



**MARATHON COUNTY  
BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING  
AGENDA**

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, January 22, 2024 at 3:00 P.M.**

Meeting Location: **Assembly Room, Marathon County Courthouse, 500 Forest St, Wausau, WI**

**Task Force Members:** Chair John Robinson, Jacob Langenhahn, Gary Gisselman, Mike Ritter, Jennifer Aarrestad, Tony Sherfinski, Eric Budleski, Milton Olson, Wade Carroll, Jon Euting

**Task Force Purpose:** *Develop recommendations identifying the potential role of Marathon County in facilitating the expansion of Broadband access in Marathon County. Review the Report: Broadband for Marathon County Broadband Assessment and Plan prepared by Design Nine and develop broad policies and partnership recommendations relating to the expansion of broadband/internet services throughout Marathon County.*

**Phone #: 1-415-655-0001**

**Access Code: 120 112 4516**

When you enter the telephone conference, **PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!**

1. **Call Meeting to Order**
2. **Public Comments (15 Minute limit)**
3. **Approval of the December 18, 2023 minutes**
4. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion:**
  - A. Update on Grant Funded/Assisted Broadband Projects
    1. Frontier
    2. Bug Tussel
    3. Charter
5. **Policy Discussion and Possible Action:**
  - A. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program
    1. Process and timelines for determining priorities for future broadband expansion
    2. Bulk Challenges
    3. Speed Test
  - B. Process and timelines for maximizing ISP participation
    1. Identify County Role in Process
6. **Next Steps and Timelines**
7. **Next Meeting Date – February 19, 2024**
8. **Adjournment**

*“Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk’s Office at 715-261-1500 or e-mail [countyclerk@co.marathon.wi.us](mailto:countyclerk@co.marathon.wi.us) one business day before the meeting.*

**SIGNED** /s/ John Robinson  
Presiding Officer or Designee

EMAILED TO: Wausau Daily Herald, City Pages, and other Media Groups

EMAILED BY: Toshia Ranallo

DATE & TIME: 1/16/2024 at 3:00pm

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE

BY: Toshia Ranallo

DATE & TIME: 1/16/2024 at 3:00 pm



# MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING

## Minutes

Monday, December 18, 2023 at 3:00 P.M.

Assembly Room, 500 Forest St, Wausau WI

| Members             | Present/Web-Phone | Absent |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Chair John Robinson | x                 |        |
| Jacob Langenhahn    | x                 |        |
| Gary Gisselman      |                   | x      |
| Mike Ritter         | x                 |        |
| Jennifer Aarrestad  | x                 |        |
| Tony Sherfinski     | x                 |        |
| Eric Budleski       | x                 |        |
| Milton Olson        | x                 |        |
| Wade Carroll        |                   | x      |
| Jon Euting          | x                 |        |

**Also Present:** Gerry Klein, Kurt Gibbs, Erin Andrews, Chris Crawford

**VIA Web or Phone:** Preston Vande Voort, Valerie Carrillo, Randy Wolfram, Todd Kruse, Kimm Webber, Bill Flood, Brady Mesenberg, Kim Dye

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Chair Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.
2. **Public Comments** (15 Minute limit) – Kim Dye presented they were able to get Frontier about 1 ½ yrs ago. They are in the town of Reid. It’s not always reliable.
3. **RITTER MAKE A MOTION; SECOND BY AARRESTAD TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 1, 2023 BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES. MOTION CARRIED.**
4. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion:**
  - A. Update on Grant Funded/Assisted Broadband Projects
    1. Frontier – Todd Kruse – They have equipment staged in the Wausau area to start in the first of the year for fiber deployment, weather dependent. 846 customer locations are focused with their three grant applications. They are doing additional planned construction work in the county, not related to any PSC or grant work.
    2. Bug Tussel – Chairman Robinson gave an overview of recent discussions. They are attempting to create a realistic completion schedule. Many factors have delayed the project’s completion.
    3. Charter – Randy Wolfram – He presented the current map of their work. They have completed 3639 connections to homes and small businesses to date. They have been working ahead of schedule. most is with RDOF. Chris Crawford gave updates on the two newer grant areas they applied for as well as additional buildouts.
  - B. Update on PSC Capital Projects Fund Projects Requests (Frontier and Charter) – Supervisor Robinson reviewed fund requests to date.
  - C. Broadband Support Position Update – Erin Andrews introduced herself and her background. She is the broadband support coordinator.
5. **Policy Discussion and Possible Action:**
  - A. Review Coverage Maps – Erin is working with Preston in CPZ to verify the accuracy of the coverage map areas and then will be issuing challenges to the PSC maps for the inaccuracies.
  - B. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program
    1. Process and timelines for determining priorities for future broadband expansion efforts - Erin reviewed the information in the packet.

- a. Unserved Areas under 20/3
  - b. Underserved Areas under 120
  - c. Community Anchor Institutions – These are town halls, schools, libraries, and multiple unit dwellings.
2. Identify County Role in Process
    - a. Process and timelines for maximizing ISP participation – Timeline was discussed.
    - b. Task Force Role – The role within the county was discussed.
  - C. Review Wisconsin Digital Equity Plan to Identify Opportunities for Marathon County – Erin reviewed what digital equity is, who is targeted, and current funding for it.
6. **Next Steps**
    - A. Map Updates
    - B. Speed Tests - WISER test
    - C. ISP Meeting
  7. **Next Meeting:** January 22, 2024
  8. **Adjournment**

**SHERFINSKI MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING, AARRESTAD SECOND. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**  
**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 4:22pm.**

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Kathy Johnson

**From:** [Kruse, Todd](#)  
**To:** [Erin Andrews](#)  
**Cc:** [John Robinson](#); [Gerard Klein](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] WI: Marathon County Jan. 22 task force report - Frontier Communications  
**Date:** Friday, January 12, 2024 3:19:35 PM  
**Attachments:** [701eb4d5-52f1-4eb1-9f21-b58377326629\\_FrontierNewBrand\\_96dpi\\_198px.png](#)

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In December 2023 Frontier started the construction process of our PPP grant agreement focused on these wire centers (exchange areas):

1. Wausau Main
2. Schofield

This construction phase is an extension of the Central Office (CO) preparation work Frontier completed throughout the Fall of 2023, which I noted in previous updates.

Our current construction phase – focused on connecting Outside Plant (OSP) fiber cable infrastructure to the CO equipment -- runs from December 2023 through March 31, 2024.

Weather permitting Frontier intends to have network testing completed with Customer Locations (CL's) available for customers to subscribe (aka "Open for Sale") in April 2024 for these two wire centers.

In late March/April 2024 timeframe Frontier will provide a summary of total CL's that were completed.

**Todd Kruse**  
Fiber Partnerships Team , Business Development  
todd.kruse@ftr.com | 6124235621 | Saint Paul, Minnesota



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This communication is confidential. Frontier only sends and receives email on the basis of the terms set out at [http://www.frontier.com/email\\_disclaimer](http://www.frontier.com/email_disclaimer).

To: Marathon County Broadband Committee

From: Scott Feldt, Director of Public Affairs

RE: Marathon County Broadband Project

Date: January 15, 2024

### **Introduction**

The Marathon County Broadband Project being performed by Bug Tussel Wireless (“BTW”), has been delayed due to a number of factors. While there has been a delay, Bug Tussel is committed to completing this county project and the Leathercamp project by the end of 2024.

### **Background**

BTW and Marathon County entered into a partnership in 2021 via the issuance of \$25 million of bond funding through the Fond du Lac County Bond Program. The proposed project included the construction of 18 cellular towers and 198.33 miles of middle mile fiber at an estimated cost of approximately \$22.5 million. The Marathon County Board approved the Project in 2022 with a target completion year of 2024.

Following issuance of the project, the President of BTW, the Marathon County Broadband Committee Chairman, and the Marathon County IT Director visited various townships in the County to inform local governments of the Project and to gain any feedback and concerns the townships may have. These meetings included many requests by townships for fiber and/or towers to be located in their areas. As a result, the Project scope had increased from 18 towers to 24 towers and from 198.33 fiber miles to 452 fiber miles with no increase in funding.

Initial construction began as anticipated in 2021. However, it was quickly realized that rock was more prevalent along the fiber construction route than originally estimated. This caused significant delays (approximately 3 months) in construction as well as an increase in cost of approximately \$3.5 million. In parallel, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the material market were significant, causing significant lead time increases and material costs over doubling from original estimates. The expansion of the project, the need for additional rock boring has led to funding challenges.

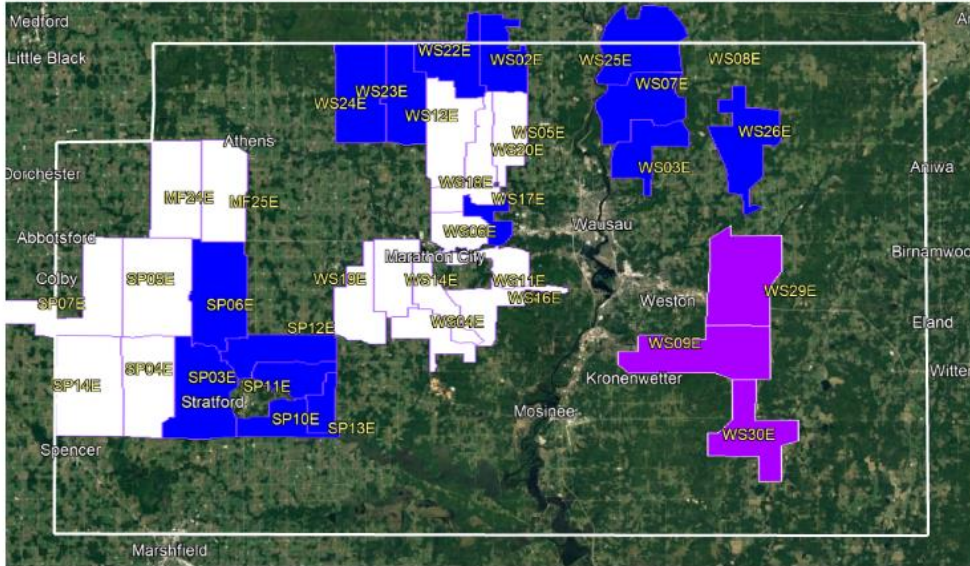
### **Project Status**

Currently, 16 towers have been constructed and are live, and additional tower projects are in various stages of lease acquisition and permit approval. Over 182 miles of conduit have been installed. We are verifying that all work has been completed by our subcontractors. Still, the project, which has expanded from the original plan, cannot be completed under the original budget. We have proposed a modified project route that reduces the number of fiber miles but still exceeds the mileage listed in the original project design. The expanded project scope and the increase in rock boring will still require additional funds for the project to be completed. Bug Tussel has been discussing options to modify the project and its corresponding budget. We hope that Bug Tussel and Marathon County can decide upon a funding path that will assist in the project being completed within its scheduled timeline. We understand that there may be concern regarding the completion of the project. The setbacks encountered were unfortunate, still Bug Tussel is committed to the Project’s success in Marathon County.

- White area is completed.
- Blue is scheduled for 2024 construction.
- Purple is scheduled for 2025 construction.

Project to date, we have construction complete to 3,808 homes and small businesses. 2024 we will add an additional 1,931 homes and 592 in 2025.

Let me know if you have additional questions.





## What is the BEAD Challenge Process?

The BEAD Challenge Process is a period of time whereby nonprofits, Tribal and local units of government, and ISPs can submit challenges, and thereafter rebuttals on whether a location or Community Anchor Institution (CAI) is served, underserved, or unserved.

- **Served locations** must have broadband service available with at least 100/20 Mbps or above with less than 100 ms of latency
- **Underserved locations** have broadband service speeds less than 100/20 Mbps but above 25/3 Mbps
- **Unserved locations** have a broadband service option that is less than 25/3 Mbps
- **CAIs are considered served** if they have at minimum a 1 GB symmetrical broadband service available.

## What can be challenged

The Wisconsin Broadband Office will only allow challenges on the following grounds:

- The identification of eligible Community Anchor Institutions, as defined by the Eligible Entity (State of Wisconsin);
- Community Anchor Institution BEAD eligibility determinations;
- BEAD eligibility determinations for existing [Broadband Servicable Locations](#) (BSLs);
- Enforceable commitments (see page 31 of this [BroadbandUSA FAQ document](#) for more information); or
- Planned service.

## Process Overview

- Prior to beginning the Challenge Phase, the Wisconsin Broadband Office will publish the set of locations eligible for BEAD funding.
- During the Challenge Phase, the challenger will submit the challenge through the Commission's Electronic Records Filing (ERF) system. **Challengers will have 30 calendar days to submit a challenge** from the time the initial list of unserved and underserved locations, community anchor institutions, and existing enforceable commitments are posted.

## Why should we get involved?

The primary reason to participate is that the results of the Challenge Process will identify the locations that will be eligible for BEAD funding.

It will also determine the project areas that will be eligible for BEAD funding, which will affect the bidding process.

Following the completion of the BEAD Challenge Process, all locations classified as unserved and underserved will be eligible for BEAD grant funding.



## Transparency Notice

The information contained in this document is based on the best available information as of December 14, 2023. At this time, neither Volume I nor Volume II have been approved by the NTIA.

[Sign up on the Wisconsin Broadband Office website](#) for challenge process updates via the newsletter and subscribe to the docket 5-BCH-2024



## Who can challenge

The Wisconsin Broadband Office will only allow challenges from:

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- Tribal governments
- Units of local government
- Broadband service providers with facilities currently in the State of Wisconsin or facilities planned by June 30, 2024.

## Timeline

|  |  |
|--|--|
| As soon as possible [before 1/16/2024]                             | Begin preparing for the Challenge Process by getting an PSC ERF account, FCC FRN account, a free Tier E CostQuest license (see the steps outlined in the next section of this fact sheet.) |
| One week prior to start of challenge process [estimated 1/16/2024] | Phase 1 – The PSC will publish a list of eligible locations and overview of Challenge Process, timeline, and instructions for using ERF to submit challenges and rebuttals.                |
| Day 0 [estimated 1/23/2024]  | The PSC will publish BEAD eligibility map and location set by broadband serviceable location identification number   |
| Day 0 – Day 30 [estimated 1/23/2024 – 2/22/2024]                   | Phase 2 - Challenge Phase  |
| Day 31 – Day 60 [estimated 2/23/2024 – 3/25/2024]                  | Phase 3 – Rebuttal Phase   |
| Day 60 up to Day 90 [estimated 3/24/2024 – 4/26/2024]              | Phase 4 – Final Determination Phase completed by Commission staff  |
| After April 30, 2024   | NTIA reviews and may modify the final eligibility determinations following the Wisconsin Challenge Process.  |

## Before the Challenge Process: What to do NOW

1. **Decide who on your team will be the point person** who will set up and hold the accounts and/or manage the accounts. Keep a record of your accounts and passwords so you are ready to go when the challenge process begins.



### CHECKLIST: WHAT TO DO NOW

- Identify a local point person for all accounts
- Register for a PSC Electronic Records Filing account
- Sign up for FCC Username account (if you don't already have one)
- Sign up for Federal Communications Commission Registration Number
- Request a NTIA Tier E CostQuest license
- Sign up for Wisconsin Broadband Office newsletter
- Subscribe to 5-BCH-2024 on the PSC's ERF system

**TARGETED DEADLINE:**  
**JANUARY 16, 2023**





2. **Sign up for a Public Service Commission Electronic Records Filing account.** How-to:
- Click on **E-Services** tab on the PSC [homepage](#):



- Click on **Upload Document** and then select **Create New Individual Account** link under the Logon ID and Password boxes.



**Warning:** Your session will close if it remains inactive for an extended period of time.

**NOTE:** Telecommunications providers must use this new [filing interface](#) to upload tariffs to ERF.

**Note:** If your password is not in compliance with the new rules, we will redirect you to the change password page.

Logon ID:

Password:

Are you a robot? Check the box to prove you are human.

I'm not a robot



[Change/Forget Password?](#) [Retrieve Logon ID](#)

[Create New Individual Account](#)

- Enter the email address, click the **Send Code Now** link.
- Enter the code from the email in the One-Time Code box.
- Complete the form. \*Please include phone number.
- After submitting you will have a new Logon ID immediately.
-



- h. You can click on “**Back to Login Button**” to update your account or upload a document.
    - b. The ERF Help / How To [menu](#) has links to the full User Guide, a Quick Reference Guide, and Frequently Asked Questions.
3. **Sign up for an FCC Registration Number (FRN)** - because the FCC’s National Broadband Map contains the base data used for BEAD funding allocations, you will need an FRN number for your challenge process. You will use the National Broadband Map to determine/confirm if the locations are accurately listed, which will help identify locations eligible for BEAD funding.
  - a. You need a FCC Registration Number (FRN) and access to the email address used to sign up for the FRN.
  - b. If this is the first time you are registering for a FRN, you will need to first set up and activate a [Username Account](#).
  - c. Follow the detailed instructions [on this page](#) to complete your Username Account and FRN registration.
4. **Request a Tier E License** - The NTIA Tier E License supports participation in a challenge process organized under a Federal Broadband Granting Agency’s (FBGA) broadband grant program(s). The Tier E license is intended for units of local government, non-profits, and other organizations that have signed an FCC Tier 4 license. Here are three resources that will help you through this process:
  - a. [Guide to requesting a Tier E License](#) – see page 2 of this guide for a list of what you need to have prepared. You can also watch for a guide from WI PSC on their [Internet for All page](#).
  - b. [Request a Tier E License](#)
  - c. [Sample Tier E CostQuest License Agreement](#)
5. Decide how you will conduct your challenge process – sign up for the [Wisconsin Broadband Office newsletter](#) for updates and timelines.

## References and Resources

[Webinar Slide Deck: Introduction to the BEAD challenge process, NTIA](#)

[Broadband USA](#)

[Proposed Volume I](#)

[CostQuest](#)

[Proposed Volume II](#)

[NTIA](#)

[PSC/Wisconsin Broadband Office](#)

[Extension Broadband Toolkit](#)

[FCC](#)

[PSC Internet for All page](#)

## BEAD – Broadband Equity and Deployment

| BEAD PROCESS  | DATE   |
|---|--|
| PSC Volume 1 submitted to NTIA                              | 12/1/ 2023   |
| PSC Volume 2 submitted to NTIA                              | 12/27/2023   |
| FCC Fabric Challenges                                       | Ongoing  |
| Vol 1 Approved by NTIA                                      | TBA – anticipated late Jan/early Feb                                   |
| PSC opens challenges to confirm locations eligible for BEAD | As soon as Vol 1 approved challengers have 30 days to submit challenge |
| PSC 2023 Grant Awards announced                             | Prior to BEAD LOIs due   |
| PSC Vol 2 Approval  | TBA  |
| BEAD LOIs (Letters of Intent) Due                           | Late Spring (est)  |
| BEAD Applications Due                                       | Late Summer (est)  |
| BEAD Awards Announced                                       | TBA -Funds must be committed within 365 days of Vol 2 Approval         |
| BEAD Grant Projects Completed                               | 2030   |

### Definitions:

BEAD – Broadband Equity and Deployment

PSC Submitted to NTIA:

Volume 1: Establishes the locations and Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) eligible for BEAD funding and outlines the challenge process.

Volume 2: Details remaining requirement for initial proposals, including Letters of Intent (LOIs)

LOIs – Letters of Intent will be submitted by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) defining scope of project, including:

- Estimated number of locations applied for, the geographical area and proposed technology.
- Commitment to providing low-cost service option.
- Documentation of financial, managerial & operational capacity
- Documentation of other funding received or being pursued.

## Speed Test for Citizens

As part of our efforts to improve accuracy on broadband maps, Marathon County created posters to encourage individuals to run speed tests at their home or business.

We are looking to update the poster and need to determine which speed test to offer.

**Option 1:** New North Express Optimizer Test. [www.expressooptimizer.net](http://www.expressooptimizer.net)

Released in 2021 by New North, this records the data and allows users to view a map of speed test data in the state, town or county.

1/11/24, 3:25 PM

### Marathon County

**Households** 57,707  
**Population** 134,063  
**Test locations** 2,177  
**Total Tests** 3,186  
**Percent participation** 3.77%  
**Participation goal (10%)** 5,771

#### Download

\* No Service 113 5.2%  
 \* 0-25 Mbps 1,106 50.8%  
 \* 25-11 Mbps 543 24.9%  
 \* 100+ Mbps 415 19.1%

#### Upload

No Service 113 5.2%  
 <3 Mbps 837 38.4%  
 3-25 Mbps 990 45.5%  
 25-100 Mbps 111 5.1%  
 100+ Mbps 126 5.8%

#### Min Max Med Mbps

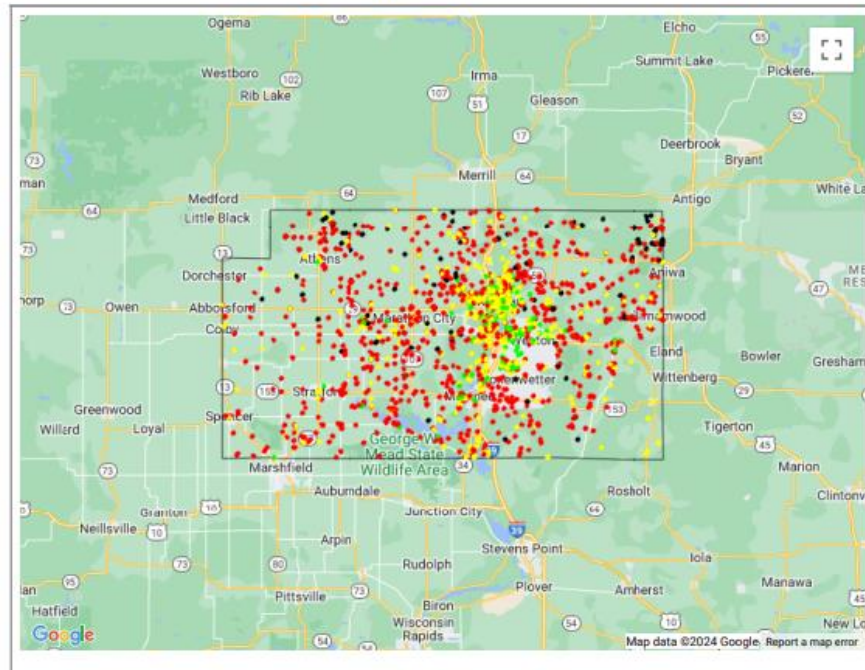
**Download** 0.01 1,106.79 21.43  
**Upload** 0.01 1,020.58 4.70

**No service reasons:** may total >100%

Not Available 98.00%  
 Too Expensive 12.00%  
 Physical Issues 1.00%  
 No Computer 1.00%  
 Don't Know How Computer 1.00%  
 Privacy 1.00%

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report



#### Fixed 1,913 locations

| Download    |           | Upload      |           |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| No Service  | 113 5.9%  | No Service  | 113 5.9%  |
| 0-25 Mbps   | 916 47.9% | <3 Mbps     | 708 37.0% |
| 25-100 Mbps | 480 25.1% | 3-25 Mbps   | 864 45.2% |
| 100+ Mbps   | 404 21.1% | 25-100 Mbps | 103 5.4%  |
|             |           | 100+ Mbps   | 125 6.5%  |

#### Cellular 264 locations

| Download    |           | Upload      |           |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| 0-25 Mbps   | 190 72.0% | <3 Mbps     | 129 48.9% |
| 25-100 Mbps | 63 23.9%  | 3-25 Mbps   | 105 39.8% |
| 100+ Mbps   | 11 4.2%   | 25-100 Mbps | 21 8.0%   |
|             |           | 100+ Mbps   | 9 3.4%    |

## Option 2: PSC Test

In June 2023, the PSC requested individuals use a test through Wiser. This link asks for demographic information and will the state's broadband planning efforts: [Survey 123 and Speedtest \(wi.gov\)](https://www.wisconsin.gov/survey123)

The WISER Survey provides information that provides data to ensure affordability and accessibility which goes beyond just confirming access.

Marathon County Broadband Projects

| PROVIDER         | Grant/Funding Program | Year Awarded | Goal of Completion | Approx # Served | Description   | Status  |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Frontier         | PSC Grant             | 2022         | 2024               | 10,000          | deploy fiber to the home network to 10,626 locations in 25 towns or Villages within Marathon County             | Not completed<br>Project revised to cover 190 miles around MC, conduit run through some of area, no fiber connected to date |
| Bug Tussel       | Conduit Loan          | 2021         | 2024               | 1,800           | Fiber run to approximately 1800 homes LeatherCamp connect approx 600 premises South of Kronenwetter/East of I39 | Not completed   |
| Bug Tussel       | PSC Grant             | 2022         | 2024               | 600+            | Fiber SW of Wausau,   | Ahead of schedule   |
| Charter/Spectrum | RDOF                  | 2022         | 2026               |                 | Upgrade DSL to existing customers   |   |
| TDS              | ACAM                  |              | 2038               |                 |   |   |
| Charter/Spectrum | PSC Grant 2023        | TBA          |                    | 846             | Fiber to SW Marathon County   | Application submitted, award announcemnet expected February 2024  |
| Frontier         | PSC Grant 2023        | TBA          |                    | 322             | Fiber to the home in portions of the Village of Maine   | Application submitted, award announcement expected February 2024  |
| Frontier         | PSC Grant 2023        | TBA          |                    | 343             | Fiber to the home in portions of the Towns of McMillian and Spencer   | Application submitted, award announcement expected February 2024  |
| Frontier         | PSC Grant 2023        | TBA          |                    | 181             | Fiber to the home in portions of theTown of Emmet and Village of Edgar  | Application submitted, award announcement expected February 2024  |