

# Town of Roque Bluffs

3 Roque Bluffs Road  
Roque Bluffs, ME 04654  
(207) 255-3330



---

## The Roque Bluffs Broadband Initiative

**THE NEED:** Fast internet service, also known as *broadband*, is fast becoming an essential utility. Students need it to do homework. Businesses need it to reach customers. Families use it to stay connected. Rental properties are expected to have it. Many jobs allow working from home, but only when connected to their co-workers. Home entertainment is rapidly moving to broadband-based distribution.

**THE PROBLEM:** Broadband is unavailable in Roque Bluffs to all but a very few homes. Wireless signals cannot penetrate our dense forests or go around hills, and the DSL service provided by the telephone company is old technology and cannot provide modern broadband speeds. Because the town has a small population spread out over a large area, companies cannot get a good return on the investment required to install a modern broadband network. Roque Bluffs is not alone – many rural communities across the nation suffer from this same problem. While half of US homes had electricity by 1925, parts of Roque Bluffs were not electrified until the 1960's. If rural towns like ours are not to be similarly left behind by the information age, they must act themselves to become connected. Your town Board of Selectmen formed a Broadband Committee last spring to do just that. Working with the Island Institute and Axiom Technologies, the committee has developed a detailed plan to install a state-of-the-art fiber optic broadband system to *every home* in Roque Bluffs.

**WHY FIBER OPTICS?** It is the fastest and most robust technology suited to our area. The single optical fiber connected to each home will be able to carry 100 high-definition TV signals simultaneously, about 300 times the broadband capability currently available in town. Fiber optics is the most “future-proof” technology. Installing broadband is a major undertaking for the town; we want our system to last decades. Because of its capacity, even if internet speeds increase by 100 times, our system will be able to keep up. Because fiber optics is widely used as the backbone of the US telecommunications industry, there is little doubt that it is here to stay. Finally, because fiber optic systems don't share capacity among users, there is no slow-down in service in the evening when your neighbors are watching TV or going on-line.

**HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?** Three factors determine how much broadband service will cost:

1. **Cost to the town:** Installing the system will cost roughly \$1 million dollars. If successful, the State and Federal grant programs can provide a majority of the support; the Broadband Committee is already aggressively pursuing these funding opportunities. With these grants, the property tax for the median home may only increase by approximately \$3 per month. Even without grant funds, this increase would be only approximately \$11 per month.
2. **Cost for service:** Under our plan, the town will own the system and will contract with Axiom Technologies in Machias to provide internet service. Internet service levels will start at 25Mbps to 100Mbps and is expected to cost between \$70- \$110 per month. Under the contract with the Town, Axiom will return some of the gross revenue as part of a public-private partnership. This is estimated to be about \$6000 per year if at least half the town residents sign up for service.
3. **Savings:** A fast broadband connection can provide significant savings. Modern cell phones can make and receive calls over a home's broadband connection even when there is no cell service; one can therefore drop one's home telephone service all together. Purchasing a variety of broadband entertainment options

can reduce your cost compared with satellite TV by half or more. The number of options is increasing daily, as broadband becomes the connection method of choice for a wide range of services.

We expect that the System will allow for significant overall savings to the citizens of Roque Bluffs. The total cost of the 25Mbps plan will be \$73 (\$70 for service plus \$3 in property tax) for the median household. This cost is considerably less than comparable service in most US cities. A typical DirectTV over broadband plan is \$50/month. This is a total of \$123/month. The current comparable offering from Spectrum is \$120/month. For the price, however, the new system will provide faster and more reliable service, and this service will be available throughout the town, not just for a few houses on the Roque Bluffs Road. Additional cost savings information is available in the Cutting the Cord document from Axiom and located on the Roque Bluff's blog located here: [www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic](http://www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic)

**DO I NEED TO SIGN UP NOW?** If the project is approved, those who sign up for service initially can pay a \$49 deposit to be credited toward their first month's bill. This deposit will hold your spot and will ensure that that you receive a no-cost hookup at which time your \$49 deposit will be credited toward your first month of service. Connections can be made at any time later, but the homeowner will then have to pay for installation at a cost likely to be in the hundreds of dollars.

**HOW IS IT INSTALLED?** The optical fiber cable will be installed throughout the town on the existing utility poles. To most homes, the fiber will follow the same path as existing phone and electrical lines. For those homes without poles and/or down long private drives, the fiber cable can safely be installed on the ground. Fiber can also be installed in existing buried conduit or in a conduit which is installed by the homeowner in advance. Once the line reaches your home, it enters a small box mounted on the wall outside, and a small hole is drilled in the wall for a cable, just as for current telephone installations.

**WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?** The project cannot proceed without the town's approval of the project budget.

**An informational meeting will be held at 6:30pm on Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at Roque Bluffs Town Hall.**

If the project is approved, some work can begin this summer. Depending upon when grant funding becomes available, the project could be completed as early as this winter, but most likely all homes will have service by the spring/summer of next year.

**YOUR VOTE MATTERS!** This is an opportunity for the town of Roque Bluffs to act together to take its future into its own hands. If we do not do this for ourselves, history shows that neither private industry nor the State or Federal governments will do it for us, at least not for decades to come. Check our blog frequently for more information: [www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic](http://www.islandinstitute.org/blog/economic)

**Come to the meetings and be a part of Roque Bluffs history!**