

## Local residents encouraged to take Indiana Speed Test

(Article 1<sup>st</sup> appeared in the August 1, 2021 edition of the Evening Star)

Leaders of broadband expansion in all four local counties are hoping to receive state grants to help with the the cost of building rural fiber-optic networks, estimated at \$20 million to \$30 million per county.

A key step in qualifying for grants will be proving that local residents need better internet service.

Local leaders are encouraging residents to take the Indiana Speed Test at [infb.org/speedtest](http://infb.org/speedtest). Indiana Farm Bureau and several partners are sponsoring the speed test.

“The speed test may be performed multiple times on any device that has an internet or cellular connection. The test takes less than one minute to complete, and no personal information will be collected,” Farm Bureau says.

In addition to measuring their internet speeds, people also can use the test site to report that they have no internet service at all.

Taking the survey is important “so we can get a true assessment of what the internet speeds are countywide,” said Anton King, executive director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership. The partnership recently launched the DeKalb County Broadband Initiative with a web page to guide residents to the test site.

The county needs 375 test reports to be considered as quality data, King said.

The surveys “are so critical in making this happen in Noble County,” said Ron Raypole, CEO of Noble REMC.

“If armed with the right data, the kind that the Indiana Speed Test can collect, Noble County will be in a better position to compete” for grants, Lori Gagen, operations director of Noble County Economic Development Corp., wrote in a recent article for KPC Media Group newspapers.

The test results will be important in counteracting federal maps that show an inaccurate picture of broadband in northeast Indiana, officials say.

“Those maps are upside down, showing that 87% of Noble County has it available, already,” Raypole said. He believes the correct figure is 20-30%.

Partly as a result, the federal government in recent years has awarded grants to providers of slower internet services such as wireless networks. Raypole called that frustrating.

State officials realize that the federal data is misleading about the local need for broadband, Raypole added.

“They are trying to use other means of showing that it’s needed. The Farm Bureau survey is one way,” he said.

As of late last week, Farm Bureau had collected tests from more than 8,000 locations across Indiana.

The project is looking to count Hoosiers who do not have at least 25 MB upload and 3 MB download speeds:

Local county results last week showed:

- DeKalb 93 tests, 64 below standard;
- LaGrange 17 tests, 16 below standard;
- Noble 319 tests, 294 below standard;
- Steuben 49 tests, 41 below standard;
- Four-county total — 478 tests, 415 below standard.