



# Questions & Answers

## Newcomb-Sangamon Wireless + Fiber Project

Mahomet, Illinois

Last updated 11-25-2020

If you live in Newcomb Township near the Sangamon River, or between the Sangamon and Mahomet, Volo Internet + Tech is bringing our lightning-fast fiber internet services to your neighborhood!

If you live in the proposed project footprint, this will be a tremendous upgrade, bringing your reliable, modern internet with speeds and customer service that far surpass options typically available in rural areas, and increasing property values even if you do not choose to use our service (see Q15).

It takes time (and money!) to build out the infrastructure for such a big project. With COVID, we know there's an urgent need for better connectivity *now*. To help your neighborhood immediately, we installed a temporary bridge wireless service as an immediate solution if you need connectivity sooner than we can complete the fiber backbone. It relies on line-of-sight to the wireless tower (as well as distance from it), so while many will be able to reach this service, there will be some who cannot. More on this service starts at Q16.

How and when we're able to build out the fiber portion of this project depends on a few factors. It's very expensive to build fiber, and while Volo is committing to funding a large portion of the project, we need a majority of neighbors to commit to both signing up for the service *and* to participate in our **Fiber Future Funding Program** (details in Q10-14). This allows you to help propel this project *and* enjoy lifetime service discounts in exchange for doing so. Once we achieve the participation and funding goals needed in each area, construction will begin and continue until the area is complete, after which we will move on to neighboring areas.

Read on to learn more about both the wireless and fiber portions of this project, and how to participate in the **Fiber Future Funding Program** to help fuel the construction and timeline of this project!

## QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR FIBER INTERNET PROJECT

### Q1: What are monthly costs for your fiber service?

A: The baseline monthly cost for Volo service in your area is \$64.95, both for wireless and fiber service. HOWEVER, this price point is under your control! Through our **Fiber Future Funding Program**, you can determine how much you want to pay, monthly vs up-front, with discounts that will bring FREE monthly service in some cases (see Q10-14).

A reminder though: to even build the fiber infrastructure, we need about 50% of all area residents to participate in some significant way (\$2,500 or more) to help with the pre-pay funding. **Your participation in our Fiber Future Funding Program is critical to making the fiber service possible! Please help if you can!**

## **Q2: What are the installation costs?**

A: Installation for your service will be \$300 (which includes your wireless install if you're participating in that service). These installations typically cost over \$1,000 and we've discounted this significantly in the interest of furthering the project.

For fiber, a basic installation covers installing up to 250 feet of buried fiber and conduit underground from our backbone to your home, then mounting a small grey plastic 10"x10" box on the side of your house. In the event we need to run more than 250 feet of buried cabling on your property (especially applicable for homes with longer driveways), we charge an additional \$2 per foot of buried cabling that we install. If custom installation steps or additional buried cabling are required, our technician will advise you at your installation what is needed and the cost for such, and you can choose to proceed or not at that time.

## **Q3: How fast will the fiber service be?**

A: The fiber project will be installed in phases. During the first phase when we are installing what's known as "last mile fiber", speeds will be between 100-200 mbps and with typical speeds of at least 100 mbps. In the final phase of the project, we will be connecting to what's known as "middle mile fiber". When we do, the connection speed will increase to 400-1,000 mbps (with typical speeds, based on your hardware and other factors, of 200-800 mbps).

## **Q4: How will the fiber service actually get to my house?**

A: First, we install a fiber optic backbone cable through your neighborhood, with underground vaults (known as handholes) and/or above ground "pedestals" spaced every 2-4 houses. Then, prior to your installation, our crew will install a fiber optic "drop cable" (a smaller cable with 1-2 strands) from your home to the nearest pedestal or handhole. On your home, that fiber goes into a small gray box (about 10"x10"), into a piece of electronics that converts the fiber to Ethernet. At the time of your installation, we install a CAT-5E Ethernet cable from that box to an appropriate location in your house, where you provide power to the external electronics and connect your computer or wireless router to our system.

We do not provide a router as part of the basic installation because many people have one, and there is no "one size fits all" solution that we can provide that would work well for all homes. Our technicians usually carry a basic router which you can purchase for \$75; however, depending on the size of your home and your needs, you may need something more powerful. Our staff can help you with some options when setting up your installation.

## **Q5: Will you need an easement from me for this project?**

A: In many cases, we'll be seeking easements from homeowners to allow us to easily, efficiently, and quickly run fiber infrastructure throughout the project area. Easements are extremely non-intrusive and in many cases your property may already be served by easements for other area utilities. In some cases, easements may not be needed. In the cases where they are, we ask for homeowner cooperation and participation to make this overall project a timely success.

As we plan construction in your area, we will reach out to you and your neighbors about the need for easements, showing you a map of what area the easement would cover and send you a draft of the easement agreement to consider. Once we have all the easements we need in your area, we will file them with the county and begin construction.

### **Q6: What yard impacts can we expect with this project?**

A: We are very sensitive to the fact that homeowners take great pride in their yards and gardens. The techniques we use to install both the backbone and home connections are designed to be as minimally disruptive as possible but do result in a fair amount of disturbed ground. To mitigate that we take a 3-stage approach:

1. During installation, we consult with each property owner and use the least-disruptive installation technique possible, be that a plowed-in line, directional boring, or a hand-dug trench (each method has its tradeoffs).
2. After install, we remediate the ground using dirt and/or compost, grass seed, and straw, or specific landscaping products as needed. We don't usually disturb anything other than grass, but if we did, we'd work with the homeowner to fix it.
3. Landscaping works best during the Spring and Fall, so we return the following Spring or Fall to double-check that no further remediation is needed. Homeowners can reach out to us any time before, during, or after construction to discuss concerns and remediation needs.

### **Q7: What's your uptime percentage – how often can we expect service to be down?**

A: Volo is proud of our uptime, which is similar to or better than other similar providers. We expect our full fiber-based services to be "up" at least 99.5% of the time. For a more specific comparison, our records indicate that the connection to Pinetree Subdivision from December 2019 to early September was live 99.876% of the time.

### **Q8: Are there any data caps? And will everyone who signs up for this service enjoy the same speeds/strength?**

A: This service does not have data caps and all who are connecting via the fiber will enjoy the same speed and strength on our network, though the electronics you use in your home will have some impact on ultimate performance. Wireless performance is influenced by a variety of factors including distance, how clear your path to the tower is, other users' signal strength, among others. We strive to make each connection as good as the technology and physics will allow, but there is some variability from wireless user to wireless user.

### **Q9: When can we expect this project to be completed and allow us to surf online with incredible Volo fiber speeds?**

A: We broke ground on the project in September 2020 and will work to build out all phases fully by the end of 2021. You can learn more about project areas, phases, and updates [here](#).

*Please note: this is a GOAL and not a GUARANTEE.* To even build the fiber infrastructure, we need about 50% of all area residents to participate in some significant way (\$2,500 or more) to help with the pre-pay funding. **Your participation in our Fiber Future Funding Program (see Q10-14) is critical to making the fiber service live as soon as possible!**

We also build in contingencies for weather, permitting, and easement needs, and other delays, but this is after all 2020, and who knows what we should expect in terms of random catastrophes or surprises!

Please be patient and know that we are working as fast as we can given capacity and circumstances to get you online with new service. We know how important this service is to you and your neighbors and we pledge to move as quickly as we can! And please consider what level of participation you want to have in our **Fiber Future Funding Program!**

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT PROJECT FUNDING AND OUR FIBER FUTURE FUNDING PROGRAM FOR DISCOUNTED SERVICE**

### **Q10: Tell me more about Volo's Fiber Future Funding Program and paying some in advance in exchange for billing discounts.**

A: Bringing your neighborhood a fast fiber network is an exciting project, but also a very expensive one. Volo is financing about half of the project's costs internally. But we are a small local family-owned company without the same access to financing as some of the larger conglomerate companies. As such we need financial help to make this project a reality, so we've adopted a customer partnership model to help finance the rest of the project costs.

For the remaining funds needed, we are asking area residents to participate in our **Fiber Future Funding Program**, a community partnership model that's a win-win for you, your neighborhood, and the project overall. Participate in this program with a funding pledge now, and you'll save money with long-term discounts on your monthly bills in return for helping with the early costs of this project.

To reach our funding goal, **we will need about 50% of the neighbors in your area to participate in the program, ideally at a level of at least \$2,500.** While paying less can work (and more is obviously welcomed!), \$2,500 really helps to fuel the program and ensures we can proceed with the project.

### **Q11: When is payment due if we commit to participating in the Fiber Future Funding Program?**

We are not asking you to pay the amount you pledge until Volo is fully committed to building the fiber network, with the easements and all funding commitments ready to move forward with the project in your area. This will most likely sometime near the end of 2020 or in Q1 of 2021.

### **Q12: If I choose to participate in Volo's Fiber Future Funding Program, how much do we pay and what is the benefit to me?**

Let's say you decide to pay in at the recommended \$2,500 level. You have two options for how the discount plays out, so let's look at how this benefits your bills and long-term costs:

- Choose our **10-year Discount Option** and your monthly bill goes down by \$25/month. You will pay only \$40/month for your internet for 10 years instead of \$65. **This nets \$3,000 in savings for your \$2,500 payment!**
- Choose our **Lifetime Discount Option** and enjoy \$20 off your bill each month, paying only \$45 each bill instead of \$65. Over a 20-year period, this nets you **\$4,800 in savings on your \$2,500 pay-in** – and that payoff continues to grow over time.

This is just one pay level scenario. You can commit to participate in the Fiber Future Program at any level (including no contribution), but remember: we cannot make the fiber portion of this project happen without about 50% of the area neighbors participating to help with the infrastructure costs.

Here's a chart to help you understand options, including how you can even get free internet for life!

	10 Year Discount Option		Forever Discount Option	
Up-front payment amount:	Discount \$/mo*	Your monthly bill will be* (instead of \$64.95)	Discount \$/mo*	Your monthly bill will be* (instead of \$64.95):
\$500	\$5	\$60	\$4	\$61
\$1,000	\$10	\$55	\$8	\$57
^ these help but these are best V				
\$2,500	\$25	\$40	\$20	\$45
\$4,000	\$40	\$25	\$32	\$33
\$5,000	\$50	\$15	\$40	\$25
\$6,000	\$60	\$5	\$48	\$17
\$6,500	FREE	FREE	\$52	\$13
\$7,000	FREE	FREE	\$56	\$9
\$8,125	FREE	FREE	FREE	FREE

\*rounded to nearest dollar

You can choose to participate at any level or decline and pay the \$65/month. But remember—**we cannot make the fiber portion of this project happen without about 50% of all area residents participating in some significant way to help with the pre-pay funding.** We hope you'll join us and participate in the **Fiber Future Funding Program** and help make this project a reality!

For people who participate in this program at the \$2,500 level or more, we are also waiving our 12-month service agreement minimum term.

Also if, for whatever reason, Volo is unable to build out fiber in your area (e.g., a lack of FFFP contributions), you still get to keep your monthly discount without having to pay your FFFP commitment.

### **Q13: If we pay into the Fiber Future Funding Program, can the monthly service cost savings that come along with that be passed along to new homeowners if we sell our home?**

A: Unfortunately, we can't do that at this time. Having the discount "run with the land" significantly complicates the agreement, and requires additional costs related to legal and recording fees. But that shouldn't deter you! People looking to move soon are actually the MOST likely to come out ahead, regardless of the discount passing on or not.

### **Q14: Are there any other financial benefits to participating in the Fiber Future Funding Program and helping to pay for this program up front?**

A: Yes! Bringing fiber to your neighborhood and your home instantly – and significantly – increases the value and marketability of your home while having no impacts on your taxes. Studies have repeatedly shown that **homes serviced by high-speed fiber internet see 3-5% higher sale value**, and less tangibly, opens it to a much broader market of interested buyers.

For every \$100,000 in your home value, studies indicate that you could see a \$3,000-\$5,000 higher selling price than if you sell without fiber in the area. In short, that means that **homeowners can expect to gain at LEAST 2x the value of the average \$2,500 contribution we are suggesting you make to help with the infrastructure of this project.**

### **Q15: Aren't there state and federal funds to pay for such projects?**

A: Yes and no. There are programs such as the Rural Development Opportunity Fund and Connect Illinois. However, your area is not listed as an eligible area for funding for most, if not all, of them. Additionally, RDOP is an auction-based program with awarded funding distributed over the next decade. Since funding does not come up front, this still leaves us with the problem of funding the most expensive part – the initial buildout/infrastructure. With regard to Connect Illinois, the next deadline for applications isn't until March 2021, with funding, if awarded, coming later that year (plus, your area isn't eligible for these funds).

Finally, these state and federal programs cater more to large, multi-state corporations than they do smaller, locally owned operations like ours. The reporting, tracking, engineering, and related requirements end up nearly tripling our cost, which basically eliminates many of the advantages of getting the funding in the first place. They often also require a large local match of 50%, which is one of the things we consider in asking for local up-front contributions.

To still deliver high quality and reliable services and keep our local customer-oriented focus, we feel that our customer partnership model, the **Fiber Future Funding Program**, is the most likely path to getting this project accomplished. Having customers like you involved gives you an important stake and voice in this project's success while keeping costs local, fueling the local economy, and supporting small, local businesses.

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT VOLO'S TEMPORARY WIRELESS SERVICE**

### **Q16: What are the monthly costs for the wireless service?**

A: Good news! The price you pay for our temporary wireless service – and eventually the hoped-for fiber service – is in your control and ranges from \$65/month to FREE. To determine how much you want to pay, see Q10-14. Your cost is linked to your participation in our **Fiber Future Funding Program**. How much you pay rests in your hands, allowing you to set your monthly costs starting now for the temporary wireless service and for the eventual fiber service we hope to provide.

A reminder: **to build the fiber portion of this project, we need about 50% of all area residents to participate in the Fiber Future Funding Program in some significant way (\$2,500 or more) to help with the pre-pay funding.**

### **Q17: What are the wireless installation costs?**

A: More good news! Typically for basic wireless installation costs, our cost for labor and equipment is about \$250, with another \$750 for a basic fiber installation. Rather than passing along both costs to you, in the interest of furthering this project, Volo is doing both installations for just \$300.

A basic installation covers installing an initial wireless connection on your home, running a wire into your home that will be used for both the wireless and the fiber connections, all the equipment needed, and up to 250 feet of buried cabling on your property.

Remember that wireless service requires line of sight between your home and our tower. In some cases, trees and other obstacles may require us to install your wireless connection on a post or other custom installation steps to help get you reliable service. In the event we need to run more than 250 feet of buried cabling on your property (especially applicable for homes with longer driveways or lots of trees), we charge an additional \$2 per foot of buried cabling that we install. If custom installation steps or additional buried cabling are required, our technician will advise you at your installation what is needed and the cost for such, and you can choose to proceed or not at that time.

### **Q18: When will the wireless service be available?**

A: The tower and equipment were installed in October. Calls to those expressing interest in this service began shortly thereafter to arrange for the installation necessary to use this. We are moving outward from the tower to put people online – those closest are receiving service first and we are radiating out from there. If you'd like this service, contact Laura at [laura@volo.net](mailto:laura@volo.net) with your address.

### **Q19: Will everyone be able to access the temporary wireless service?**

A: Wireless technology is dependent on line-of-sight from the tower to your home or property as well as distance. Too much tree cover can make a connection difficult or impossible, even for those relatively close to the tower. If there is a way to receive a signal somewhere on your property, that expands options to bring this service to you, even if the receiver cannot be located on your home directly. Additionally, those further away from the tower will have an increasingly harder time accessing this service. If you have questions about wireless viability at your location, email [laura@volo.net](mailto:laura@volo.net).

### **Q20: How fast will the wireless service be?**

A: Wireless service speed depends on many factors including obstructions, interference, and distance. We expect wireless services in this area to have typical speeds between 10mbps and 40mbps, which should be fast enough for most uses including zoom/video class work and streaming entertainment.

### **Q21: Where is the wireless tower located?**

A: The tower is located at the northwest corner of 450 E and CR 2600. You can see it's exact location on the map [here](#).

## **GENERAL PROJECT QUESTIONS**

### **Q22: Is there a service contract?**

A: There is a service agreement associated with the service, covering the general terms and conditions of usage. In some cases there is no required minimum term, in others there is. For example, when we offer heavily discounted installation there is usually a minimum term of 1 year. After the term expires, unlike other services we don't routinely raise prices or lock you into further terms – Volo prides itself on the quality of our services and feel confident that you'll stick with us long-term because you *like* us, not because you *have to*.

**For people who participate in our Fiber Future Funding Program at the \$2,500 level or more (see Q12), we are waiving our 12-month service agreement minimum term.**



## **Q23: We're snowbirds: can we get our service shut down over the months we're gone?**

A: Yes, we are happy to work with you on this arrangement so long as the service is turned off for more than one month at a time, and not more than once per year. What we do not want are random month-on/month-off requests that take a toll on our administrative staff being able to keep up with and track such demands.

## **Q24: If our service goes down, how long might it take to get a service call for repairs?**

A: We monitor core systems 24x7 and have technicians on call to head out for major issues at all times. A neighborhood-wide problem would result in a technician being dispatched within two hours regardless of the day or time. More common, individual problems are still important, but we don't generally dispatch a tech in the middle of the night in those cases. If you call for assistance and it looks like the problem is isolated to your home, you should be able to talk to someone who can look up details on what might be impacting your service within a few minutes. At that time, unless we can resolve the problem immediately, we normally recommend scheduling a tech visit to get your repair on our calendar. Those visits can sometimes be scheduled same day, but more often the next day. If you call on a Friday or Saturday, we do have time slots we can schedule on Saturday and Sunday. We may ask to schedule less urgent issues (looking into speed issues that aren't actual "outages," or other non-urgent repairs) a few days out, or on days with more technician availability, and thereby reserve those Sat/Sun times for urgent matters. If you're only available Saturday or Sunday, we will find a way to accommodate you.

After your initial problem report by phone, we begin our analysis by troubleshooting from our offices to 1) get a clear idea of what exactly the problem is, and 2) once we know that, dispatch the right people from our team equipped to make the proper repairs. Some problems can be fixed from afar, ahead of your scheduled tech visit, and others require team members with certain training, certifications, or tools.

Our goal is to always provide some type of repair service within 1 business day. Many problems can be fixed more quickly and if so, that's what we always strive for. Other issues need more time to diagnose (e.g. something that is intermittent) or require time for a JULIE marking (2 business days). Regardless, our customers' online needs are a priority for us, and our team is dedicated to solving whatever issue is impacting your home or area as quickly as possible.

## **Q25: Will you install service to my shop/shed/outbuilding?**

A: If you'd like service installed to another building on your property, you have three options:

1. Have us install separate service to that building and pay monthly costs associated for that service;
2. Pay us on a time+materials basis to install a connection from your primary building/home to the secondary building, for a one-time cost (a good budgetary estimate for these connections is \$5/ft but each one will be slightly different); or
3. Install service yourself, either trenching a wire or fiber (or putting duct in which we will then fill for you on a time+materials basis), or using a "wireless mesh" router system like the Google Wifi or Netgear Orbi.

*If you have questions, contact Laura at [laura@volo.net](mailto:laura@volo.net) or 217-778-1687.*

*Also check [www.volo.net/nsfiber](http://www.volo.net/nsfiber) for updates.*