Connectivity Planning
in the Southern Gulf Islands

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this project all about?

This project aims to develop a community based connectivity plan, which Network BC and the Ministry of Citizen Services Connected Communities call a 'digital roadmap'. This plan will help us understand in what ways our island communities want to be better connected, and how increased broadband internet can improve the social, economic, and environmental potential of the islands. Connectivity plans ensure infrastructure investments are coordinated, scalable, provide value for money, and achieve priority objectives for the region. Once complete, the plan will open better access to available funding, and will guide Internet Service Providers in their investment decisions for improved broadband in the Southern Gulf Islands.

Why is this a priority of the Southern Gulf Islands CRD Electoral Area Director?

The Southern Gulf Islands lag far behind the internet speeds identified by the Federal government as a minimum standard: broadband speeds of at least 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload. This affects the quality and accessibility of emergency services, healthcare, climate adaptation, education, transportation, government services, economic diversification and more. Better connectivity in the Southern Gulf Islands will enable social diversity, innovations in transportation, a green and sustainable economy, and new opportunities for young families.

How will the Southern Gulf Islands benefit from this project?

Improved connectivity will strengthen this region's potential, diversity, and sustainability. Not only are improvements to our internet service levels crucial for the provision of emergency and health services and for the realization of our economic development goals, improved connectivity will support us in working together to reduce our carbon footprint—from alternative transportation to tele-health and distance education.

What is the timeline of this project?

Phase 1 of this project is focused on community engagement to develop a "Digital Roadmap," for the SGI. The Digital Roadmap will be based on community conversations focused on understanding how, in each sector of island activity, increased broadband will better support the social, economic, and sustainability goals of the Southern Gulf Islands.

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These conversations will be supported by the use of interviews, surveys and town hall meetings on each of the SGIs, over the fall and winter of 2019.

In the second phase of this project, we will engage qualified professionals and Internet Servie Providers to develop a "Southern Gulf Islands Connectivity Design Strategy." It will consider how the community goals identified in phase 1 can be advanced through infrastructure design. It will take into account existing service hubs and will present the region with options for infrastructure and technology to advance our communities' own connectivity goals, as identified in Phase 1. This will take place in spring/summer 2020.

What is the CRD's role in Connectivity?

The CRD is not an Internet Service Provider. The CRD does manage emergency services and owns some infrastructure to enable radio communications (e.g. Capital Region Emergency Service Telecommunications), but does not have a service to deliver internet services. The CRD's role in this project is to facilitate community engagement; we are hosting the conversation with SGI communities and will contract a qualified professional create the connectivity design plan that can be used by Internet Service Providers to inform investment and leverage government funding.

Who are the sponsors of this project?

This project is a top priority of the CRD SGI Electoral Area Director and the CRD SGI Community Economic Sustainability Commission.

How does this project relate to Islands Trust as the Land Use Authority?

In June, 2019, Islands Trust Council requested that the appropriate agencies of Canada and the Province "take steps to facilitate and fund the safe and reliable improvement of internet connectivity throughout the Trust Area." When it comes to building new infrastructure, the Islands Trust Local Trust Committees are the "Land Use Authorities" responsible for determining concurrence with the federal government's standards for community consultation on new infrastructure proposals. This CRD project is a planning process and will not be proposing specific infrastructure

development. The CRD is engaging with Islands Trust and will keep the Local Trust Committees on each island fully apprised of our findings and recommendations.

Is this the same as the Connected Coast project?

This project is using the "digital roadmap" approach developed by the Connected Communities team at the Ministry of Citizen Services and is not the same as the Connected Coast project, which is a Federal and Provincial partnership project to place sub-sea fibre-optic cable from north of Prince Rupert, to Haida Gwaii and south along the BC coast to Vancouver and around Vancouver Island.

Galiano already went through a similar process in 2017 in preparation for the LTC's Telecommunication Special Advisory Planning Commission report. Isn't this redundant?

The data collected in 2017 has provided a foundation for this project that has helped to inform our understanding of the opportunities and challenges for connectivity improvements. Approaching connectivity from a regional perspective will allow us to take advantage of the economies of scale of the larger region, rather than each island tackling the challenge independently. In order to do this effectively, we need to ensure that the date we collect in the community consultation phase is consistent across all of the islands.

What technologies will be used to improve connectivity on the islands?

The "Southern Gulf Islands' Connectivity Strategy" will present options based on community input, the opportunities and constraints of each island, existing infrastructure, and existing and emergent broadband technologies. The most common ones are:

* DSL (acronym of Digital Subscriber Line – delivering connectivity over ordinary phone lines up to 25 Mbps)

* Cable (co-axial – basically sending Internet connectivity through the same type of copper wire as cable television at speeds between 10 Mbps and 120 Mbps)

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* Fibre optics (connectivity is ensured by modulated light flowing down a glass or clear plastic cable at a speed about 100 times that of cable, enabling a throughput of over 1 Gbps)

* Wireless broadband (this is where connectivity works similarly to a cordless phone. The Internet is broadcast via towers and received by an antenna within clear line of sight at speeds up to 25 Mbps)

* Mobile or cellular wireless broadband (connectivity via the cellular phone network. LTE, often referred to as 4G because it is a fourth generation technology, can provide speeds up to 150 Mbps. 5G – a fifth generation tech uses a shorter wave length enabling much higher throughput speeds)

* Satellite Internet (not yet operational; similar to wireless broadband, except that the signal comes via an orbiting satellite at the equator to a satellite dish installed on your home. It is also a line of sight technology, which means that at our latitude, the dish points quite low on the horizon. Speeds projected to be up to 500 MBPS)

* Satellite constellation (an emergent technology where a group of artificial lower altitude satellites work in concert to ensure point to point connectivity. With this technology, the satellite dish does not have to point so low on the horizon.)

By the way, "Broadband" just refers to high speed internet where the internet connection is always available, as opposed to a dial-up connection, which is much slower and user initiated/ended.