





Four Towns Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes

			
Florida, MA	Hawley, MA	Monroe, MA	Savoy, MA

FHMS Four Towns Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes

There was a combined in-person and teleconference meeting of the FHMS Four Towns Broadband Committee on Thursday, August 28, 2020 at 4:30 pm at the Florida, MA Town Hall. (Note: This meeting was recorded.)

MEETING MINUTES

In Attendance:**

Hawley: Lark Thwing,* Rick Kean
 Florida: Christine Dobbert,* Cindy Bosley, Erica Oleson,
 Stephanie Pare, Ron Bosley
 Monroe: David Gagne,* Marcella Stafford-Gore
 Savoy: John Tynan*
 DesignNine: Jack Maytum (via phone, partial)
 WiValley: Brian Foucher
 OTELCO: Trevor Jones (Absent)
 Interisle: Steve Harris
 MBI: Michael Baldino

Unanimously
 Approved,
 FHMS Four-Towns
 Committee,
 Sept. 24, 2020

*Voting Members

** Note: There were a number of persons participating in this meeting this call telephonically who were not identified because of technical glitches, and there may have been some who did not identify themselves.

Quorum, Call to Order:

Chairman Lark Thwing declared an in-person quorum and called the telephonic and in-person meeting to order at 4:25 pm.

◆ **Minutes of the June 4th Meeting.**

The Minutes of the June 4, 2020 FHMS Teleconference Meeting were reviewed and accepted unanimously by the voting members, all of whom were present.

◆ **Introductory Remarks by Chair Lark Thwing.**

Lark opened the meeting by reporting that he had conducted an informal in-person and telephonic Q/A session with members of the Hawley community on Tuesday, August 25. He reported that many people wanted to know the causes of the delays in deploying the poles and electronics to Hawley. Lark's answers to these questions will be documented in a set of FAQs which will be posted for that June 25 meeting.

- Aside from adverse weather conditions, supply availability problems, injuries and COVID-19 issues, there was one other delaying condition that changed during the interim between the August 25 Q/A session and the August 28 FHMS Broadband Committee meeting. That had to do with cash flow. Lark announced that that problem seems to have been resolved, via discussions between Brian Foucher of WiValley and Michael Baldino of MBI. So as to not hold up payments to pay its crews and acquire critical CBRS (Citizens Band Radio Service) equipment, MBI will allow WiValley to swap incomplete Phase 1AA & Phase 2 infrastructure items for Phase 3 ones that are already complete. Payment will be made upon submission of the revised report.

Both Michael and Brian reconfirmed this understanding during the meeting. Brian said he was expecting a payment during the week of September 1, 2020.

- Lark also reported that DesignNine had agreed to extend their contract to the end of the year, and that Consultant Jack Maytum will take a more pro-active role in helping WiValley with paperwork, deadlines, permitting, and the like, so as to give Brian Foucher more time to focus on network construction, deployment and tuning.
- Lark passed out a set of Critical Path documents, diagrams and tables prepared by WiValley which show updated status, timing, and next steps for the various Phases of the project, as well as setting revised goals for completion. Copies of those documents are incorporated as the last six pages of these Minutes.

◆ **Report from Brian Foucher:**

- Brian then reviewed the status and recast completion dates of the various phases of the FHMS Broadband project, using the Critical Path and Benchmark charts as a guide.
- Synopsis:

Phase	Construction / Test Activity	Status	Done By
I	Create core Point of Presence (POP) site; 2 poles: one in Hawley and one in Savoy	Complete	6/2/2019
IAA	Four strategic poles, in Savoy, Hawley & Florida	Complete	2/15/20
IA	Temp Shelter/Telescoping Test Pole then 80ft guyed wood pole (Borden Mountain.)	8 wks after permits	12/15/20
IB	Install poles.	Complete	3/19/20
II	Build 10 sites: 2 in Monroe 4 in Florida 1 in Rowe 1 in Hawley 2 IN Savoy	Complete	6/7/2020
III	Construct Florida POP plus 10 sites: 4 in Hawley 2 in Florida 4 in Savoy	Complete Elect/Conduit Installation Poles Installed Site Equip't Installation in Progress	Substantially Complete 10/15/2020 Electric Utility Power at Site 10/31/2020
	Install Four Poles: 1 in Florida 3 in Hawley		
IV	Construct 6 sites: 4 in Hawley, 1 in Savoy and 1 in Florida.	Complete Elect. Conduit; Poles Inst., Site Equipment Inst. in Progress	Substantially Complete 12/1/2020 Electric Utility Power at Site 12/31/2020
	Optional construction of 3 additional pole sites, if needed, for signal enhancement.		
FINAL	Release of Hold Back Payments after project testing shows its construction and performance goals have been reached, per FHMS/MBI.	4 weeks after Phase 2	

Brian indicated that he now feels confident that he can meet these recast project deadlines and objectives.

◆ **Status of reports and info Design Nine has been seeking**

Included in the project management decisions reported on at this meeting was a commitment to participate in a project update teleconference every Thursday with Brian, MBI personnel, Lark and Jack Maytum, Design Nine. Brian commented that the new format should meet DesignNine's requirement for more information.

◆ **Update on accidents, COVID effects, staffing in general and inventory levels for forward progress.**

These have had a significant impact. In particular:

- One installer fell from a roof, breaking his wrist;
- Another staff member had to return home to lend support when his grandmother was diagnosed with COVID;
- In general, some staff members have been reluctant to enter homes because of COVID; and,
- Materials delays and resulting cash flow issues led to some staff layoffs.

As a result, Brian said, WiValley is looking to hire additional local installer(s) and will order CBRS (Citizens Broadband Radio Service) equipment as soon as the MBI payments arrive.

◆ **Will the four towns' state-sponsored hotspots be extended by MBI and HG&E?**

- Yes, Michael Baldino announced that the Hotspots had been continued through December 31.

◆ **Efforts to connect households with school age children.**

Lark reported he had secured customer lists and other resources for the towns so they could reach out to families with school aged children so they can be prioritized for installations.

◆ **Extension of Design Nine contract to December 31, 2020.**

As stated earlier by Lark, this extension has been accomplished, with Jack Maytum taking a more proactive role in project management activities in the future.

◆ **Comments/feedback from Design Nine**

As Jack Maytum was unable to connect telephonically to this portion of the meeting, he could not contribute comments.

◆ **Comments/Feedback from Rick on Customer Contact.**

Rick said that he had been unable to reach many people – two to four per week when he was making calls.

Rick said he was considering using custom email merge mailings as a way to determine the best time(s) to reach people and speed the process up.

◆ **Other business not anticipated at the time the Agenda for this meeting was posted:**

There were several WiValley/Otelco customers present who had questions, comments, and concerns about service, including:

- **Achieving desired performance and trees:** The question came up several times about cutting trees to increase performance. Brian said quite adamantly that no one should cut trees to increase performance. This was a problem that the process of network tuning is meant to handle. Lark related that he has two houses installed on the network, and that performance on each varied dramatically. His conclusion was that “You can’t predict the performance of a location until the entire network has been installed.”
- **Stephanie Pare stated that she was “very frustrated,”** as she had taken down a number of trees and had had a hard time getting help from customer service. She had a number of issues, and Brian agreed to address them off-line. She asked, “When will the network be complete,” and Brian said, “by the end of the year.” Lark then added that that is the plan, not a guarantee.

Stephanie pressed the issue of getting timely information on the process of building the network. Lark said that the FHMS Committee would meet every month and the meetings are open to the public. He noted up to date information is on the Hawley website at:

<http://www.townofhawley.com/four-towns-docs/>

- **Committee member John Tynan** asked about the status of two poles on Route 116 in Savoy: were they live? Brian said they were live, and would be hooked up to customers the following week.

John also asked how we could help Brian, and Brian said they were looking for a technician.

- Someone raised the question of **how to keep the public informed and how to prevent having to answer the same questions over and over**. Steve Harris responded by describing the FAQ's article he had recently written for the project, which will be made available shortly. Lark mentioned the Hawley website and how to reach it:

Go to the Town of Hawley Website – www.townofhawley.com,
Click on “Broadband” at the top of the home page,
Click on the first item on the drop-down menu:
“FHMS Four Towns Broadband Project”

Or just use this link:

<http://www.townofhawley.com/four-towns-docs/>

- Someone asked **when Borden Mountain would be completed**. The critical Borden Mountain site (Phase 1A), has had to go through an extensive state review which determined that the existing fire tower could not accommodate the FHMS hardware. WiValley is now slated to complete the review and installation of a separate pole and shed by December. 15. As Brian stated, the target completion date is now the end of the year.
- There were several **complaints about Customer Service responsiveness** during the prior two months, particularly regarding Otelco, but also WiValley. Brian detailed the fact that most service requests should go to Otelco, and that a “ticket” system is in place to make sure both WiValley and Otelco know about them.

Michael Baldino, Lark and the FHMS Committee members agreed that Otelco should attend future Committee meetings.

- Christine Dobbert brought up the fact that a number of Florida users were **paying for a higher level of service than they were getting** – why can't they be charged at the lower rate?

Brian responded that if they went to a lower level of service, its specified top performance levels would be all the signal speed they'd ever receive.

The subject of speed tests came up. Brian stated that the validity of local speed test measurements is severely hampered by the number of devices and apps that were turned on at a user location at the time the test is engaged. WiValley and Otelco have implemented an automated system, which meets Federal standards, and monitors the speed being delivered to every customer.

- Christine also asked about the **timing of bringing fiber into Florida**. Brian responded that that is a part of Phase III, which is scheduled for implementation by the end of October.

◆ **Set next meeting date.**

Lark set the next FHMS tele-meeting date for Thursday September 24, 2020 @ 4:30 pm. This will be a combined in-person and telephone conference meeting – physical location will be Florida, MA.

◆ **Adjournment:**

Chairman Thwing adjourned the meeting at 5:55 pm.

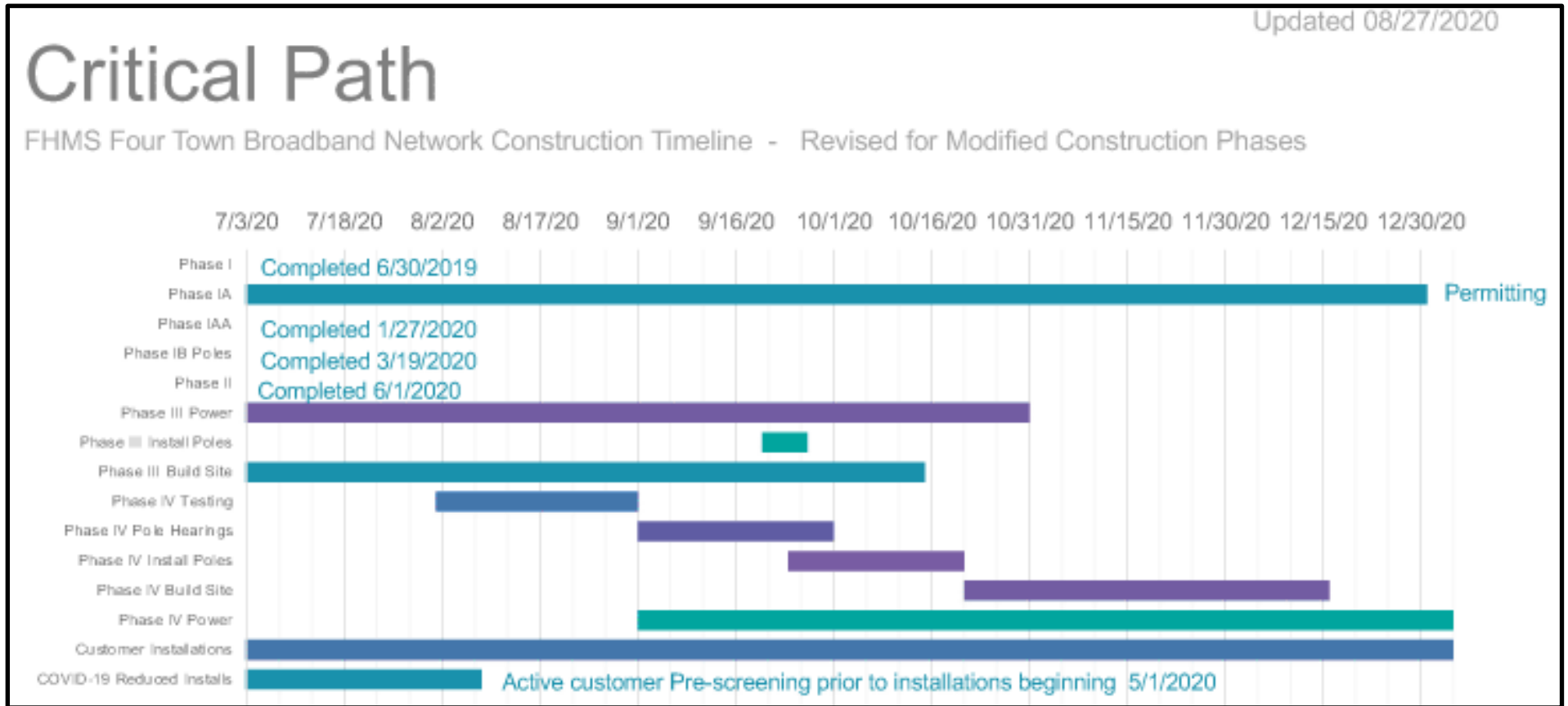
Respectfully Submitted,



Rick Kean

9/9/2020

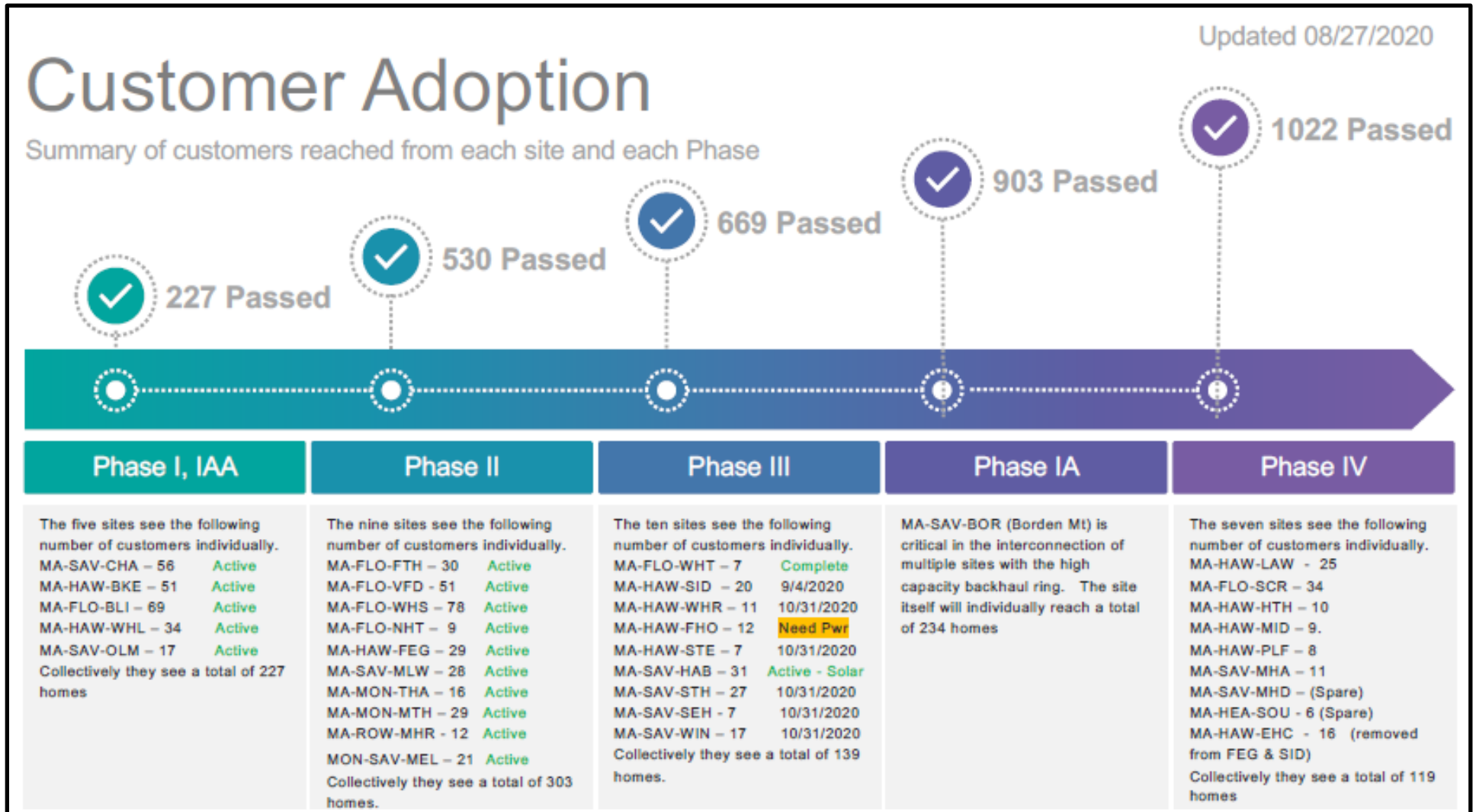
FHMS WiValley Chart #1



FHMS WiValley Chart #2.

Revised Project Milestones	Phase	Project Milestones Updated as of 04/03/2020	Status	Revised Completion Date
Updated 08/27/2020	I	Construction of Core POP - SAV-CHA, HAW-BKE	Complete	6/1/2019
	I AA	Construction of Sites FLA-BLI; HAW-WHL; SAV-OLM, FLO-BLI	Complete	10/8/2019 Utility Power – 1/27/2020 Customers Installed 2/15/2020
	IA	Temporary installation of an aluminum shelter with 35 ft telescoping Tower. Permitting and Construction of Equipment Shelter and Installation of equipment as per agreement with DCR on a new 80 ft Guyed wooden pole	6 weeks after permits	12/15/2020
	IB	Pole Installation Phase	Complete	3/19/2020
	II	Construction of 10 additional sites at the following locations - FLO-FTH, FLO-VFD, FLO-NHT, FLO-WHS, HAW-FEG, MON-THA, MON-MTH, ROW-MHR, SAV-MEL, SAV-MLW. The Phase 2 sites have been updated to move HAW-FEG from Phase 3 to Phase 2. FLO-WHT has been moved from Phase 2 to Phase 3	Complete	6/7/2020
	III	Construction of Florida POP and 10 sites at the following locations – <i>FLO-WHT, FLO-NHT-2, HAW-SID HAW-WHR, HAW-EHR, HAW-FHO, HAW-STE, SAV-HAB, SAV-STH, SAV-SEH, and SAV-WIN</i> 4 Poles to be installed at FLO-NHT-2, HAW-HER, HAW-WHR, HAW-STE	Complete Elec/Conduit Inst Poles Inst. Site Equipment Installation in progress	Substantially Complete 10/15/2020 Electric Utility Power at Site 10/30/2020
	IV	Construction of 6 sites at the following locations – <i>HAW-HTH, HAW-LAW (On Private Property), HAW-PLF, HAW-EHC, SAV-MHA, FLO-SCR</i> . Additionally there are tentative plans to add the following sites, SAV-SMF, HEA-SOU, and SAV-MHD. These sites are not "Required" in the design for coverage of 96% of the homes but we have included them as reserve sites for increased service to customers. The site HAW-MID has been removed as all the locations served from this site can be better served from the new site HAW-LAW 5 Poles to be installed at HAW-PLF, HAW-LAW, HAW-EHC, SAV-MHA & FLO-SCR	Complete Elec/Conduit Inst Poles Inst. Site Equipment Installation in progress	Substantially Complete 12/1/2020 Electric Utility Power at Site 12/31/2020
	FINAL	Release of hold back payments after FHMS / MBI perform / review final performance test results	4 weeks after Phase IV	

FHMS WiValley Chart #3



FHMS WiValley Chart #4

Updated 08/27/20200

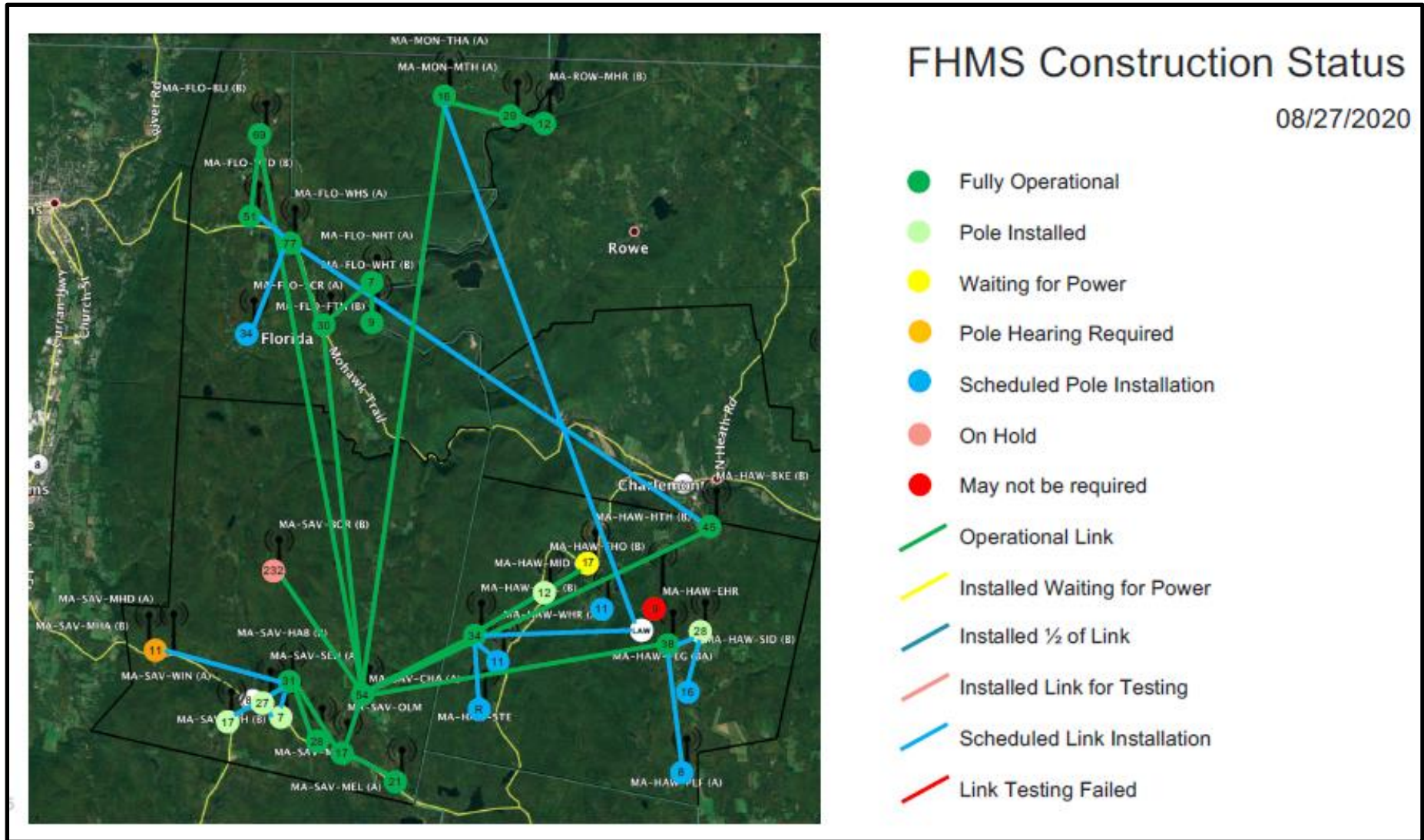
Active Customers

Summary of customers reached from each site and each Phase



Phase I, IAA		Phase II		Phase III		Phase IA		Phase IV		
Florida	50/10 - 5 25/3 - 9 12/2 - 2 VoIP - 8	Florida	50/10 - 7 25/3 - 24 12/2 - 6 VoIP - 7	Florida	50/10 - 1 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Florida	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Florida	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	54
Hawley	50/10 - 2 25/3 - 4 12/2 - 3 VoIP - 1	Hawley	50/10 - 1 25/3 - 8 12/2 - 2 VoIP - 1	Hawley	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Hawley	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Hawley	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	20
Monroe	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Monroe	50/10 - 25/3 - 3 12/2 - VoIP -	Monroe	50/10 - 25/3 - 2 12/2 - 1 VoIP -	Monroe	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Monroe	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	3
Savoy	50/10 - 5 25/3 - 24 12/2 - 6 VoIP - 8	Savoy	50/10 - 2 25/3 - 3 12/2 - 1 VoIP - 2	Savoy	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Savoy	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	Savoy	50/10 - 25/3 - 12/2 - VoIP -	41
Active Customers (60) % Connected - 26%		Active Customers (53) % Connected - 17%		Active Customers (4) % Connected - 3%		Active Customers (0) % Connected - 0%		Active Customers (0) % Connected - 0%		118 11%

FHMS WiValley Chart #5



FHMS WiValley Chart #6

