ORS SEEKING MAPPING DATA FROM BROADBAND PROVIDERS

COLUMBIA, SC – September 1, 2020 – AccelerateSC, the task force created by Governor Henry McMaster to identify the most pressing needs caused by COVID-19, found that the lack of access to the internet was one of the greatest obstacles to remote learning, working, and access to telehealth.

Pursuant to South Carolina Act 142, signed by Governor McMaster on June 25, 2020, the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) has requested all broadband service providers and broadband infrastructure owners operating in South Carolina to submit data and information on the availability of broadband service at delivered download and upload speeds and by technology type for each address in the state serviceable by the broadband service provider or infrastructure owner.

"Earlier this year, AccelerateSC recommended a substantial investment in broadband and the General Assembly, with my support, acted in short order – approving $50 million for the development of a statewide broadband plan to address gaps in our wireless infrastructure," said Governor McMaster. "As we begin the process of expanding our broadband capabilities, it is critical that we identify those coverage gaps in order to have a comprehensive understanding of South Carolinians' needs."

In addition to a letter of support from Governor McMaster, the ORS also has a letter of support for this effort from Senate Finance Chairman Hugh Leatherman and House Ways and Means Chairman Murrell Smith.

Act 142 directed the ORS to secure a vendor for the development of a broadband statewide county-by-county mapping plan to assist in determining where access to broadband has impeded the delivery of distance learning, telework, and telehealth for the most vulnerable population of South Carolinians impacted by COVID-19.

CostQuest Associates, Inc. has been engaged by the ORS to perform various Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-related services associated with this mapping project. Specifically, CostQuest is processing broadband service provider data to analyze the current state of broadband attributes across South Carolina and identify the number of broadband serviceable structures and their map-based locations in served and unserved areas of the state. Following a thorough assessment and inventory of key South Carolina assets, a detailed map will be made available by the end of November 2020.

This mapping project will serve as a catalyst for increased availability (access to) and adoption (use) of broadband to better serve our citizens during this public health emergency.

Information is due to the ORS by Sept. 25.

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