Corporation of the County of Elgin
Connectivity Committee

AGENDA

For Wednesday, July 20, 2022, 2:00 P.M

1st Meeting Called to Order

2nd Approval of the Agenda

3rd Adoption of Minutes – June 29, 2022

4th Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

5th Delegations

6th Reports

1) Connectivity Advocacy Plan Updates
2) *Building Broadband Faster Act, 2021 Update* – Chief Administrative Officer (walk-on)
3) SWIFT Project Update – Chief Administrative Officer (walk-on)

7th Other Business

8th Correspondence

9th Date of Next Meeting

10th Adjournment

VIRTUAL MEETING: IN-PERSON PARTICIPATION RESTRICTED

NOTE FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Please click the link below to watch the Council Meeting:
https://www.facebook.com/ElginCountyAdmin/

Accessible formats available upon request.

Corporation of the County of Elgin

CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES
For Wednesday, June 29, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

The Elgin County Connectivity Committee met this 29th day of June, 2022. The meeting was held in a hybrid in-person/electronic format with Committee Members and staff participating as indicated below.

Attendees: Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair (in-person)
Councillor Dominique Giguère (electronic)
Councillor Duncan McPhail (electronic)
Justin Pennings, Community Member (electronic)
Mike Andrews, Community Member

Staff: Julie Gonyou, Chief Administrative Officer (in-person)
Brian Lima, General Manager of EPE/Deputy CAO (in-person)
Delany Leitch, Legislative Services Coordinator (in-person)

Regrets: Jeremy Sharkey, IT Coordinator
Joshua Kiirya, Community Member

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting convened at 2:05 p.m. with Councillor McPhail the Chair. Deputy Warden Marks was delayed due to an event and later resumed the Chair.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by: Councillor Giguère
Seconded by: Councillor McPhail

RESOLVED THAT the agenda for the June 29, 2022 meeting be approved as presented.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Dominque Giguère	X		
Councillor Duncan McPhail	X		
Justin Pennings	X		
Mike Andrews	X		
Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair	X		
TOTAL	5	0	

- Motion Carried.

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Councillor Giguère
Seconded by: Justin Pennings

RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the meeting held February 17, 2022 be adopted.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Dominque Giguère	X		
Councillor Duncan McPhail	X		
Justin Pennings	X		
Mike Andrews	X		
Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair	X		
TOTAL	5	0	

- Motion Carried.

4. DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST OR THE GENERAL NATURE THEREOF

None.

5. DELEGATIONS

None.

6. BRIEFINGS

6.1 Whites Station Operations Centre Antenna Communications Tower Optional Replacement Report – General Manager of Engineering, Planning and Enterprise

The General Manager of Engineering, Planning and Enterprise presented the report providing the Committee with a review of the recently completed structural inspection undertaken on the County's Whites Station Operations Centre antenna communication tower.

Moved by: Councillor Giguère
Seconded by: Justin Pennings

RESOLVED THAT the report titled "Whites Station Operations Centre Antenna Communications Tower - Optional Replacement Report" from the General Manager of Engineering, Planning, & Enterprise (EPE) / Deputy CAO, dated June 21, 2022 be received and filed; and

THAT follow-up information with respect to the option of providing space at Whites Station for prospective ISPs to install towers be provided to the Connectivity Committee at a future meeting.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Dominque Giguère	X		
Councillor Duncan McPhail	X		
Justin Pennings	X		
Mike Andrews	X		
Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair	X		
TOTAL	5	0	

- Motion Carried.

6.2 Connectivity Advocacy Plan – Chief Administrative Officer

The Chief Administrative Officer presented the report containing a draft *Connectivity Advocacy Plan* for the Committee's review and comment.

Moved by: Mike Andrews
Seconded by: Justin Pennings

RESOLVED THAT the report from the Chief Administrative Officer, entitled "Connectivity Advocacy Plan", dated June 22, 2022 be received and filed; and

THAT feedback from the Committee be incorporated into the Connectivity Advocacy Plan; and

THAT a revised Connectivity Advocacy Plan be presented to the Connectivity Committee at a future meeting.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Dominque Giguère	X		
Councillor Duncan McPhail	X		
Justin Pennings	X		
Mike Andrews	X		
Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair	X		
TOTAL	5	0	

- Motion Carried.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Connectivity Committee will meet again on July 20, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Councillor Giguère
Seconded by: Justin Pennings

RESOLVED THAT we do now adjourn at 3:15 p.m. to meet again at the call of the Chair.

Recorded Vote

	Yes	No	Abstain
Councillor Dominque Giguère	X		
Councillor Duncan McPhail	X		
Justin Pennings	X		
Mike Andrews	X		
Deputy Warden Tom Marks, Chair	X		
TOTAL	5	0	

- Motion Carried.

_____	_____
Julie Gonyou, Chief Administrative Officer.	Tom Marks, Chair.

REPORT TO CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

FROM: Julie Gonyou, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Connectivity Advocacy Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Connectivity Committee Advocacy Plan be approved and forwarded to Elgin County Council for their review and endorsement.

PURPOSE:

At its meeting on June 29, 2022, the Connectivity Committee reviewed a draft Connectivity Committee Advocacy Plan. The purpose of this report is to follow-up on feedback received regarding the plan. A revised draft of the plan is attached to the report for the Committee's consideration.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Appendix I – draft Connectivity Advocacy Plan
- Appendix II - Infographic – Connectivity Advocacy Plan
- Appendix III - Fibre Optic Progress Map - Connectivity in Elgin

BACKGROUND:

The Connectivity Committee has worked very hard to identify ways to create enabling environment for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to grow and flourish within Elgin County.

The landscape for connectivity networks across Elgin County is already changing. Since the Committee's work began in 2018, additional community networks have emerged, and their potential for meeting connectivity gaps has improved (see Appendix III). Nevertheless, there are still many areas that must still be addressed before community networks will reach their full potential which is why a formalized Connectivity Advocacy Plan is imperative.

CONNECTIVITY STUDY – BACKGROUND & DECISION-MAKING:

The following information provides background information and the decision-making chronology for the Internet Connectivity and Broadband Analysis, Assessment, and Proposed Solutions study undertaken by IBI Group.

- In 2021, Elgin County Council engaged IBI Group to complete a study including "Internet Connectivity and Broadband Analysis, Assessment, and Proposed Solutions" ("Study"). The Study provides a series of actions that are intended to advance connectivity in the County, while acknowledging the importance of partnerships and advocacy efforts. It recognizes the importance of broadband as an indispensable part of modern infrastructure.

- At the December 16th 2021 Connectivity Committee ("Committee") meeting, IBI Group presented its final draft report which included options to advance the access of affordable and reliable high-speed internet in Elgin County. For ease of reference, IBI Group's options are included within the next section of this report.

- The Connectivity Committee carefully considered all options presented by IBI Group and requested that staff provide additional information regarding Option #1: Advocacy, Strategic Purchasing & ISP Coordination.

- At its meeting on February 17th, the Connectivity Committee passed the following motion:

  > THAT the IBI final report titled "Internet Connectivity and Broadband Analysis, Assessment, and Proposed Solutions" presented to Elgin County Council; and
  >
  > THAT the Chair be directed to provide Elgin County Council with a summary of the Connectivity Committee's recommended next steps with respect to final report prepared by IBI Group Inc.

- On February 22, 2022, Elgin County Council supported the Connectivity Committee's recommendation and passed the following motion:

  > THAT the report titled "Internet Connectivity - IBI Group Final Report and Committee Recommendations" from Deputy Warden Marks, dated February 17, 2022, be received and filed for information; and,
  >
  > THAT Elgin County Council support the Connectivity Committee's recommendation to leverage existing staff resources and the Connectivity Committee to support to IBI's Option #1 – Advocacy, Strategic

Purchasing and ISP Coordination to facilitate and advocate for investment in broadband infrastructure (senior government / private sector).

- A delay in bringing forward a draft strategy for consideration by the Committee was associated with a technical disruption at the County of Elgin in April 2022 which required Committee meetings to be suspended for the month of April and part of May.

- On June 29, 2022, staff presented a draft Connectivity Advocacy Plan for the Committee's review. The Committee provided comments, and a revised Plan is attached for further consideration.

CONNECTIVITY ADVOCACY PLAN:

Advocacy efforts with all other levels of government to be centered on the critical role played by access to stable and affordable broadband infrastructure in local, provincial, and national economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Connectivity Advocacy Plan includes four (4) key pillars which are detailed in Appendix I. An infographic that supports the Connectivity Advocacy Plan is included in Appendix II and a Fibre Optic Progress Map is included in Appendix III.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Serving Elgin	Growing Elgin	Investing in Elgin
☒ Ensuring alignment of current programs and services with community need. ☒ Exploring different ways of addressing community need. ☒ Engaging with our community and other stakeholders.	☐ Planning for and facilitating commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural growth. ☐ Fostering a healthy environment. ☒ Enhancing quality of place.	☒ Ensuring we have the necessary tools, resources, and infrastructure to deliver programs and services now and in the future. ☐ Delivering mandated programs and services efficiently and effectively.

LOCAL MUNICIPAL PARTNER IMPACT:

The Connectivity Advocacy Plan requires that Elgin collaborate with its Local Municipal Partners. The Connectivity Advocacy Plan, once finalized, will be discussed with Elgin's Administrators at an upcoming meeting.

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS:

The Connectivity Advocacy Plan includes a Communications/Engagement pillar with the goal of communicating the activities and efforts of the Connectivity Committee.

CONCLUSION:

It is recommended that the Committee review and provide feedback regarding the draft Connectivity Advocacy Plan. Once finalized, it is recommended that the Committee seek Council's approval for the Connectivity Advocacy Plan.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Julie Gonyou
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix I– Draft Connectivity Advocacy Plan

Elgin County Connectivity Committee

Plan to support Option #1- Advocacy, Strategic Purchasing and ISP Coordination

Advocacy efforts with all other levels of government to be centered on the critical role played by access to stable and affordable broadband infrastructure in local, provincial, and national economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. This key concept will be supported and demonstrated through 4 key pillars and their corresponding objectives:

Pillar	Outcomes	Actions	Responsibility
Communications/Engagement	1. The activities and efforts of the Connectivity Committee are communicated in an accessible manner that intentionally reaches an audience which includes Elgin County residents, prospective residents, current and prospective ISPs, other levels of government, and the broader public	Ensure that Committee activities and news are made publicly accessible so residents and ISPs recognize that broadband is a key priority being supported by an active and engaged Committee: - establish a dedicated section of the existing Connected Elgin page for the Committee. - plan, conduct, and process strategic public surveys to ensure engagement is always ongoing. - make publicly available information regarding Elgin County's efforts to facilitate broadband expansion targeted toward potential ISPs (web page, social media) - publicize news and updates on Committee activity; link to	Administrative Services/Communications

		Committee meeting agendas and minutes - host a renewed forum with current/prospective ISPs for updated insights into contemporary, local needs/considerations - Prepare and implement a communications strategy to support advocacy efforts and the work of the Committee - Prepare and disseminate news releases for major milestones/advancements.	
	2. Advocacy efforts include real resident experiences and reflect an accurate local as a key means of attracting ISP and funder support	Leverage lived experiences from residents and business owners regarding their connectivity experiences. - establish and maintain a constantly-updated database of resident concerns that tracks key information to substantiate needs/concerns/geographic considerations and use it to support communications/ advocacy efforts/ Committee business - Utilize social media, Engage Elgin and Elgin County website to share these resident experiences.	Administrative Services

	3. Staff establish and maintain a public repository of Elgin-specific connectivity data for use by staff and the Committee	Maintain an organized and updated data repository to support advocacy and engagement efforts, inform committee members, and guide implementation of the plan: - Maintain an updated GIS map showing connectivity/gaps and ensure it is publicly accessible. - undertake new survey opportunities for both residents and existing/prospective ISPs on matters of County interest in relation to broadband. Utilize survey results to keep data repositories current.	Administrative Services Engineering/IT Administrative Services/Communications
Leadership/Relationship Building	1. The Connectivity Committee and staff routinely and proactively pursue opportunities to streamline the approval process for new broadband projects	Explore opportunities in existing and future Elgin County policies/procedures related to broadband infrastructure construction projects that would reduce or eliminate fees for work undertaken to expand/enhance the local network: - undertake a review of current policies/procedures related to permits, construction, information sharing, formal relationships as they relate to broadband projects	Engineering Services/Administrative Services/Legal Services

		- establish a solid customer service presence based on responsible data management and ongoing follow-up with residents and ISP representatives (collecting information, confirming receipt of all messages, regular updates, check-ins, sending individualized information when relevant)	Administrative Services
		- reach out to counterparts at comparable/ neighbouring municipalities for insight into other incentivization/facilitation policies and procedures that support broadband projects	Engineering Services/Administrative Services
		- meet with senior management and legal counsel to consider the implications and technicalities of reducing/eliminating fees related to broadband infrastructure	Engineering Services/Legal Services/Administrative Services
		- explore potential for the establishment of an Elgin-specific RFP process as a means of supporting the value of a localized approach to infrastructure expansion and enhancement	Engineering Services/Purchasing

	2. Elgin County is clearly established and recognized as the lead for advancing rural broadband efforts	Establish and maintain a strong public presence for Elgin County as the lead for community broadband expansion/ enhancement, while being mindful of key relationships with the province, LMPs:	
		- demonstrate a meaningful awareness of Elgin County taking ownership of local broadband infrastructure issues/ advancement by building relationships with both members of the public and current/prospective ISPs	Administrative Services/Engineering Services
		- Maintain a close working relationship with LMPs on this shared priority	Administrative Services/Engineering Services
		- research policies implemented by neighbouring jurisdictions intended to incentivize/facilitate broadband projects with a focus on making Elgin County a competitive regional presence for attracting new prospective ISPs	Administrative Services
		- engage with stakeholders/partners (WOWC, SCOR) to remain updated on best practices and regional advocacy efforts	Council and Committee

		and ensure coordination of efforts - establish a positive working relationship with representation from Infrastructure Ontario (IO), government ministries, relevant agencies	Engineering Services/Administrative Services/Committee
	1. 3. Elgin County both maintains and seeks opportunities for relationships with members of the public, large and small ISPs, and other levels of government regarding broadband	Cultivate relationships with key stakeholders and engage in regular two-way communication and information sharing: - define the vision and framework for relationships with ISPs and the level of support to be provided to ISPs as part of funding application processes - streamline access to information and centralize contact - maintain regular engagement with key provincial contacts (both political and staff/department) - host a second public internet forum for the sharing of ideas and discussion. - engage in regular communication with local	Administrative Services/Economic Development Administrative Services Administrative Services Council/Committee/ Administrative Services Economic Development

		municipal partners to facilitate streamlined messaging, project policy and implementation coordination, benefit from localized insights, remain updated on ongoing/emerging issues and concerns - engage with a broad spectrum of Elgin's business community, especially rural businesses, to establish a sound understanding of needs and concerns specific to business operation-possible survey, etc. as quantifying this will be critical to supporting advocacy efforts.	Administrative Services/Engineering Services Economic Development
Advocacy	Elgin County receives funding for rural broadband projects and has the ability to distribute it in a way that best meets local needs.	Engage in a variety of advocacy efforts with the goal of achieving increased funding for rural broadband in Elgin: - develop and implement an advocacy strategy with senior levels of government, especially the province and especially in the pre-election period, centered on meetings and delegations with Ministers/senior ministry representatives that highlights both Elgin County's unique needs and approach	Administrative Services/Communication

		to addressing the need for broadband, and emphasizes the need for Elgin to receive its fair share of funding.	
		- prepare standard advocacy strategy materials and tailor them to specific audiences in advance of meetings/ delegations.	
		- establish working relationships with ministry staff/government representatives who can facilitate advocacy efforts. (Admin, Committee)	Council/Committee/ Administrative Services
		- facilitate communication to the provincial government on behalf of local/prospective ISPs regarding concerns and barriers that impact the advancement of broadband projects in Elgin.	Council/Committee /Administrative Services
		- using data collected via the previous surveys and webpage/database, communicate to the province at every opportunity the degree to which the lack of stable/affordable/accessible broadband negatively impacts life and business in Elgin.	Council/Committee/ Administrative Services

		- act as a resource for Committee members and Councillors on matters related to broadband advocacy, support as a central point of contact to streamline information dissemination (Admin)	Administrative Services/ Engineering Services/ IT
		- draft letters on behalf of County Council, the Connectivity Committee in response to senior government changes regarding broadband to continually reinforce Elgin as a willing partner in advancing and expediting local projects	Administrative Services
		- prepare letters of support on behalf of Council/ Committee for ISP funding applications to senior levels of government	Administrative Services
		- create, update, and make public templated advocacy letters for residents to download and personalize and send to senior levels of government (general concerns, specific to unserved residents, issue-specific) and share suggestions for optimizing self-advocacy efforts	Administrative Services

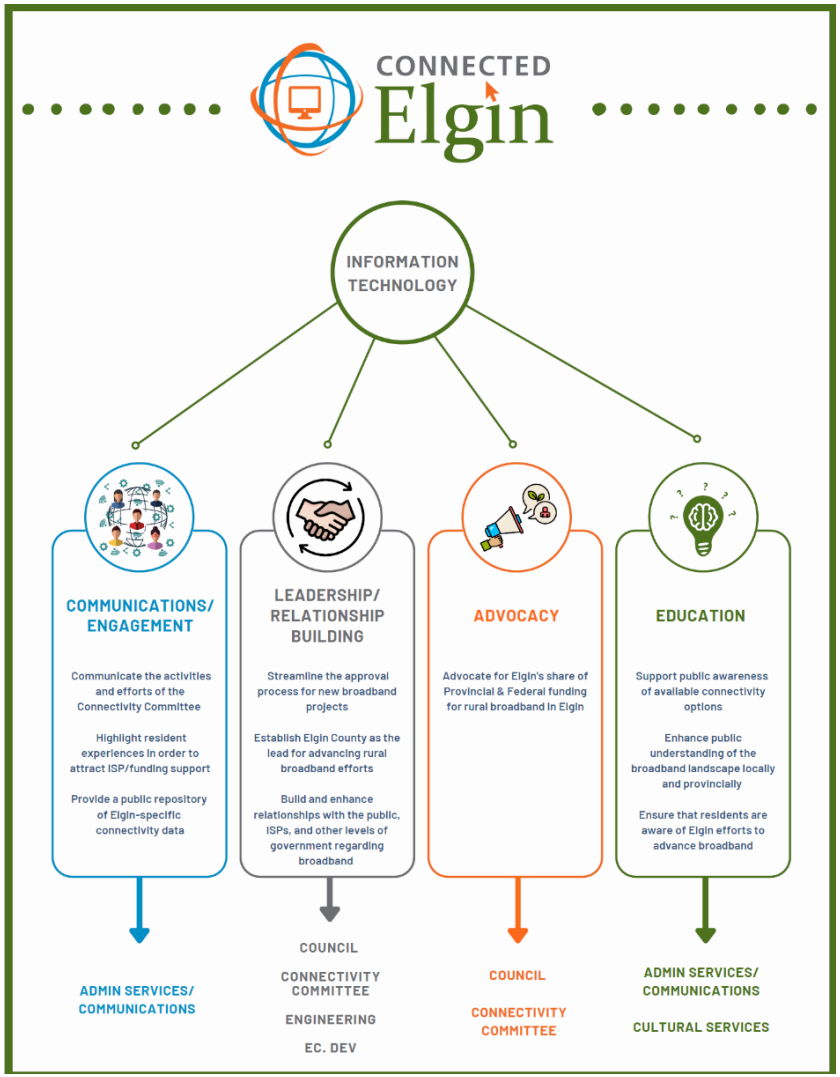
Education	1. The public is aware of the current status of broadband access in Elgin and how they can become connected/ improve their connection	Develop and make public resources that support enhanced connectivity for Elgin County residents: - develop and make public an Elgin County connectivity guide that is easily accessible both on the web page and in hard copy (Admin/EcDev) - engage with library branch staff in order to gather information about local community internet needs collected both formally and informally (level of use by residents without home internet, reasons given by clients for lack of home internet) - Leverage the Elgin County Library network as a key means of receiving and disseminating hard copy information related to broadband. The Library will act as a source of localized insights as a service most connected to the public and can target residents who lack access to stable and affordable high-speed internet (Admin)	Administrative Services/Communications Administrative Services/Library Staff

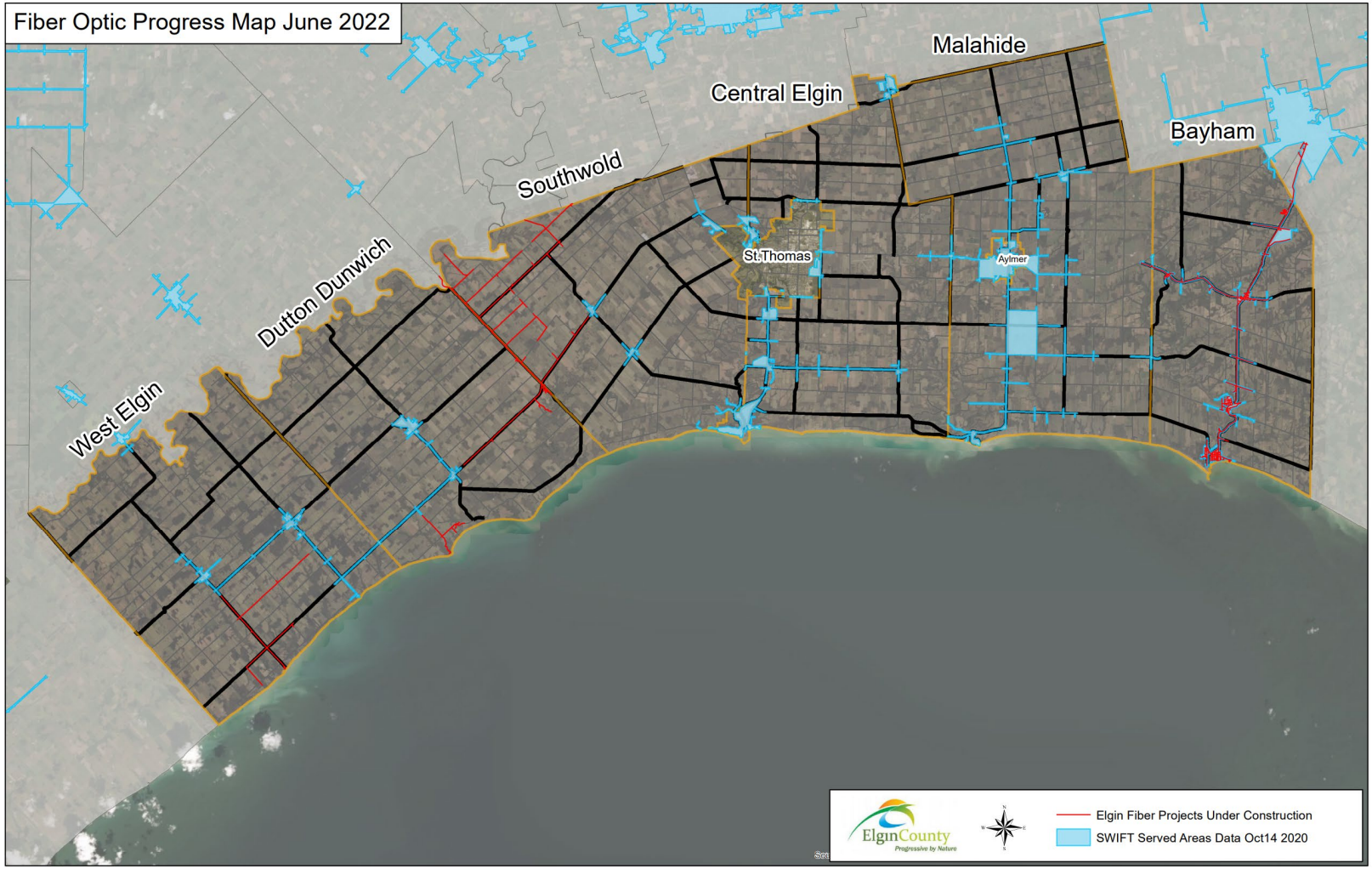
	2. The public has access to information that supports a clear understanding of the broadband landscape both locally and provincially	Synthesize the broad volume of technical/contextual/logistical information related to broadband expansion in Ontario and locally and prepare it for public access/communication in a way that is easy to understand: - develop and maintain a section on the Engage Elgin web page with updated information on provincial legislation and programs regarding broadband expansion, SWIFT project details and updates and connectivity related resources from AMO, ROMA etc.	Administrative Services/Communications
	1. Elgin residents are aware and up-to-date on the County's efforts to advance local broadband expansion	Endeavour to contextualize/ chronologize the process by which broadband enhancements/expansion have taken place to-date in Elgin County: - Share publicly goals, priorities, process, timelines, efforts, etc. - address the common misconceptions (most significantly, that nothing is being done to address the lack of stable and affordable high-speed internet in Elgin County	Administrative Services/Communications Note: This objective links back to the actions taken to communicate the activities and efforts of the Connectivity Committee and County Council in regards to improving connectivity in Elgin County.

		- maintain an updated public archive of County of Elgin advocacy efforts to date. - post previous Council correspondence related to broadband advocacy on the Engage Elgin Connectivity Webpage - Provide continuous avenue to provide feedback.	

Appendix II

Infographic – Connectivity Advocacy Plan



Appendix III

Fibre Optic Progress Map - Connectivity in Elgin