



Report

Site visit to St John's Parish, Tobago

1 Purpose

A site visit to the region of St John's Parish, Tobago was conducted by Dexter Boswell-Inniss and Naseema Mohammed from the October 31 to November 2, 2019 to assess the availability of fixed broadband internet access services in the area. A meeting had been arranged with Ms. Eileen Daniel from one location (Parlatuvier) for 11.00 am on the November 2, 2019 to discuss issues and concerns. Ms. Daniel's contact information was provided by Stacy Williams from the Authority's Tobago office. The information collected from the residents and further data analysis would be utilised in assessing whether this area is suitable for a pilot Universal Service Fund (USF) project, in accordance with the Universal Service Regulations.

2 Background

This area has come to the attention of the Authority due to the last Digital Divide Survey 2013, where St John's Parish was marked as an area which was underserved. After considering newly acquired data on Digicel's access fibre infrastructure roll-out in Tobago, the Authority decided to do a drive through the region between Castara to Hermitage to determine the possibility of extending fixed broadband internet service to the communities existing in St John's Parish. A meeting was arranged in Parlatuvier to also hear the concerns of some residents in the area.

3 Methodology

The status of the telecommunication infrastructure on route to and through the parish of St John was noted. A meeting was held with Eileen Daniel to discuss the status of the broadband internet service currently available within the area, i.e. type and quality of service. Any other information provided by her was also noted. Impromptu meetings were also made with the principals of primary schools located at Parlatuvier and L'Anse Fourmi and all details regarding their fixed broadband internet service was noted. Additionally, impromptu meetings were held with residents in a grocery in Parlatuvier, a beach restaurant in Bloody Bay and a resident in L'Anse Fourmi.

4 Findings

4.1 Observations on route through St John's Parish



On route to and through St John's Parish, to the main towns of Parlatuvier, Bloody Bay, L'Anse Fourmi and Hermitage, it was noted that Arnos Vale is well covered. Les Coteaux has wire-line infrastructure and two cell sites. There is wire-line infrastructure along the North Side road with both concrete and wooden poles. Castara has wire-line infrastructure. TSTT's wire-line site for Castara is located at the Castara Community Center, 11°16'49.32" N, 60°41'40.86" W, with backup power available via fuel cell technology and standby batteries. On arriving to Villa Escalante, which is located 3.7 km from Castara, there was no sign of wire-line service from any fixed line operator. There is an existing (mostly concrete) pole route to Parlatuvier. Within the village of Parlatuvier itself, the poles are, for the most part, wooden. The concrete pole route continues along the North Side road from Parlatuvier to Bloody Bay, and thence to L'Anse Fourmi. A few poles along this route are wooden and are not well maintained. The concrete pole route continues from L'Anse Fourmi towards Hermitage. Just on the outskirts of L'Anse Fourmi, there is an estate called Tumbiri Lodge. Hermitage ends at 30.3 km from Castara. It should be noted that there is adequate road reserve for the pole route on the North Side road and that for the most part, the concrete poles are in good condition. Some houses en route from Castara to Campbelton, Charlotteville have DirectTV dishes.

4.2 Parlatuvier

Parlatuvier is 5.9 km from Castara. The community consists of approximately 105 houses and ends at 9.4 km from Castara. The Parlatuvier Anglican School is serviced with broadband internet service (provided by TSTT) via fibre of speeds tested at 3.6 Mbps downlink (DL)/1.85 Mbps uplink (UL). The internet service bill for the school is paid by the THA. There is a computer lab at the school with laptop computers. In summary, the internet service provided by the fibre cable is utilised to provide WiFi access to the laptops and teachers' WiFi enabled devices, including cell phones. One teacher noted that the range of the WiFi service is short. It was also stated by the teacher that once there is no electricity the landline service (provided by TSTT) does not work. However, fixed phone service works well once available. The photos below show the setup for the broadband service at the school.



One resident, located just a few houses away from the school commented that the landline service provided by TSTT cuts off once rain falls, and their internet service is also provided by TSTT.



The Authority met with Ms. Eileen Daniel outside the Parlatuvier Community Centre as she was unfortunately, not able to acquire the use of the centre so that other villagers could meet with the Authority. It also rained heavily during the meeting with Ms. Daniel. She indicated that there was an upgrade done to her landline service and thereafter the phone line did not work well, especially during rainfall. She also commented on her broadband service which is provided by TSTT (same setup as in the picture above) “The internet service is no good, not ever 100%.” Her package is a combined package from TSTT of landline and internet service (5 Mbps) of approximately \$300 monthly.

Ms. Daniel showed the Authority where the TSTT wire-line site is located in Parlatuvier, 11°18'4.09" N, 60°38'49.68" W. It is labelled a UMC 1000 site, which is a circa 20 year old Digital Loop Carrier system.

4.3 Bloody Bay

Bloody Bay is 9.4 km from Castara. The community consists of approximately 70 houses. At the Bloody Bay beach facility, it was noted that the same Huawei WiFi device was utilized to provide broadband internet service from TSTT. Bloody Bay also extends towards the Main Ridge Forest Reserve (1.7 km from the junction), just where the pole route ends and cell phone service diminishes. There appears to be no pole route through the Main Ridge Forest Reserve.



The wire-line TSTT site in Bloody Bay is located at 11°17'35.17" N, 60°37'40.67" W.

4.4 L'Anse Fourmi

L'Anse Fourmi is 17.6 km from Castara. The community consists of approximately 90 houses and ends at 19.1 km from Castara. The village is served by both Digicel and TSTT cell sites. The Methodist Primary School is serviced with broadband internet service (provided by TSTT) via fibre of 4 Mbps DL. The principal indicated that the service is very good, and the service is provided via the same setup as that of the Parlatuvier Anglican School, unfortunately photos were not taken due to the equipment being housed in a rack which was locked. There is also TSTT fixed landline phone service at the school.



A visit to one resident who utilises her house as a shop to sell light snacks to passing tourists also showed a TSTT Huawei wireless modem providing internet access services.

4.5 Hermitage

Hermitage is 25.2 km from Castara. The community consists of approximately 8 houses on hilltops and ends at 30.3 km from Castara. The community was mostly vegetation. No residents were met in this community. The houses are not serviced with electricity from T&TEC and there is no fixed landline service in the area. There is a WASA sign indicating a project but no signs of any actual WASA infrastructure.

5 Conclusion

The expected distance to be served in St John's Parish would be 33 km. The villages of Parlatuvier, Bloody Bay and L'Anse Fourmi are suitable locations to implement a CUSI project as all communities have limited fixed broadband internet services at minimum speed capabilities and with unreliable service. In total, these three communities consist of approximately 265 houses. It was observed that there is adequate road reserve for pole installation and there are also existing concrete poles that can be utilized and (possibly) shared amongst operators.

D. Boswell-Inniss

Date

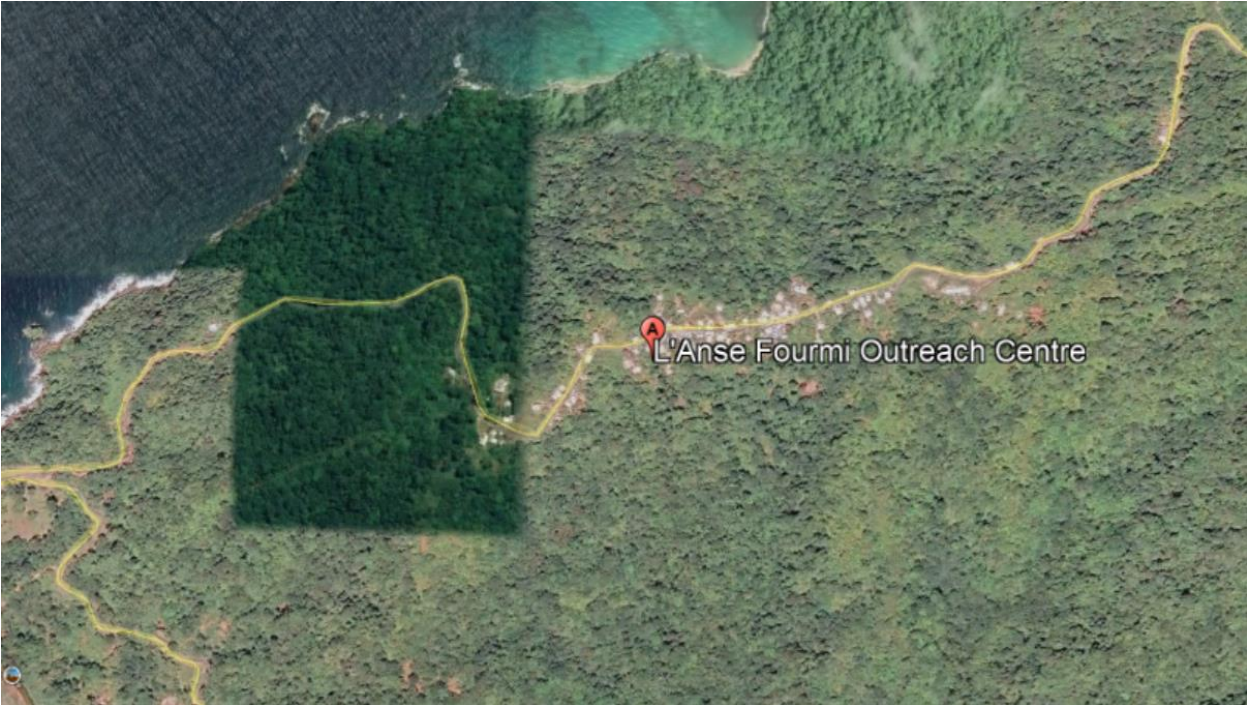
6 Appendix I: Parlatuvier



7 Appendix II: Bloody Bay



8 Appendix III: L'Anse Fourmi



9 Appendix IV: Hermitage

