mile collaboration, targeted funding, projects in process, or planned, and identification of unique needs or existing efforts requiring a solution. Commissioner Scott requested this is a good time to include the County's IS department and invite the new director of the Road Department to this meeting.

III. **BROADBAND MAPPING STEWARDSHIP.** John Egelhaaf, SWMPC, led the group regarding this agenda item. Mr. Egelhaaf asked for a process or policy for updating the DCS GIS Map with new information as broadband is deployed and the status of the parcel changes. Chris Scharrer, DCS Technology, agreed this is an important endeavor, with multiple options, but feels the group probably should complete the mapping survey first, as he is contracted to do. Once the final report is completed and presented, then let's talk updates to the mapping process if so desired.

IV. MIDDLE MILE CONSIDERATIONS. John Egelhaaf, SWMPC, updated the group on his recent quest to fully understand middle mile infrastructure through webinars, resource gathering, and numerous correspondence with Merit. When the group is ready, he would like to share his knowledge and better understanding of the middle mile backhaul along with build out possibilities for Berrien County and our region. A state-wide map of Merit's infrastructure was shared, as presented at previous meetings.

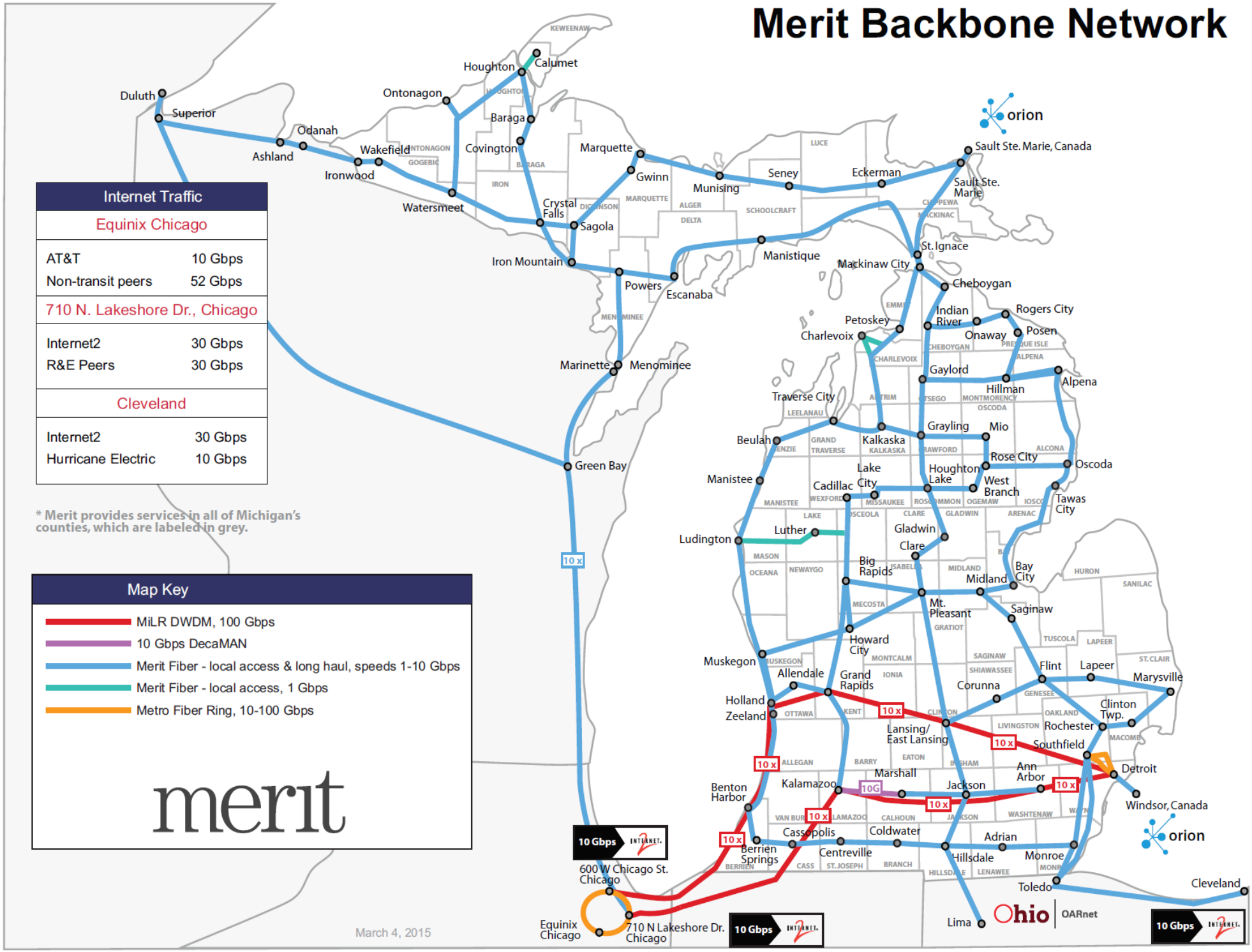
V. MSU/MERIT MOON-LIGHT GRANT. John Egelhaaf, SWMPC, discussed the recent announcement of the MSU-Merit Moonlight Grant. Michigan State University and Merit Network are joint recipients of a $10.5 million National Telecommunication and information, NTIA, Broadband Infrastructure Grant. MSU and Merit applied for the grant together. This project will help address critical infrastructure gaps by enabling technologically advanced, middle-mile fiber optic infrastructure across the state thus allowing interconnecting local internet service providers to bring affordable, robust, high-speed broadband internet to homes and businesses in underserved and unserved population areas.

Unlike closed (private) infrastructure that offers services from a single service provider to residents, the MOON-Light network will provide regional connectivity through an open-access network approach. Open-access networks are high-performance networks that are open to multiple providers that leverage the infrastructure to offer high-capacity broadband services to residents and businesses. With non-profit and cooperative organizations working together, projects like this reduce costs and accelerate broadband projects for both commercial and cooperative ISPs. This "middle mile" project intends to allow internet providers to later hook into the network for "last mile" service delivery to households.

VI. COMMUNITIES RECEIVING SWMPC ASSISTANCE. John Egelhaaf, SWMPC, gave the group an update on communities receiving SWMPC broadband planning and grant writing assistance. Since our last meeting, Mr. Egelhaaf has met with Chikaming Township and Hagar Township. Both townships were appreciative of Mr. Egelhaaf updated the community as it relates to the fluid every changing dynamics of the broadband funding landscape. Administrator Dissette has asked for the continued encouragement of townships and local municipalities to get the ARPA applications submitted to the County. As of yet, the SWMPC grant writer has not been needed yet for ARPA applications, but is learning as much as she can by watching webinars on broadband funding. James Pelletier from Weesaw Township indicated he has reached out to Merit, and is working with them on broadband infrastructure planning and funding.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS. Next BCBIT Meeting is TBD. Future meetings will include an Anchor Institution Subcommittee Roundtable. Invitations will be sent via email. This will be a virtual meeting.

Merit Backbone Network



Internet Traffic	
Equinix Chicago	
AT&T	10 Gbps
Non-transit peers	52 Gbps
710 N. Lakeshore Dr., Chicago	
Internet2	30 Gbps
R&E Peers	30 Gbps
Cleveland	
Internet2	30 Gbps
Hurricane Electric	10 Gbps

* Merit provides services in all of Michigan's counties, which are labeled in grey.

Map Key

- MiLR DWDM, 100 Gbps
- 10 Gbps DecaMAN
- Merit Fiber - local access & long haul, speeds 1-10 Gbps
- Merit Fiber - local access, 1 Gbps
- Metro Fiber Ring, 10-100 Gbps

merit

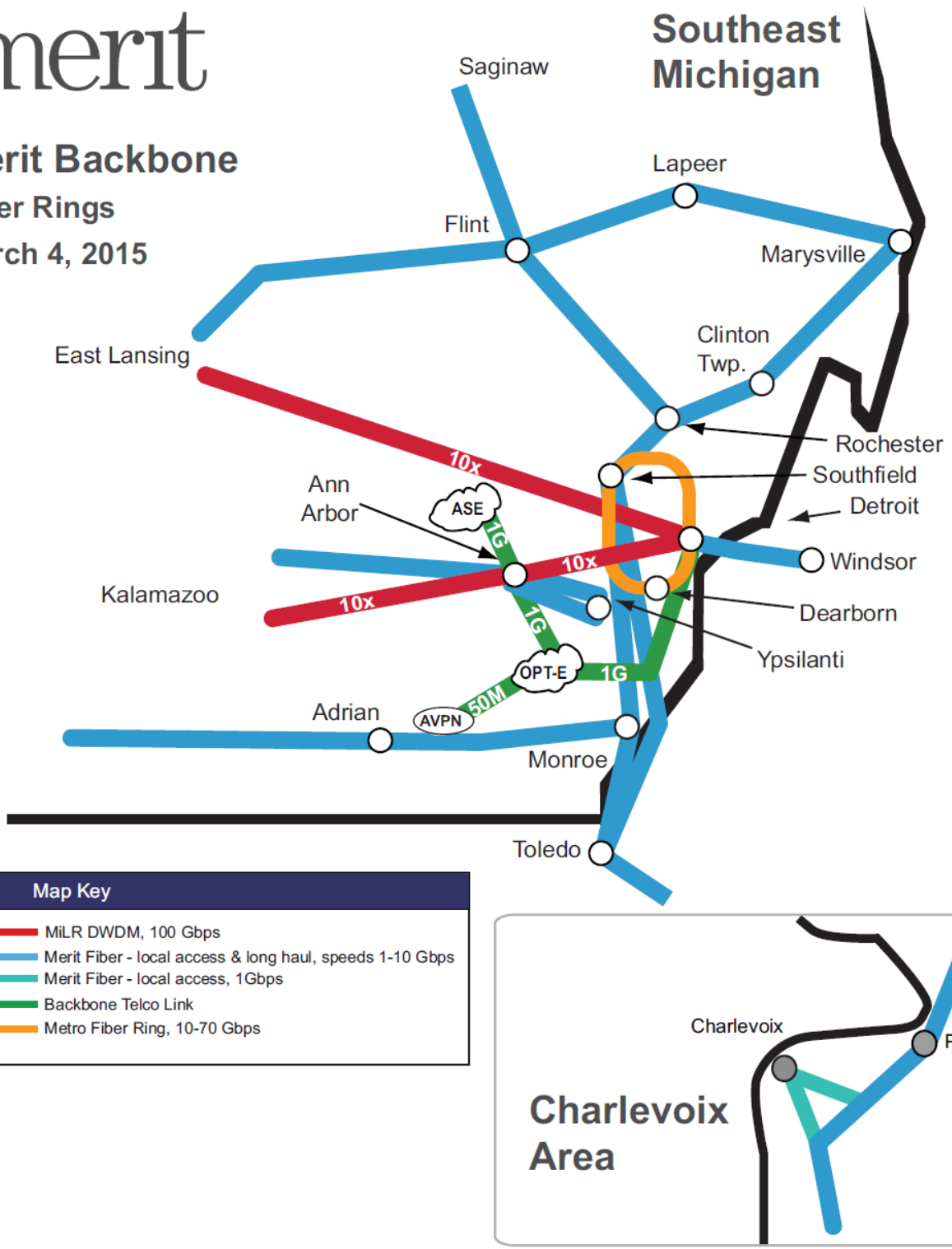
March 4, 2015

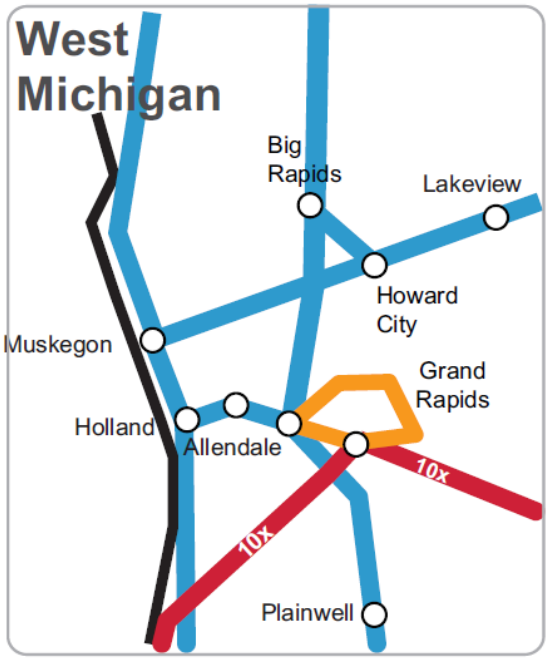
merit

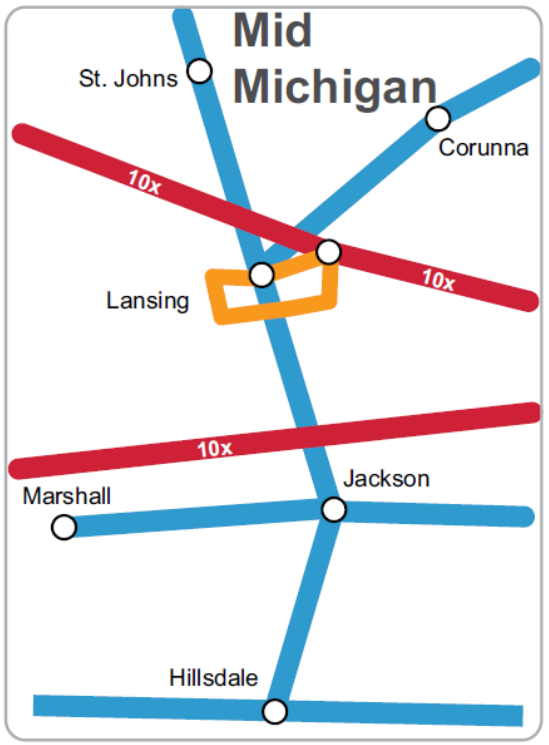
Merit Backbone

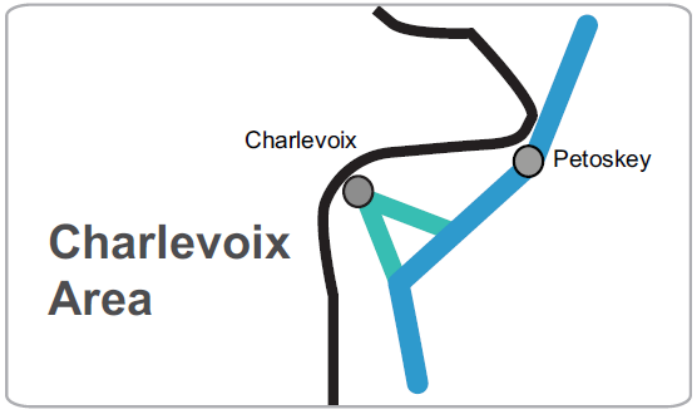
Fiber Rings

March 4, 2015









Map Key

- MiLR DWDM, 100 Gbps
- Merit Fiber - local access & long haul, speeds 1-10 Gbps
- Merit Fiber - local access, 1Gbps
- Backbone Telco Link
- Metro Fiber Ring, 10-70 Gbps