



Update to Our Internet Connection

Rock Island has been busy for the last 4 years installing the base structure for our fiber and other internet connection options throughout the County.

I decided to write this article as a layperson so that the options for our Internet service could be easily understood. I have purposefully not used acronyms and the technical terms. I hope that this article won't make the technical persons in the industry LOL, too much.

As a REALTOR, I can state that internet reliability is discussed as part of every real estate transaction. Islanders, as well as newcomers need to be connected and they desire their families to visit and, of course, the children and grandkids must have devices.

As I understand, there are several avenues for consumers to obtain Internet service in our County and they include the following:

- Dialup – Internet through the telephone line, which is very slow service. Basically obsolete.
- DSL – Internet through the Century Tel telephone line and the level of service depends on your distance from the central office; 0.5 to 2 megabits per second is typical, but they will sell you 10 which a few people on San Juan do receive. The service is inconsistent and dependent on well-maintained copper lines and the most

unfortunate event is you must work with Century Tel. Rock Island can also provide the DSL service using the Century Tel telephone line which is what I recommend, if DSL is your only option.

- Satellite Service – Internet through a satellite connection. The level of service can be up to 12 megabits but the delays in signal are significant and high data costs are an issue.
- LTE from Rock Island. Rock Island partnered with T Mobile and now we have 39 cell sites in the County with 11 on San Juan. Service speed is 10-25 megabits for \$75 per month. They have a seasonal rate for this service for \$49 if you don't live here full time. For this option, you do need line of site with one of the towers.
- Fiber Optic from Rock Island - Internet service with 30-1000 megabits per second; the gold standard. Reliable and scalable. \$80-\$180 per month based on the speed you select. They have seasonal rates for this service starting at \$55.

How do we get it?

Visit the Rock Island website or email fiber@Rockisland.com to see if your property is within a service area. Rock Island has installed fiber to the majority of the main roads, but it is the home-owners or subdivision homeowner's association responsibility to arrange for the fiber to be installed in the side roads and to the actual residences. The "middle and last mile" as it is known in the industry.

<https://rockisland.com/fiber/>

Rock Island, a wholly-owned subsidiary but operating as a separate entity from OPALCO, provides the Internet service to islanders. Rock Island does not offer a triple play for HD pay TV.

Rock Island is also providing the associated Internet support and is working closely with local property owners and business owners to upgrade their service.

There are dozens of neighborhood plats that have already been served with fiber. As a group they organized to arrange for the installation charges via loans or special assessments. This approach allowed all property owners in the area to share in the middle mile costs and then the individual homeowners absorb the cost to install down their driveways. Rock Island also has made up to \$1,500 of incentive credit available to the last mile builds. The costs to connect to fiber varies, but \$3,500-\$5,000 is a good average estimate. Generally, the trenching cost per foot is \$15-\$20

The neighborhoods without Homeowner Associations have struggled to get organized enough to be placed in the queue for fiber. Where possible, Rock Island has provided the LTE option to some of the neighbors within an area that hasn't agreed that fiber is in their future.

Rock Island's monthly fees range from \$95-\$150 subject to the speed you select. There is also a one-time hookup fee of \$150. Digital phone can be added for just under \$20 a month.

Roche Harbor Resort was on the front line for fiber installation and has benefited accordingly. They now offer internet and telephone services to the transient population staying at the resort and in the marina. Rightfully so, Roche Harbor deemed having high speed Internet as their number one guest amenity. Guests stay longer when they can keep connected to their work and family.

As property owners, we need to be the ones that accept the responsibility and bring the fiber to our homes. We need the level of communication, safety and entertainment that it offers. The fastest growing segment of the general population joining Facebook is those individuals that are over

65 years old. I need good connectivity as I am a grandma plus I need to process real estate out of my home office.

My LTE experience was very positive. DSL wasn't cutting it at 2 mb and it took a while for the new technology for me to hook up to the LTE. I was a rare exception as an LTE customer, as my signal wasn't great from the start. I needed additional items to get my connection working. The cost was around \$600 for the equipment/labor and it required a boom/basket truck and a full day of work for the installer. The install required exterior mounted equipment which I wasn't fond of, but now, I don't even notice it. I am pleased to say I enjoy 20-25 mb and can work out of the home as needed.

Advice: If you are constructing a home, remodeling or just excavating on your site, it is prudent to install conduit for fiber even if you don't plan on actually hooking up to the service. If your neighborhood is doing any excavation for roads or water lines, the homeowner's association should contact Rock Island about installing fiber.

This islands have always strived **not** to become a place of "those that have and those that have not". Historically we have always applied that to not wanting to develop into a location such as Martha's Vineyard or Jackson's Hole. It may be time to consider that the "have nots" will be those homes without good Internet service.

As a REALTOR, I know that buyers now include whether a home has good internet service as part of their criteria. Having good connectivity is imperative and all property owners should take advantage of the Rock Island programs.

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