



## Press Release

<b>Immediate Release:</b> <b>January 25, 2024</b>	<b>Contact:</b> <b>Kathie Brown</b> , Director of Rural Development and Outreach, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (309) 255-9189
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## **Mason County Launches Survey to Assess Broadband Needs in the County** *Gathering information to build a pathway to Digital Inclusion*

Mason, IL (Thursday, January 25, 2024)—The Mason County Board is launching a county wide household survey to gather information from citizens on their current internet speeds, providers, concerns and needs to inform planning efforts and guide the formulation of short and long term broadband infrastructure plans in Mason County.

In 2023, Mason County was awarded funding through Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) communities transitioning from coal and Just Transition Fund to implement a Broadband Feasibility Study. This partnership between the Mason County Board, Just Transition Fund, and Greater Peoria EDC represents a strong commitment among community leaders to explore best practices utilized by other communities throughout the midwest that have led to expanded broadband capacity through urban and rural areas of the county. Working with Finley Engineering and CCG Consulting, local leaders will have the opportunity to learn from an experienced team who have provided assistance to a wide variety of broadband operators to build fiber to the home broadband networks. Their experience assisting clients with network funding applications, network deployments and network operations gives us a unique background to complete comprehensive broadband study. By the end of the 5-month program, Mason County Broadband Planning Team will have completed a community-driven, broadband strategic plan that articulates the community's broadband vision and identifies an action plan for progress toward improved broadband access in the areas of community and economic development, education, civic engagement, healthcare, agriculture, and more.

“The goal is to gain a greater understanding of community interest and need for enhanced internet service throughout the county, the survey will provide valuable documentation of need and the interest among households in various parts of Mason County for expanded broadband infrastructure”, Kathie Brown, Director of Rural Development and Outreach for the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council said.

The purpose of the survey is to gather data and documentation that will inform planning. Survey results will no doubt help in identification of priority areas for future broadband development based on the needs and interest expressed by survey participants. Survey results will be shared with communities, local government officials, and Internet Service Providers. Thanks to the financial support provided both by State of Illinois CEJA, energy transition fund



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and Just Transition Fund this work provides a great opportunity for community leaders and Internet Service Providers to exchange ideas on strategies for building out broadband infrastructure to underserved areas in Mason County.

“In 2024, internet access is not something that is just convenient to have. It is an essential part of everyday life. Having access to the internet is a huge quality of life issue, ensure access to broadband services throughout Mason County is critical for us to attract and retain residents. Throughout the broadband planning process, our goal as a committee is to not only gather interest and engagement, but to create a plan that helps Mason County communities accelerate broadband planning and create public/ private partnerships needed to secure federal and state funding that is currently available for broadband infrastructure.” Ken Walker , Chairman of the Mason County Board, added.

The survey is open to all Mason County residents and can be accessed

residential survey: [tinyurl.com/a7tawzjw](https://tinyurl.com/a7tawzjw)

business survey: [tinyurl.com/yampx7a7](https://tinyurl.com/yampx7a7)

### About the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council

*The Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC) is a regional economic development organization covering the Greater Peoria area spanning five counties in central Illinois: Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford. The GPEDC’s mission is to promote economic development in the region through its six core programs which are Business Attraction, Business Assistance, Workforce Solutions, Innovation and Startups, Rural Development, and the development and promotion of a regional Manufacturing Network.*

### Press Contact

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