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 Wolfgram, 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 Wolfgram – 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

Frontier Communications' updates for the county's February 26, 2024 Broadband Task Force:

1.) Frontier added another 252 customer locations (CL's) that are available for consumers to subscribe to our fiber broadband on 2/12/2024 for a total of 740 CL's since January 1, 2024.

2.) Current pricing for these expanded broadband services (located near our "Weston Main" central) office are found at: www.frontier.com/shop

3.) The WI PSC and Frontier are conducting a scope of work/mapping review of our 2022 grant. This is an open docket item at the PSC which is located at: viewdoc.aspx (wi.gov)

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

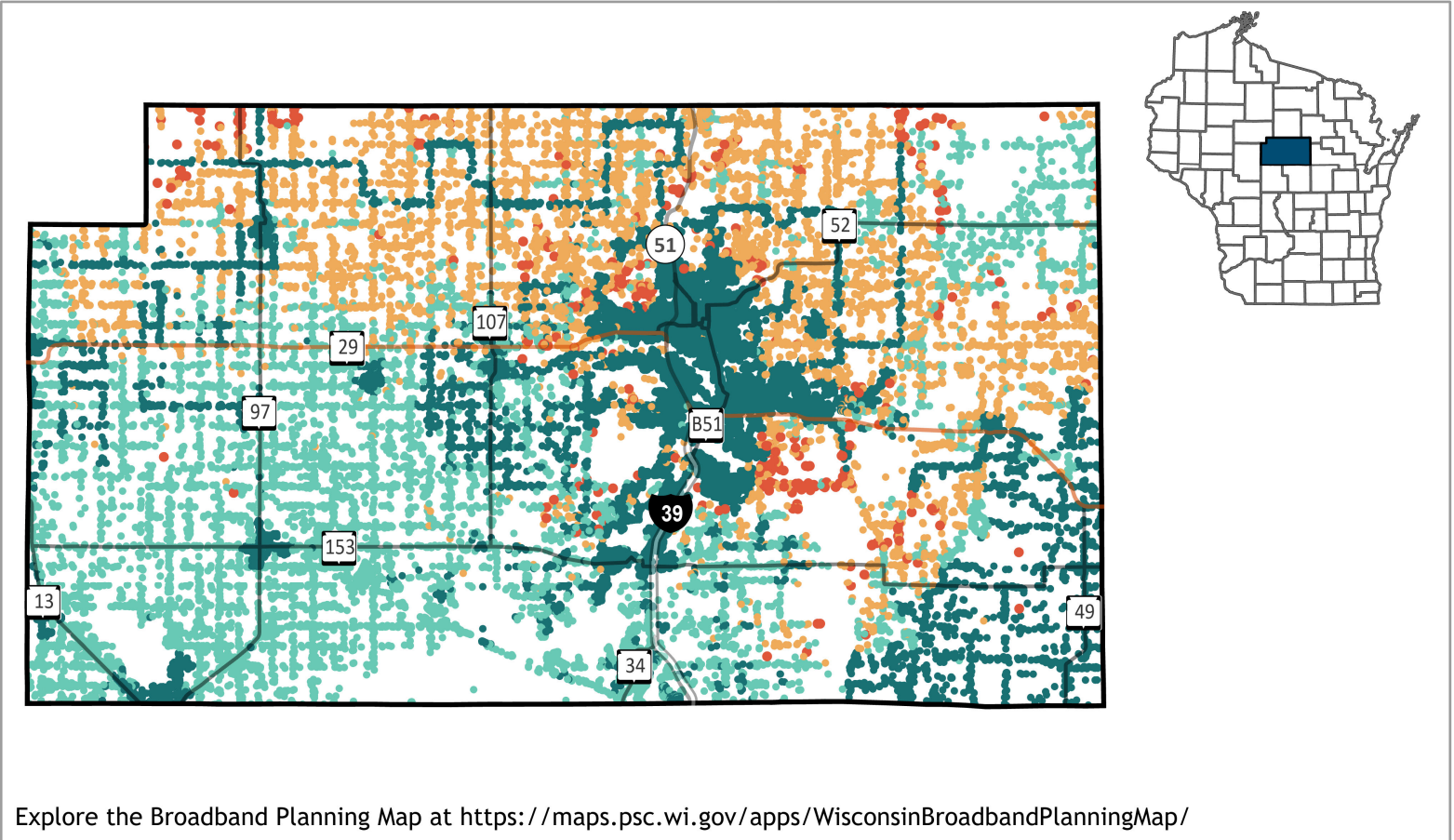# Wisconsin Broadband Access- Serviceable Locations (BSL)

Marathon County

Total BSLs **56,293**

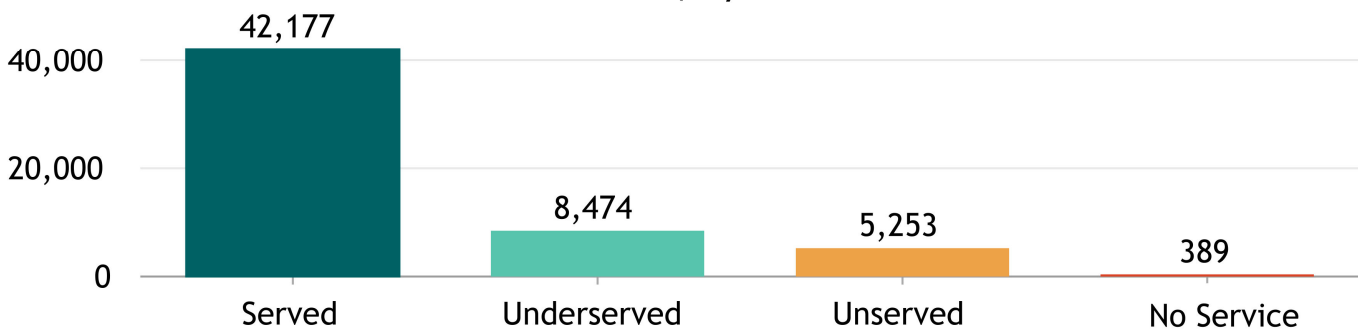Underserved, Unserved and No Service Count **14,116**

Source: FCC Broadband Data Collection BSL Service Status as of June 30, 2023
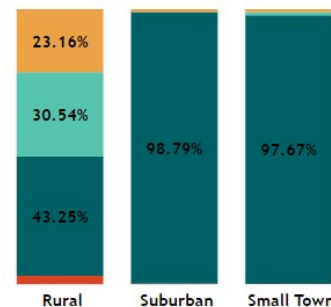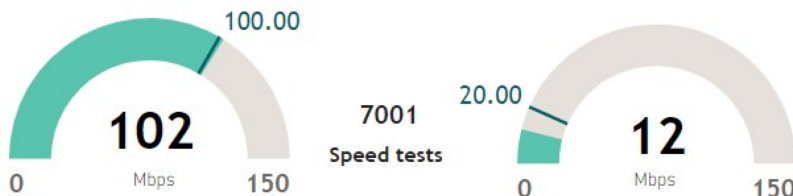
Explore the Broadband Planning Map at https://maps.psc.wi.gov/apps/WisconsinBroadbandPlanningMap/

| Served >= 100/20 (Mbps) | Underserved >25/3 and <100/20 (Mbps) | Unserved <25/3 (Mbps) | No Service |

BSL count, by service status

- Served: 42,177
- Underserved: 8,474
- Unserved: 5,253
- No Service: 389

"Broadband service' = an internet service with a minimum speed 100/20 Mbps

100.00
102 Mbps
0 — 150

7001 Speed tests

20.00
12 Mbps
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% of BSLs, by urbanicity type, by service status

Rural:
- 23.16%
- 30.54%
- 43.25%

Suburban:
- 98.79%

Small Town:
- 97.67%

Note: For counties having 100% BSL in the same urbanicity type only one bar is displayed.

Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSC of WISCONSIN

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; in communication with PSC re terms of grant
Bug Tussel	Conduit Loan	2021	2024	1,800	Fiber run to approximately 1800 homes	Project was expanded, then revised to cover 190 miles around MC, conduit run through some of area, no fiber connected to date
Bug Tussel	PSC Grant	2022	2024	600+	"LeatherCamp" project to connect approx 600 premises South of Kronenwetter/East of I39	Not completed - goal to complete by end of 2024
Charter/Spectrum	RDOF	2022	2026		Fiber SW of Wausau	Ahead of schedule
TDS	ACAM		2027		Upgrade DSL to existing customers	25% done by end of 2024, 50% by end of 2025, 75% by end of 2026, 100% by end of 2027
Charter/Spectrum	PSC Grant 2023	TBA		846	Fiber to SW Marathon County	Application submitted, award announcement 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

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.

To: Marathon County Broadband Committee
From: Scott Feldt, Director of Public Affairs
RE: Marathon County Broadband Project
Date: February 22, 2024

Current Project Status

Bug Tussel has contracted with Michels Corporation to assist in the completion of the work that was left unfinished by our previous contractor. We have scheduled Michels to begin work this month (February) to get a jump start on the project. We are working to obtain local permits (Athens and Wausau) that will allow us to begin work before April 1 so that we can repair those areas that need to be addressed and begin work on the Leathercamp Project. With Michels on board and discussions regarding a revised design and funding, we believe that 2024 will be a very productive year.

KES had begun a performance audit of the work completed (or claimed to be completed) by our previous contractor. During this audit, we have determined that a portion of the work claimed to have been completed was not. This audit was occurring during the winter months. The audit work was suspended once a significant amount of snow was on the ground which prevented us from completing our work. With the advent of Michels being able to begin work, we will have Michels perform this work as it begins to complete those areas within the county that need completion. We are confident that we will be able top provide a clearer picture as we progress forward.
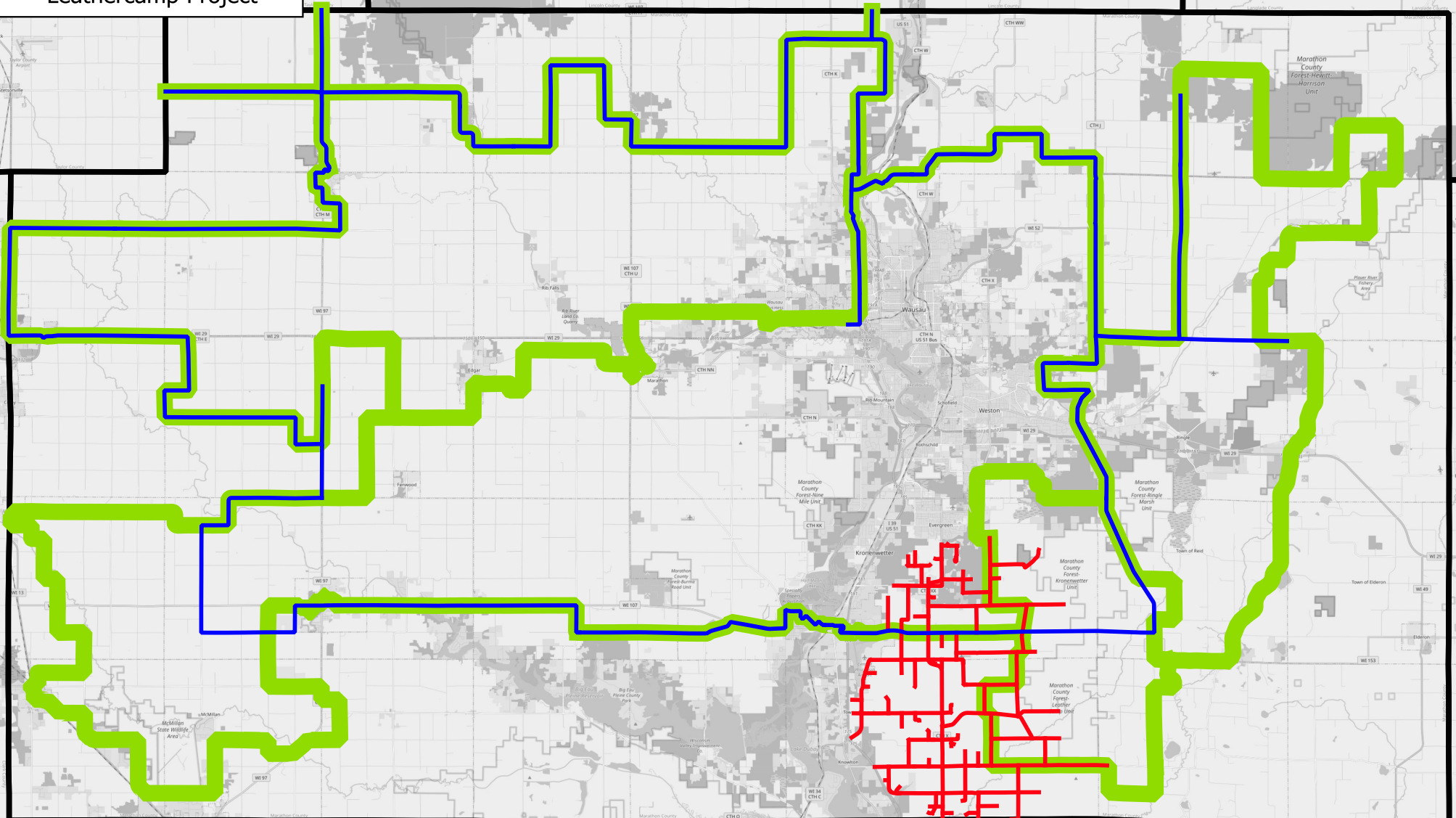
As we have stated before, Marathon County is an integral part of our overall statewide strategy. Bug Tussel is committed to success in Marathon County.

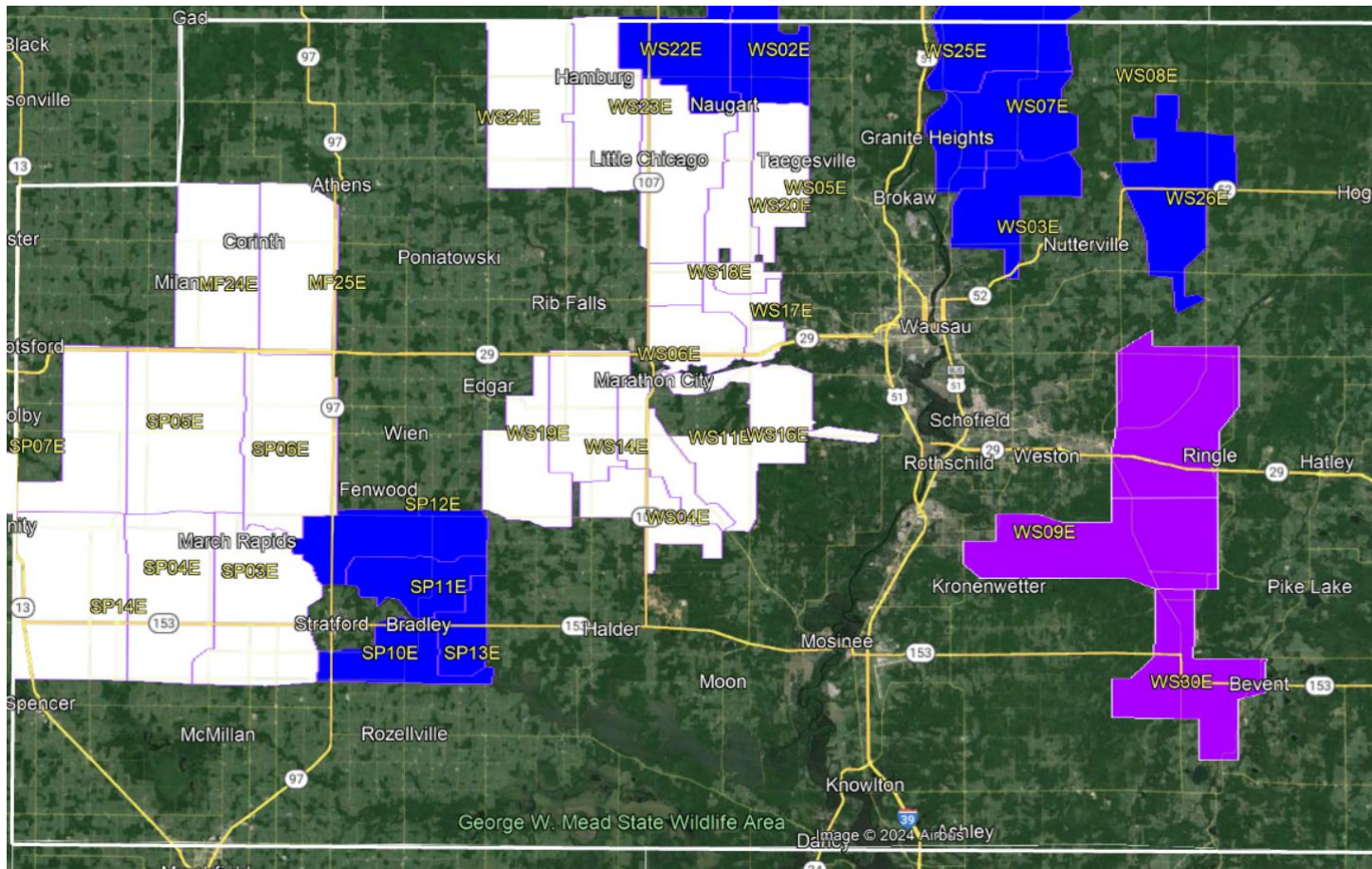MARATHON COUNTY

Fiber Route - V3
Fiber Route - V2
Leathercamp Project

Chris Crawford │ Senior Manager – Government Affairs
715.301.4074 – Direct │715.216.4266 – Cell
chris.crawford@charter.com

White – Completed
Blue – 2024
Purple – 2025

TDS Enhanced ACAM Marathon County

Even as the states go forward to determine which areas will be eligible for Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding for rural broadband services, the FCC has determined that 368 rural telephone companies will be eligible for a total of $18.26 billion through the universal service **Enhanced Alternative Connect America Cost Model (Enhanced A-CAM).**
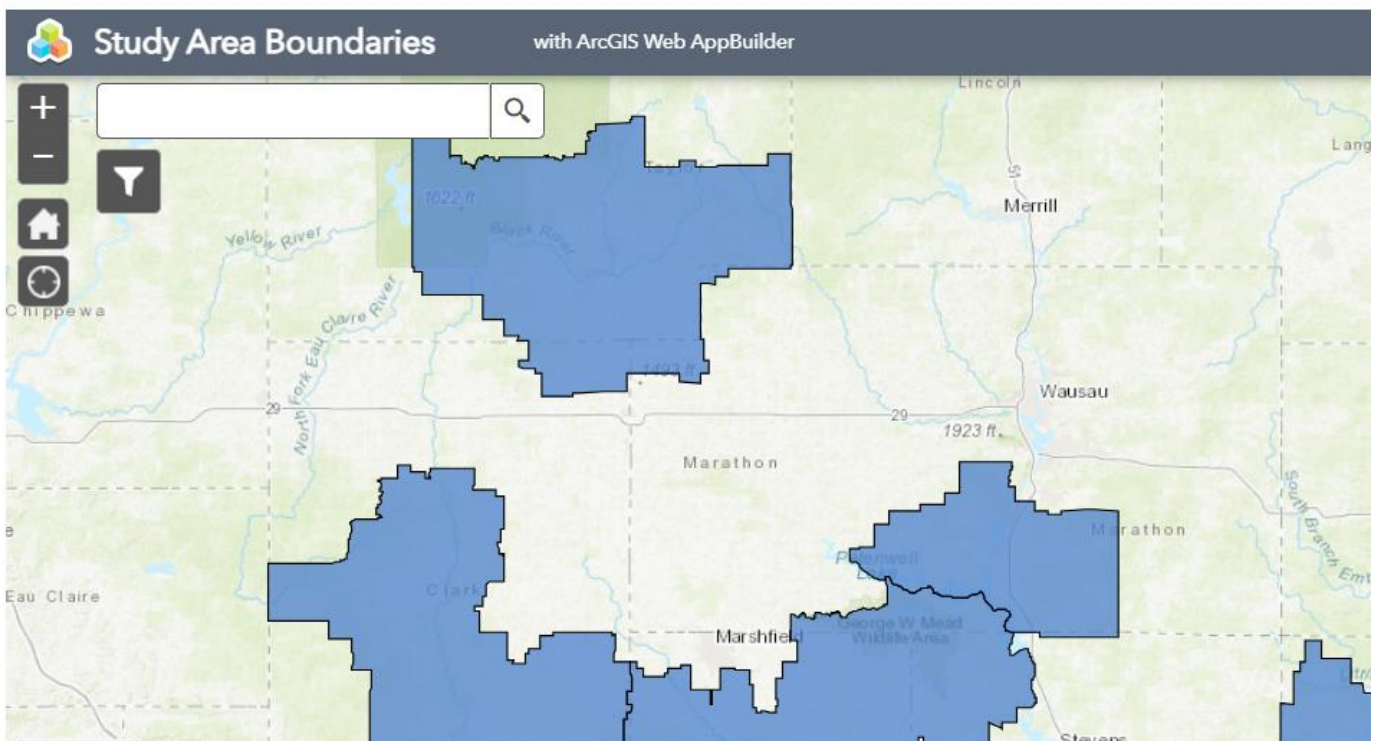
E-CAM is not a grant program, but ongoing funding through the FCC the covers broadband installation and maintenance to high cost areas. Broadband Service must be at least 100/20 Mbps.

TDS is participating in Enhanced ACAM in Marathon County. The areas impacted are indicated on the maps below. TDS is working to provide a number of addresses impacted by their project.

The timeline for the TDS Enhanced ACAM project:
        25%   completed by end of 2024
        50%   completed by end of 2025
        75%   completed by end of 2026
        100% completed by end of 2027

FCC MAP of Enhanced ACAM in Marathon County

Marathon County Broadband Projects

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Broadband High Speed Internet

BROADBAND HIGH SPEED INTERNET

Broadband Affordability

Expansion Efforts

Map of Speed Test Results

Resources & Information

Service Availability

Take the Speed Test

What Speeds Do I Need?

Font Size: 🔲 🔲   ➕ Share & Bookmark   🟧 Feedback   🖨 Print

Broadband refers to high-speed internet access and allows for high-quality and quick access to information and high quality teleconferencing. Broadband is important for work, education, healthcare, and public safety.

Marathon County has been working to expand internet access since 2009. We continue to work with county residents, community leaders, the state of Wisconsin and internet service providers to find ways to improve internet access in the County. Our goal is to ensure every address in Marathon County has access to reliable and affordable internet access. While Marathon County can not apply for grants, we do partner with a number of local internet service providers in support of their grant applications. We've made great progress, but there are still many more homes and businesses that need improved broadband.

2024 will be a pivotal year with a huge grant becoming available (Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program). This will be an opportunity for Marathon County to engage with internet service providers to connect many more homes and businesses with high-speed fiber broadband.

TAKE THE SPEED TEST

VIEW MAP OF SPEED TEST RESULTS

SERVICE AVAILABILITY

WHAT SPEEDS DO I NEED?

BROADBAND AFFORDABILITY

BROADBAND EXPANSION EFFORTS

RESOURCES & INFORMATION

BEAD – Broadband Equity and Deployment

BEAD PROCESS	DATE
PSC Volume I 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
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	TBA Prior to BEAD
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 bv 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.

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

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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:

    a. Click on **E-Services** tab on the PSC [homepage](#):

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

    c. Enter the email address, click the **Send Code Now** link.

    d. Enter the code from the email in the One-Time Code box.

    e. Complete the form. *Please include phone number.

    f. After submitting you will have a new Logon ID immediately.

    g.

       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

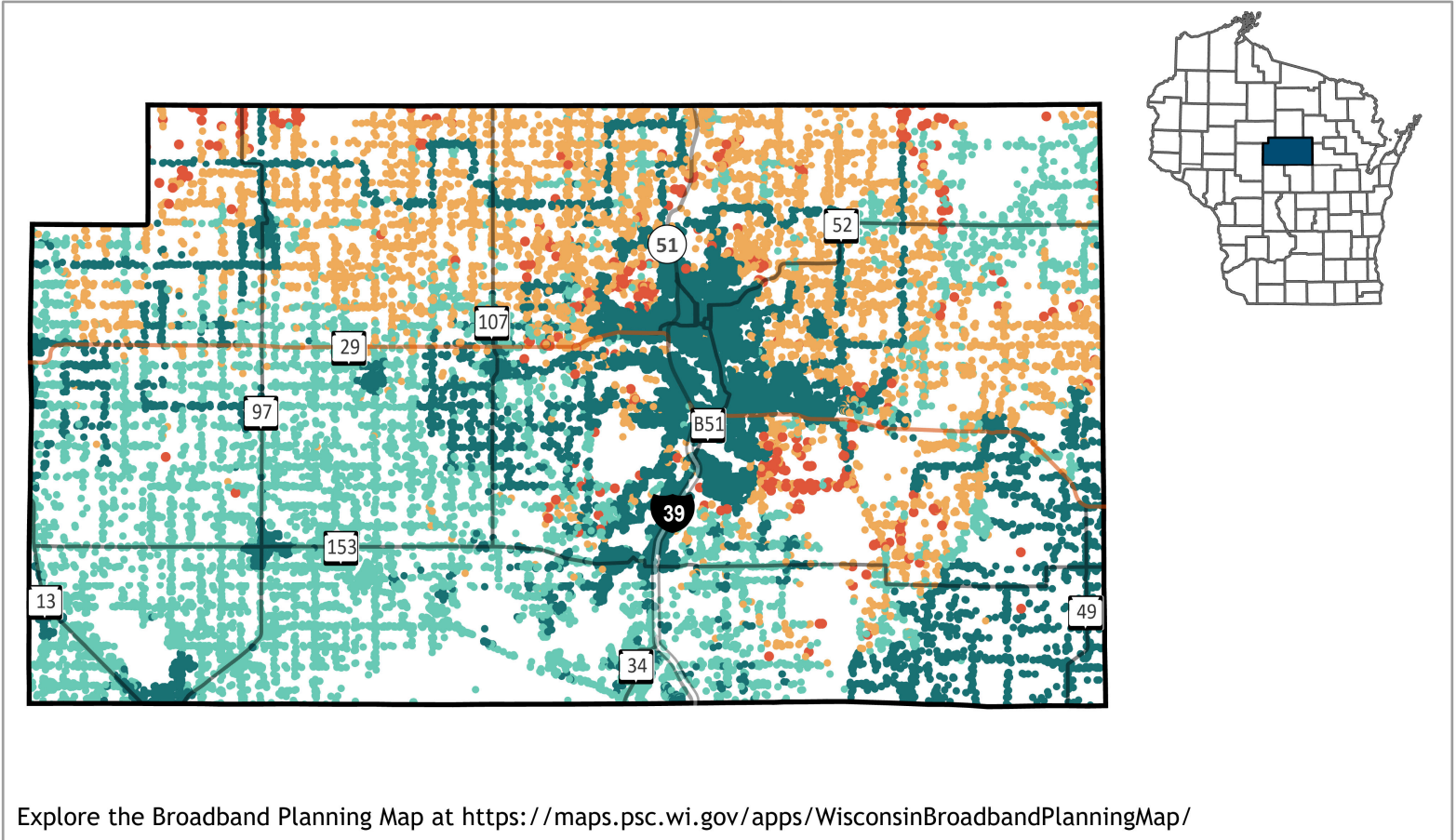# Wisconsin Broadband Access- Serviceable Locations (BSL)

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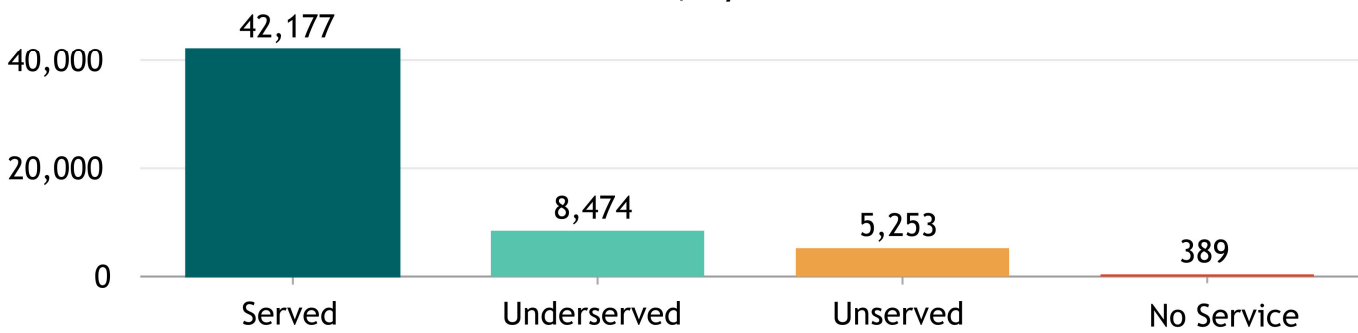Underserved, Unserved and No Service Count **14,116**

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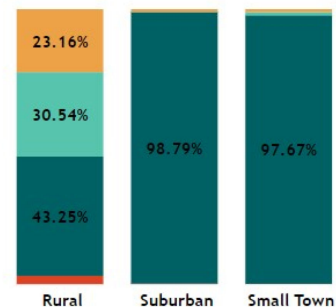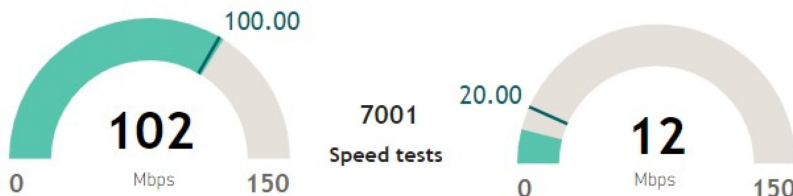

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Unserved
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BSL count, by service status

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102 Mbps (0 – 150)

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% of BSLs, by urbanicity type, by service status

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Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSC of WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Broadband- Enforceable Funding Commitment

Marathon County

56,293
Count of Total BSLs

14,116
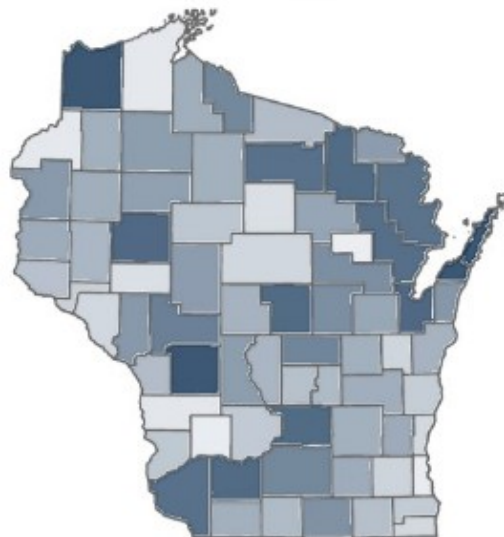Count of Underserved, Unserved, and No Service BSLs

Source: FCC Broadband Data Collection BSL Service Status as of June 30, 2023

"Enforceable Funding Commitment", (EFC) for the purposes of BEAD is any "in progress" award that will build service of at least 100/20 to all locations by either a wireline cable or fiber connection, or a licensed fixed wireless connection. This includes a subset of state awards, all ARPA awards, all USDA Reconnect awards, RDOF, and E-ACAM.
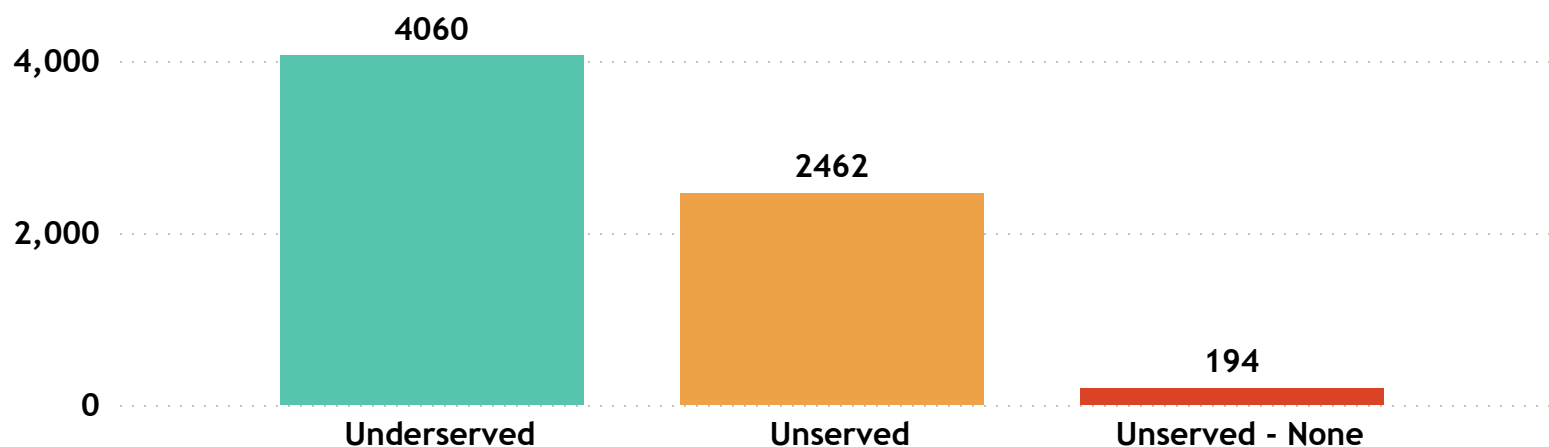
Estimated Underserved, Unserved and No Service Locations without Enforceable Funding Commitment

6,716

Estimated Underserved, Unserved and No Service Locations without EFC
(count of locations min to max)

Estimated Underserved, Unserved, and No Service locations without EFC

	Underserved	Unserved	Unserved - None
	4060	2462	194

Marathon County

FCC service as of December 31, 2022

ISP
AirNet
AirRunner Networks LLC
Amherst Telephone Company
AT&T Inc
Bertram Internet
Bug Tussel Wireless LLC
Charter Communications Inc
Cirrinity
Cirrinity - Wittenberg Cable TV Company Inc.
Cirrinity - Wittenberg Telephone Company
Consolidated Communications, Fidium
Country Wireless
Frontier
King Street Wireless, L.P.
Nsight Telservices
Solarus
TDS Telecom
T-Mobile US
United States Cellular Corporation
Verizon

Wisconsin Broadband Affordability- Plan Cost

'Broadband service' = an internet service with a minimum speed 100/20 Mbps

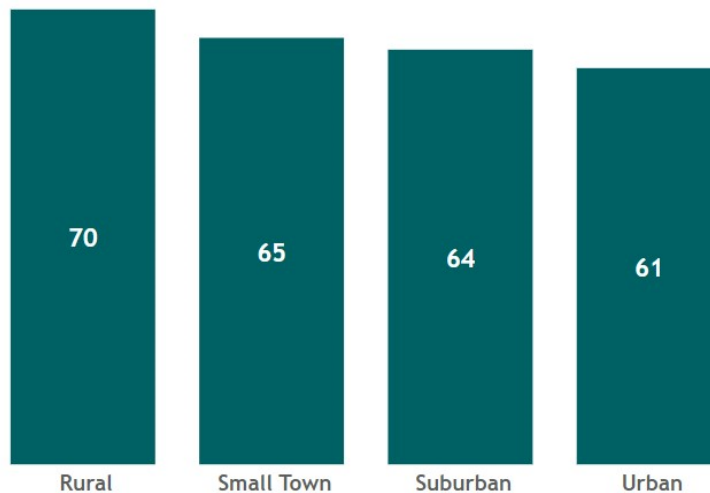ISPs in Wisconsin: **126**

ISPs in Marathon County : **20**

State Minimum Broadband
Monthly Price Range
$ 49.95 - $ 156.50

State Average of Minimum
Broadband Price/ Month
$64.85

WI Household (HH)
Median Income
$67,080

AFFORDABILITY CRITERIA:
1.17% of Household Income

WI Average Minimum Broadband Price/ Month (in $) by Urbanicity

Rural	70
Small Town	65
Suburban	64
Urban	61

Source: Service offerings from ISPs representing 2,200 price offerings across all counties.

HH annual income-range ($)	Broadband Plan* monthly cost
less than $15K	less than $15
$15K - $24K	$15 - $24
$25K - $39K	$25 - $38
$40K - $54K	$39 - $52
$55K - $69K	$53 - $67
$70K - $84K	$68 - $81
$85K - $99K	$82 - $96
$100K - $150K	$97 - $146
$150K+	$147+

* Broadband plan: is a plan providing internet service of a minimum speed of 100/20Mbps

The commonly accepted Broadband cost-burden threshold's income (see worldwide affordability target by 2025)

Marathon County
Average of Minimum Broadband Price/ Month

$ 65.09

Marathon County
Household (HH) Median Income

$ 63,029

Wisconsin HHs: 2,401,818

Marathon County HHs: 55,998

Source: ACS 5y 2017-2021

Wisconsin Broadband Office

PSC of WISCONSIN