

Town of Roque Bluffs

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will this increase my property valuation?

A. No, property assessments were just completed, and broadband access is not and will not be part of any future valuation process. Broadband makes your home more desirable or marketable but does not increase the assessment itself. Several recent studies have shown that the availability of fast broadband increases the market value of a home by 3-5%

Q. Why not wait for 5G or some other new technology?

A. As far as we know, the only new technology on the horizon that can compete in speed with a fiber optic broadband system is 5G, or fifth-generation cell service. 5G has received a lot of hype in the press over the past year, but it is designed primarily for urban environments and likely will not come to more rural parts of Maine for at least 10 years or more. Importantly, this technology relies on a strong fiber optics backbone, so unless we install the fiber network ourselves, it is unlikely that Roque Bluffs will ever see 5G technology. If you want more information on 5G, that information is available on the Roque Bluffs blog:

www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic

Q. How do I save money?

A. By subscribing to service from Axiom over the town's broadband fiber optic system, residents will be able to eliminate or reduce other parts of their overall communications bill. You can eliminate your "land-line" telephone and either purchase a very low-cost plan (typically less than \$10 per month for unlimited long distance) that uses the internet, or you can use your smart phone to make and receive Wi-Fi calls over the internet for free using your cell phone number right from your home. This works whether you currently have cell service or not at your home. A connection to the town's broadband system will allow streaming in high-definition and in 4K, with no buffering, and will allow you to do so using multiple devices simultaneously. Once you have a connection, you can greatly reduce or eliminate satellite TV (Dish or DirecTV) or cable TV (Spectrum) costs by buying your own TV-like content online. Please ask Axiom for their "Cutting the Cord" brochure for more detailed information on how this works; and we anticipate offering workshops on how to cut the cord in the future.

Q. I have Spectrum high speed internet. Why do I need new service?

A. Spectrum serves only a small area of the community, fewer than 40 homes; the company has expressed no interest in expanding its service. Unlike the proposed town broadband network, Spectrum is a shared system – there is one wire carrying everyone's TV, internet, and phone service. Because of this, subscribers often have times when their internet service is very slow, typically in the evening when there are many homes all trying to use the system at once. Spectrum service is expensive, yet rarely delivers its promised internet speed; if you are paying for 100 Mbps service, you are almost never getting what you pay for.

In the town's proposed system, each home gets the full service it pays for. We are confident that Axiom's least-expensive, 25 Mbps service will be more reliable and give its users a better experience than the Spectrum service they have now.

Finally, this is a community effort. Everyone will need to contribute if Roque Bluffs is not to be left behind.

Q. What about business internet?

A. Axiom offers the same reliable speed packages to businesses as it does residences. It can also offer enhanced services for business customers that are priced on a customized plan according to the business's needs. These include priority emergency service, enhanced technical support, a static IP, and symmetric service.

Q. What about seasonal residents?

A. This project is about equal access to all, meaning each home will have access to the same speeds and reliability. Every home will have the opportunity to receive this new service. Service rates are being developed for seasonal residents. More information will be available on the Town's Blog or at the informational meeting scheduled for Monday, April 15th at the Town Office.

Q. Can you give me more detailed cost information?

A. Your Selectmen and Broadband Committee are aggressively pursuing two grants, which will reduce the cost to the town, if awarded. If the town were to win an award, it could receive majority of the cost of the project. However, both grants will require that the town hold a special town meeting to vote to support the approximately \$1M project cost to show the town's commitment to this project. The Selectmen and Broadband Committee hope that the townspeople will be committed to supporting a service that will benefit all of us for many decades to come, and while committed to applying for grants, would like the citizens to support the cost of the whole project if grants are not successful. More information will become available as the Selectmen investigate public funding options including loans and municipal bonds. More detailed information about the final cost and project will be provided at a town informational meeting scheduled on April 15th at 6:30pm. Ongoing information about the process will be available at the town's blog: www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic

Q. Am I required to take service?

A: No, no one is required to take the new service. You can keep your current provider of service. However, this is a community project and your support will keep cost down for the community and provider, and all allows you to avoid installation costs later.

Q. Who owns the fiber?

A: The Town of Roque Bluffs will own the fiber and will contract with an internet service provider. The Town Selectmen decided to work with the incumbent provider, Axiom. The selectmen have looked at other options and spoken to other internet providers. Axiom offered the most complete option to serve every home and is willing to work closely with us to meet our goals in the community.

Q. How can I help?

A. Please call Lisa Hanscom, First Selectman at the town office (255-0333) to be a part of the Broadband Committee or sign up for ongoing communications and information about this vital project for our community.

Please attend the next public forum on April 15th at 6:30pm at the Roque Bluffs Town Hall.