



MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETING

Agenda

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, May 23, 2022 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, Kurt Schoenroch, 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.*

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health directives, Marathon County encourages Task Force members and the public to attend this meeting remotely. Instead of attendance in person, Task Force members and the public may attend this meeting by **telephone conference**. If Task Force members or members of the public cannot attend remotely, Marathon County requests that appropriate safety measures, including adequate social distancing, be utilized by all in-person attendees.

Phone #: 1-408-418-9388

Access Code: 2481 999 0555

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 March 28, 2022 Broadband Task Force Meeting Minutes**
4. **Educational Presentations and Committee Discussion:**
 - A. Roles and Responsibilities of Broadband Task Force
 - B. Overview of Past Efforts on Broadband Expansion
 - C. Funding Sources: County, State and Federal
 - D. Partnerships with Internet Service Providers
5. **Policy Discussion And Possible Action:**
 - A. Process for determining priorities for future broadband expansion efforts
 - B. Outreach and Public Engagement activities: Website; Speed Test; Other
6. **Next Steps**
7. **Next Meeting: June 27, 2022**
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 one business day before the meeting.

SIGNED /s/ John Robinson
Presiding Officer or Designee

Faxed/Emailed To: Wausau Daily Herald, City Pages, and
Other Media Groups

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE

Faxed/Emailed By: T. Ranallo
Faxed Date/Time: 5/17/2022 9:00 a.m.

BY: T. Ranallo
DATE/TIME: 5/17/2022 9:00 a.m.



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Background

2009: Recognizing a need to expand broadband access, the County Board commissioned a Broadband Gap Analysis from Elbert and Associates in 2009 to determine the broadband landscape in the county. The County decided to let the “free market” approach work, relying on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to fill the gaps.

2015: The County Board created a Broadband Connectivity Task Force to recommend strategies and policies to address connectivity and speed of internet access in rural Marathon County.

2018: The County Board retained Design Nine to complete a Broadband Assessment and Plan in response due to the lack of reliable internet services. The report presented in 2020 reviewed progress made since the preparation of the 2009 gap analysis and found that little had changed in rural areas of the County. Design Nine developed a plan that proposed constructing a series of towers with a fiber ring to provide wireless internet services to over 85% of the County. The cost for the plan was in excess of \$30 million. ISPs serving the County showed little interest in leasing fiber from the County.

2020: The County created a Broadband Task Force to: develop recommendations identifying the potential role of Marathon County in facilitating the expansion of Broadband access in Marathon County; review the Design Nine report and develop broad policies and partnership recommendations relating to the expansion of broadband/internet services throughout the County.

Recent Efforts

PSC Broadband Expansion Grant

Under the recommendations set forth by the Broadband Task Force, Marathon County partnered with various ISPs in applying for the Wisconsin Public Service Commission’s (PSC) Broadband Expansion Grant. In total, Marathon County partnered with six ISPs on seven PSC grant applications in 2020-2021. Unfortunately, only two were awarded funding. An assessment of successful applications indicated that those with strong local partnerships and minimal overlap of coverage with other applications scored higher.

In March 2022, the Broadband Task Force and County Board coordinated once again with ISPs in submitting grant applications to the PSC for Broadband Expansion Grants. The applications seek to minimize service area overlaps and the County reached out to town governments to receive matching funds to demonstrate strong local partnerships. With these criteria in mind, the County partnered with Cirrinity, Bug Tussel, and Frontier on three different applications for the March 2022 PSC grant cycle (*See Appendix for Map of proposed siting*). The applications are currently under review and a decision will be made on funding in early summer.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration Grant

In July 2021, the County Board adopted a resolution authorizing the submittal of a grant application, in partnership with Charter, to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). If approved, the \$20 million project would provide internet service in eastern Marathon County. The application is currently under review.

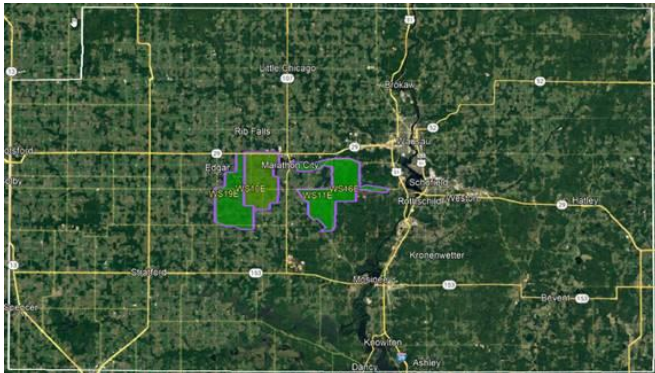


Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Rural Digital Opportunity Fund

Earlier in 2021, the Federal Communication Commission notified CCO (Charter) and LTD of successful bids in reverse auctions associated with the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund. They have submitted a long-form application to determine eligibility as part of the approval process. If successful, they will provide gigabyte service to approximately 9,683 homes/businesses, primarily in the northern and western parts of the County. The FCC has been slow in giving approval, and once it is given, the companies have up to 10 years to provide service. The County has been working with parties to accelerate deployment.

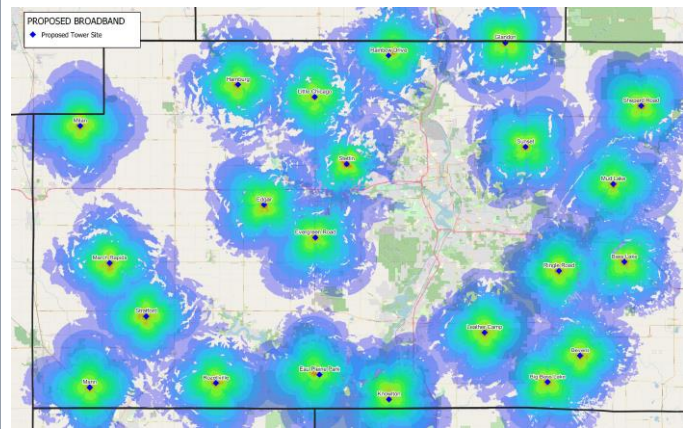
Currently, Charter has construction activity in two nodes East of Marathon City. Tentative Service dates will be June/July.



According to its proposed schedule, Charter will be building primarily the western half in 2022 and 2023. There will be some Northeast activity in 2024 and pieces of the Southeast corner will be built in 2027. *(see appendix for further details on Charter's RDOF Area).*

Agreement with Bug Tussel

Last fall, Marathon County entered into an agreement with Bug Tussel and four other counties to provide conduit bonding for broadband expansion. The project covers 370 miles of fiber and 16 towers in Marathon County *(See below for proposed tower sites)*. Bug Tussel is set to begin construction of their middle-mile project in the eastern part of the County. Bug Tussel is also partnering with AT&T to expand cellular coverage.



Internet Speed Testing Initiative

Marathon County partnered with the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and area economic development associations on a regional internet speed testing initiative. Current maps, such as the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) and the Public Service Commission's broadband maps, are unreliable, making it difficult to accurately identify where the unserved and underserved areas are. This speed testing initiative will ensure Marathon County has meaningful and accurate data that can be utilized when applying to grants and various other funding sources. *(See appendix for the speed test flyer).*



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Service Speeds

Speed

Capacity

< 25 Mbps

Basic internet for checking e-mail, google searches

25 - 99 Mbps

Will handle streaming Netflix, FaceTime, Zoom calls

100 – 499 Mbps

Fast downloads, gaming online, streaming UHD on multiple screens

500 – 1,000 Mbps

Blazing fast for just about anything



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Federal Financial Assistance

Provider	Program	Who qualifies	Offer	More Info
Federal Communications Commission	Lifeline discount	Households that make less than 135% of federal poverty guideline or have at least one member participating in certain public assistance programs	\$9.95 off monthly internet or phone bill through certain ISPs	Learn More
Federal Communications Commission	Enhanced Lifeline benefits for Tribal lands	Low-income households on federally recognized Tribal lands	\$34.95 off monthly internet bill	Learn More
Federal Communications Commission	Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)*	Households that make less than 200% of federal poverty guideline or have at least one member participating in certain public assistance programs	Most eligible families can receive a benefit of up to \$30 per month applied to the cost of their internet service. ACP-eligible households who live on Tribal lands are eligible for a benefit of up to \$75 per month.	Learn More

* Since funding may not cover the cost of service in many areas, the Administration engaged with service providers to ensure that low-cost options provide reliable service for \$30 per month or less. To view a list of participating service providers please click on the following link: https://www.whitehouse.gov/getinternet/?utm_source=getinternet.gov. Note that you can apply your ACP benefits to different providers outside of the participating provider list. There are over 1,300 providers that accept the ACP benefit. To find one near you, visit <https://acpbenefit.org/companies-near-me/>.



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Internet Service Options in Marathon County

Provider	Northeast	Southeast	Northwest	Southwest
<u>WTC/Cirrinity</u>	✔	✔		
<u>Air Runner</u>			✔	✔
<u>Spectrum/Charter</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>TDS</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>NetPros/AirNet</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>Northwoods Connect</u>				
<u>Bug Tussel</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>Nsight</u>				
<u>Solarus</u>				✔
<u>Reach Amplification</u>				
<u>Amherst Telephone Company</u>		✔		
<u>Astrea</u>				
<u>Country Wireless</u>			✔	✔
<u>Cellcom</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>Frontier</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>LTD</u>				
<u>Star Link</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔
<u>Hughes Net</u>	✔	✔	✔	✔



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Broadband Speed Test Map Results

To view the map of current results, Please visit the following Link: <https://expressoptimizer.net/projects/Wisconsin/speedtestmap.php>. To look at specific data pertaining to Marathon County, select the Map County tab.

Marathon County

Households	57,707
Population	134,063
Test locations	1,832
Total Tests	2,656
Percent participation	3.17%
Participation goal (10%)	5,771

Download

• No Service	95	5.2%
• 0-10 Mbps	528	28.8%
• 10-25 Mbps	390	21.3%
• 25-150 Mbps	546	29.8%
• 150+ Mbps	273	14.9%

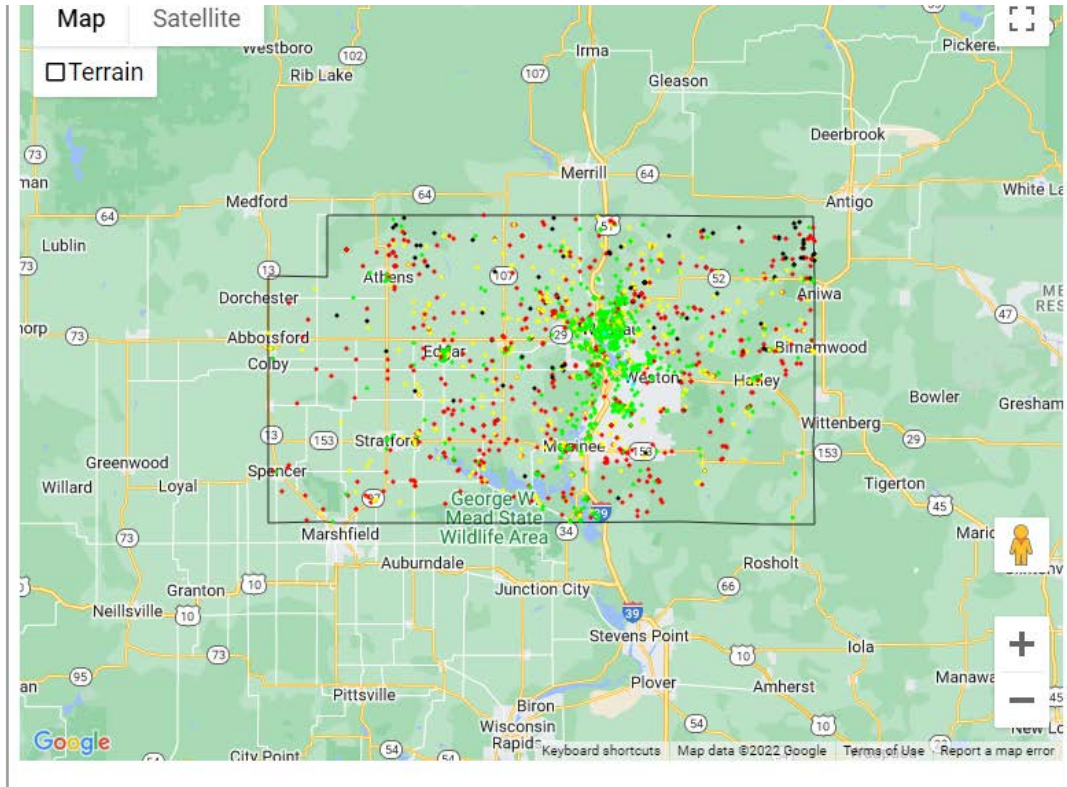
Upload

No Service	95	5.2%
<3 Mbps	661	36.1%
3-10 Mbps	453	24.7%
10-25 Mbps	415	22.7%
25-150 Mbps	122	6.7%
> 150 Mbps	86	4.7%

	Min	Max	Med Mbps
Download	0.01	1,106.79	21.93
Upload	0.01	1,020.58	5.21

No service reasons: may total >100%

Not Available	98.82%
Too Expensive	11.76%
Physical Issues	1.18%
No Computer	1.18%
Don't Know How Computer	1.18%



Fixed 1,620 locations

	Download	Upload
No Service	95 5.9%	No Service 95 5.9%
0-10 Mbps	424 26.2%	<3 Mbps 564 34.8%
10-25 Mbps	339 20.9%	3-10 Mbps 364 22.5%
25-150 Mbps	492 30.4%	10-25 Mbps 397 24.5%
150+ Mbps	270 16.7%	25-150 Mbps 114 7.0%
		> 150 Mbps 86 5.3%

Cellular 212 locations

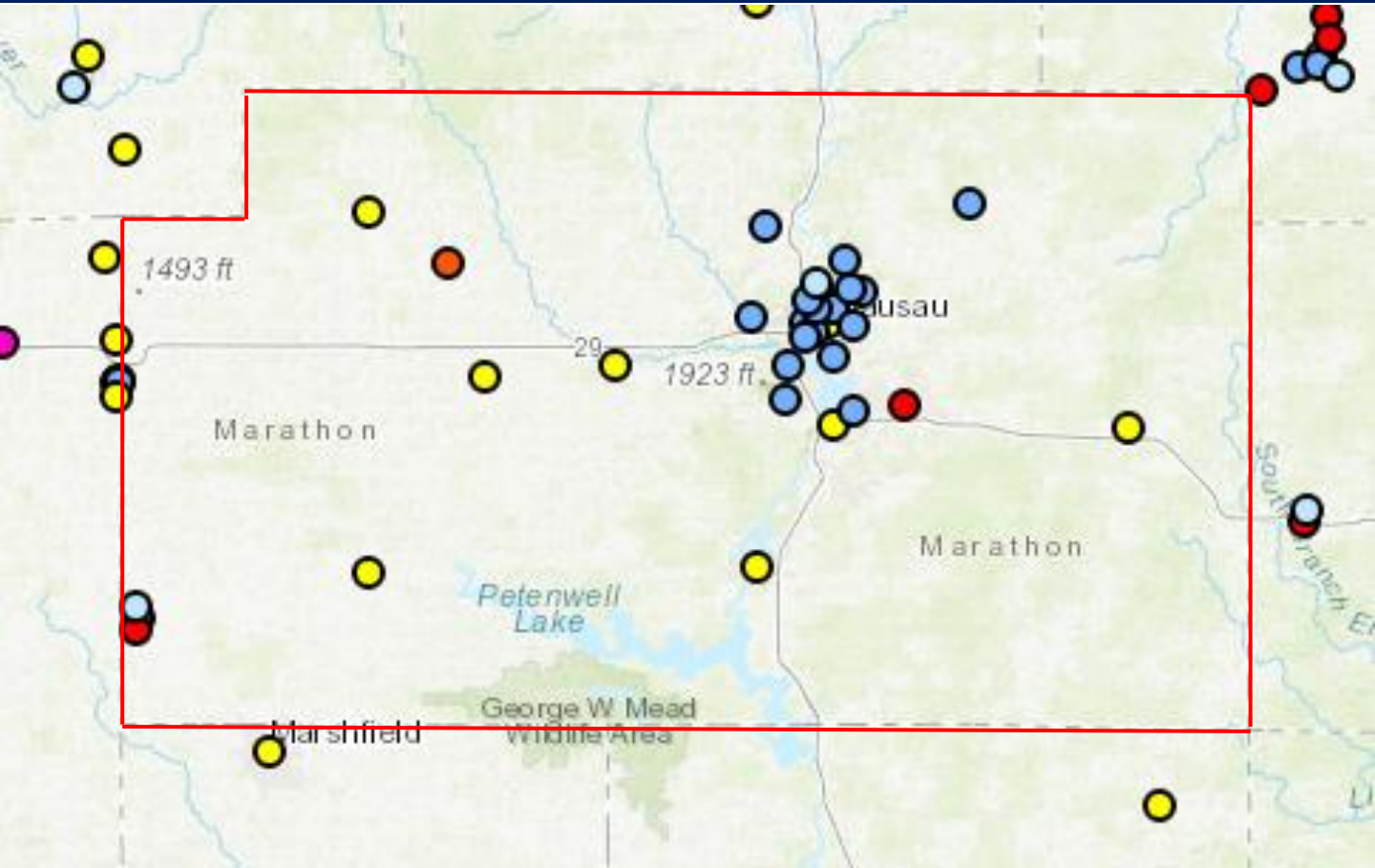
	Download	Upload
0-10 Mbps	104 49.1%	<3 Mbps 97 45.8%
10-25 Mbps	51 24.1%	3-10 Mbps 89 42.0%
25-150 Mbps	54 25.5%	10-25 Mbps 18 8.5%
150+ Mbps	3 1.4%	25-150 Mbps 8 3.8%
		> 150 Mbps 0 0.0%

Note: Results as of May 19, 2022



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Free Internet Access Locations



- Public WiFi Locations**
- Public Library
 - Public School
 - ISP Hot Spot
 - County/Federal/Local/State/Tribal Government
 - Higher Education
 - Businesses & Other Community Partners

For detailed information and physical address please visit the following link:
<https://maps.psc.wi.gov/Apps/PublicWiFiLocations/index.html>



Broadband Expansion in Marathon County

Definitions Page

Wifi

Wi-Fi is the wireless technology used to connect computers, tablets, smartphones and other devices to the internet.

Fiber

Fiber-optic internet, commonly called fiber internet or simply “fiber,” is a broadband connection that can reach speeds of up to 940 Megabits per second (Mbps), with low lag time. The technology uses fiber-optic cable, which can send data as fast as about 70% the speed of light.

Wireless

Wireless Internet service is a type of Internet service that provisions connectivity through wireless means. It provides Internet connectivity service to end users and organizations over a wireless communication network. Wireless Internet service is primarily delivered by a wireless Internet service provider (WISP). Typically, wireless Internet is delivered through radio waves or satellite signals.

Mbps

Mbps stands for "megabits per second" and it is the standard for measuring the speeds of an internet plan. Internet plans have both an upload speed and a download speed. Download speed governs how quickly you can download things off the internet. This covers things like streaming videos or movies, downloading files like games, or even just browsing the web. Upload speed determines how quickly you can send things to the internet. This is for things like sending files to your boss for work or posting pictures online.

Internet Service Provider

A company that provides subscribers with access to the internet

Middle Mile

The Middle Mile is the network that provides connectivity from local “last mile” networks to the Internet.

Last Mile

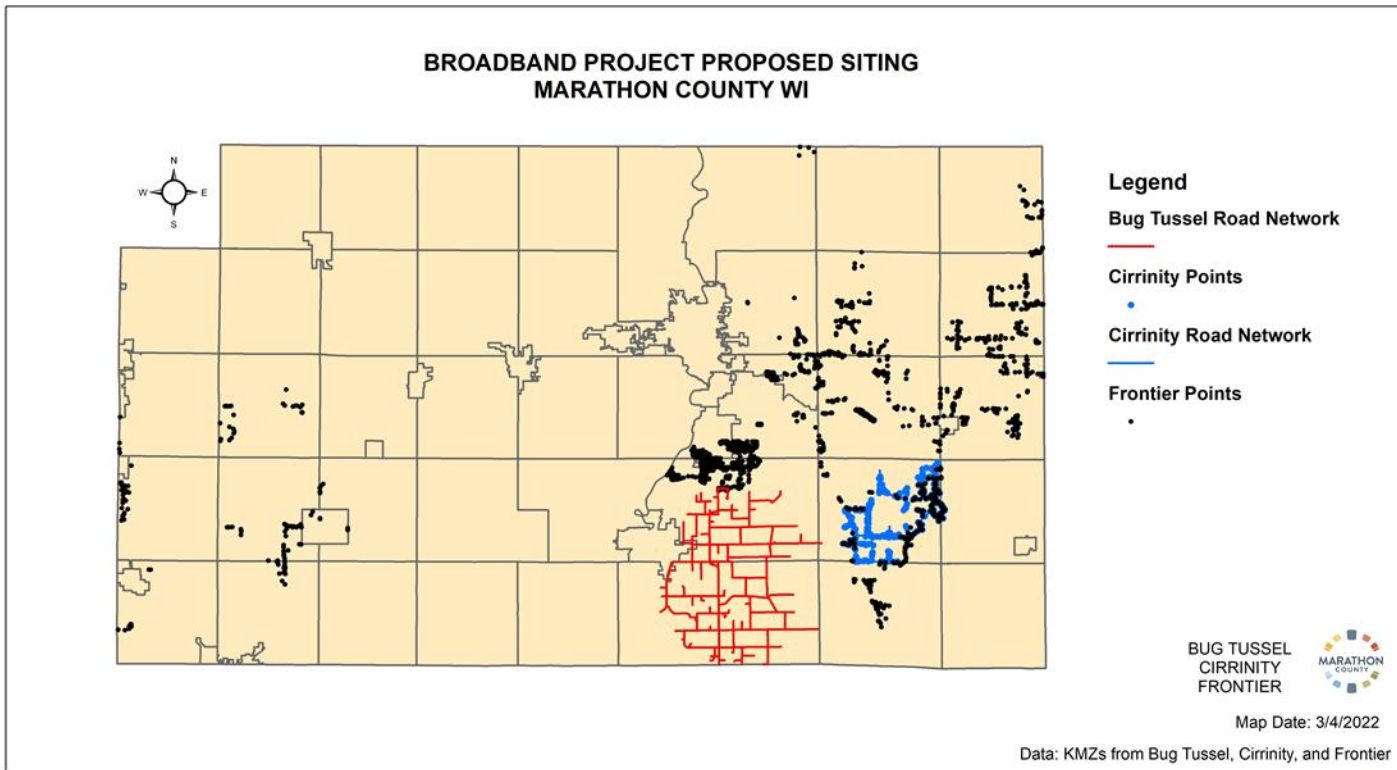
The last mile refers to the short geographical distance that must be spanned to provide services to end-user customers.

RDOF

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) is an FCC initiative designed to inject billions of dollars into the construction and operation of rural broadband networks.

PSC

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is responsible for regulating more than 1,100 Wisconsin public utilities. The PSC supports the Broadband Expansion Grant Program to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability in underserved areas of the state.



Speed Test Flyer



The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, in partnership with Marathon County, is conducting a regional internet speed testing initiative.

Many communities that need broadband funding may miss out because the data showing their need isn't available. The goal of this project is to create an accurate regional map of where internet service is and is not available and what speeds people are currently receiving.

Take the speed test today and encourage your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to do the same! Participants are encouraged to take the test multiple times at different times on different days to ensure comprehensive data.



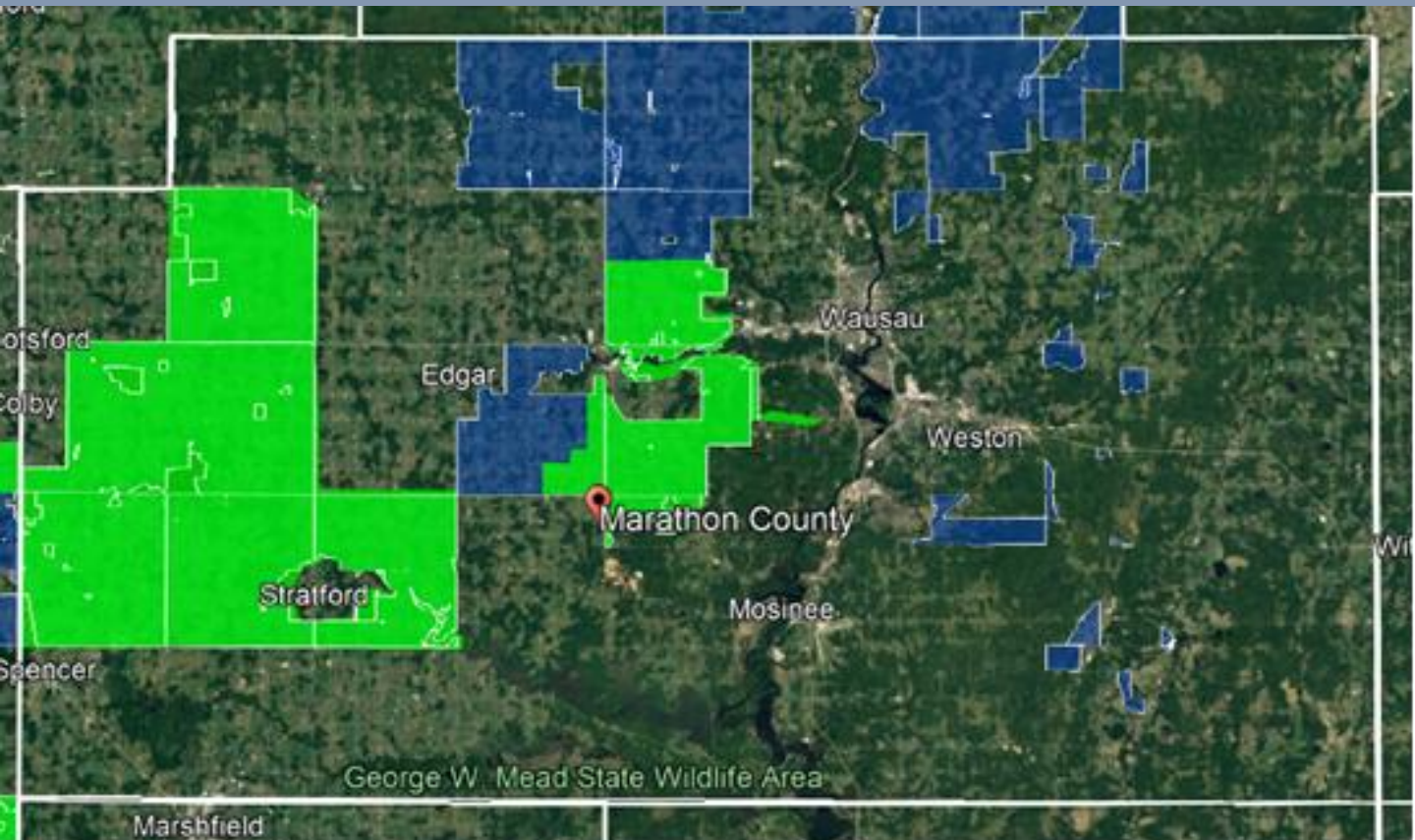
If you have no internet for any reason, please call **715-261-1404** to report the address.

No Internet? Let us know! If you don't have internet available at your residence or business due to no service being available or other barriers, please call 715-261-1404 to report the address.

Charter Communication RDOF Area in Marathon County



Charter Communication RDOF Area in Marathon County – Build Plan for 2022





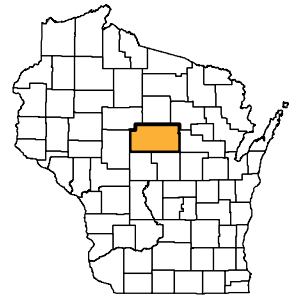
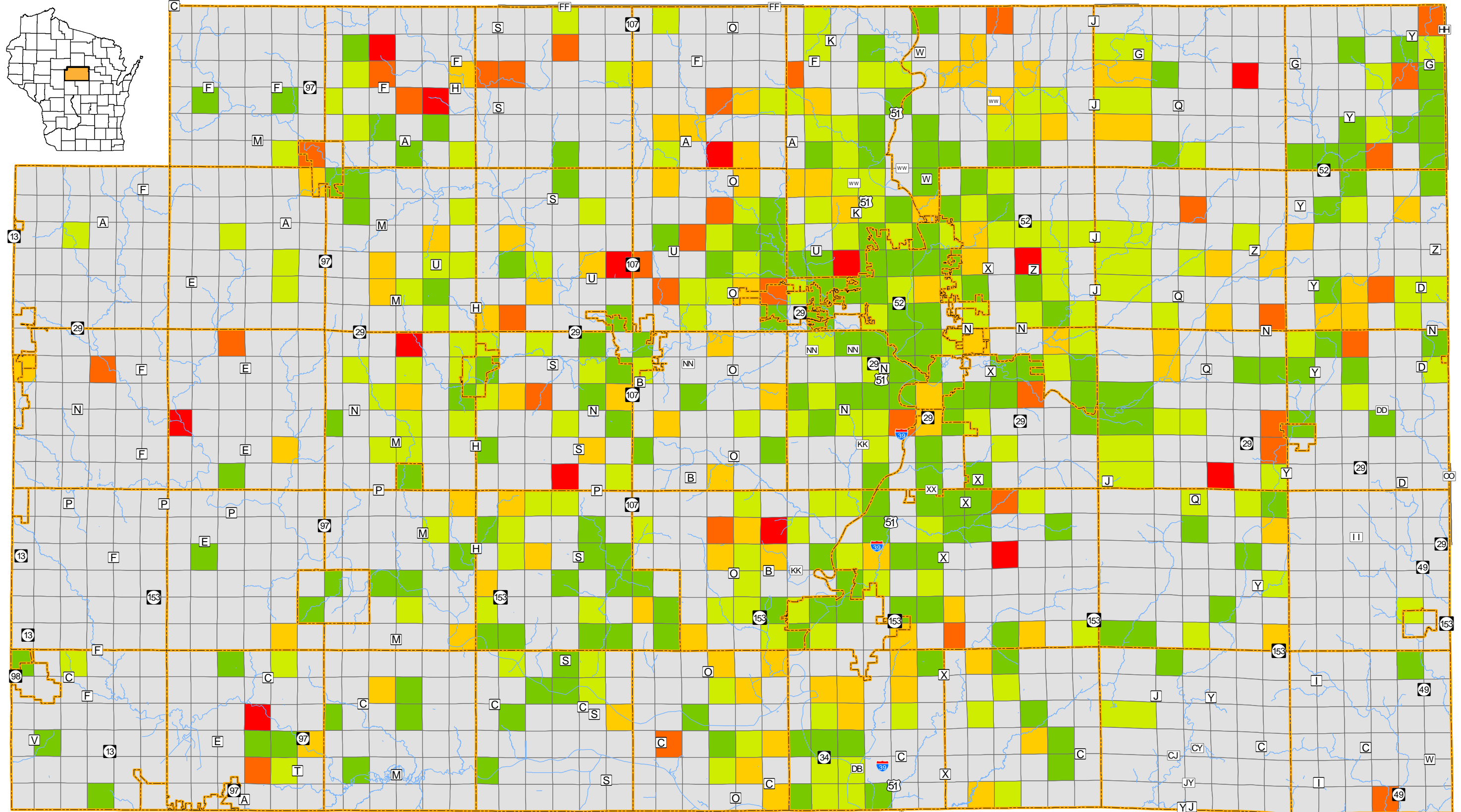


Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- No Data
- < \$50
- \$50 to \$75
- \$75 - \$100
- \$100 to \$150
- > \$150

Average Cost Per Month 5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey of the actual boundary of any property depicted. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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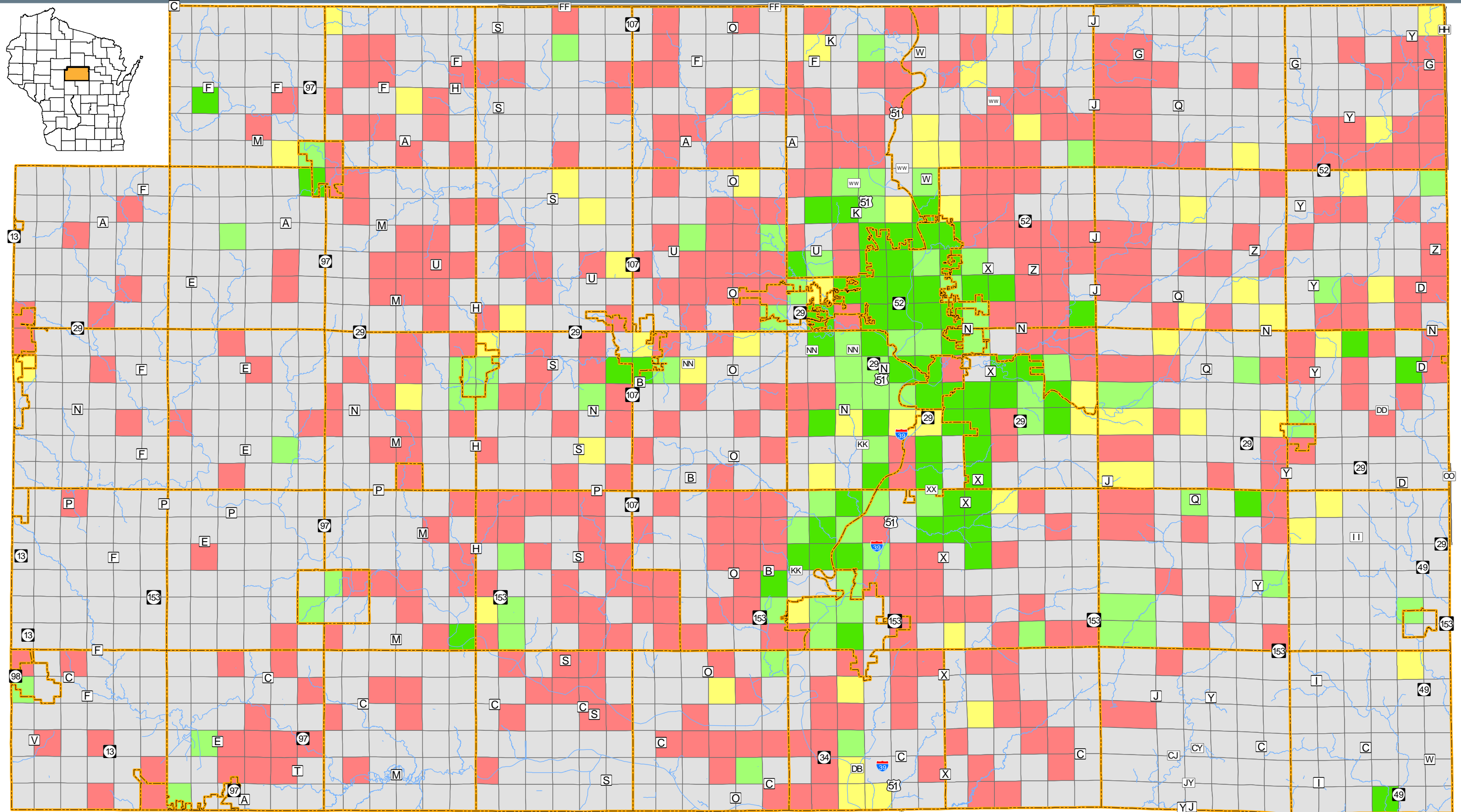
Legend

- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- No Test or Service
- Average Download Speeds**
- < 25 MB
- 25 to 50 MB
- 50 to 100 MB
- > 100 MB

Average Download Speed

5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



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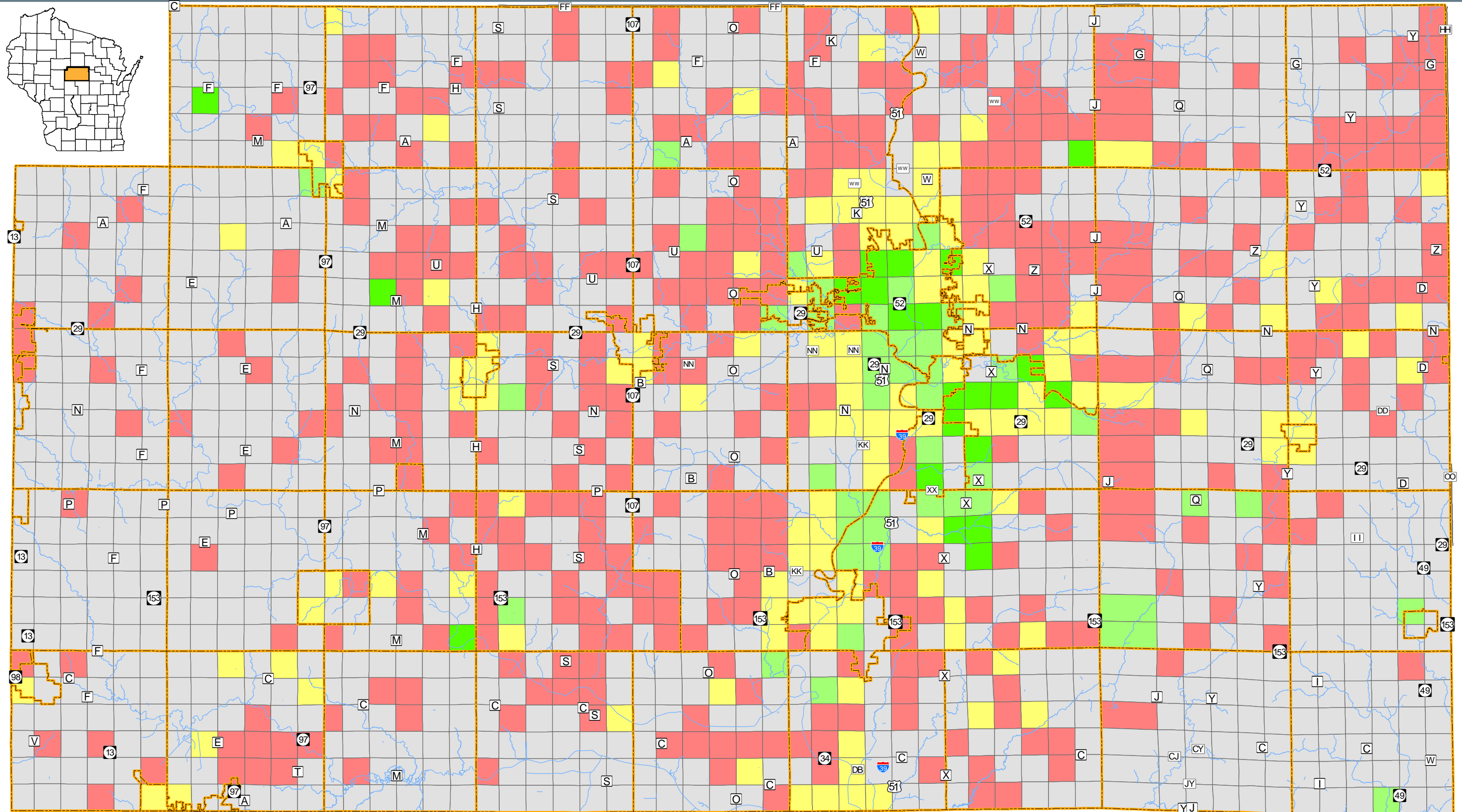
Legend

- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- No test or Service
- Average Upload Speeds**
- < 5 MB
- 5 to 20 MB
- 20 to 100 MB
- > 100 MB

Average Upload Speed

5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



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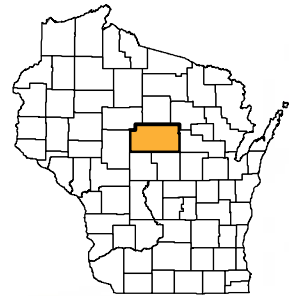
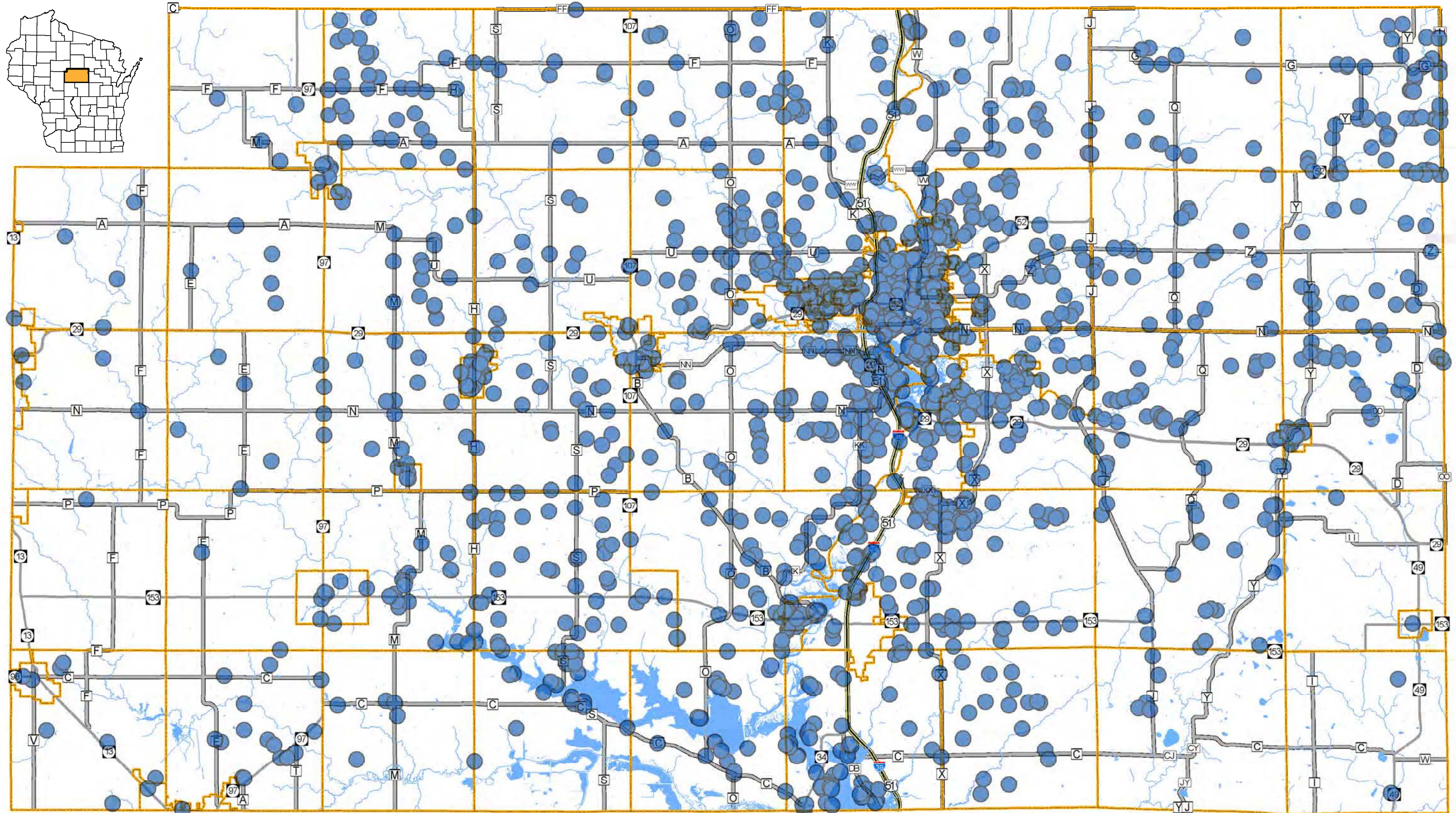


Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- General Test Location

Locations 5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



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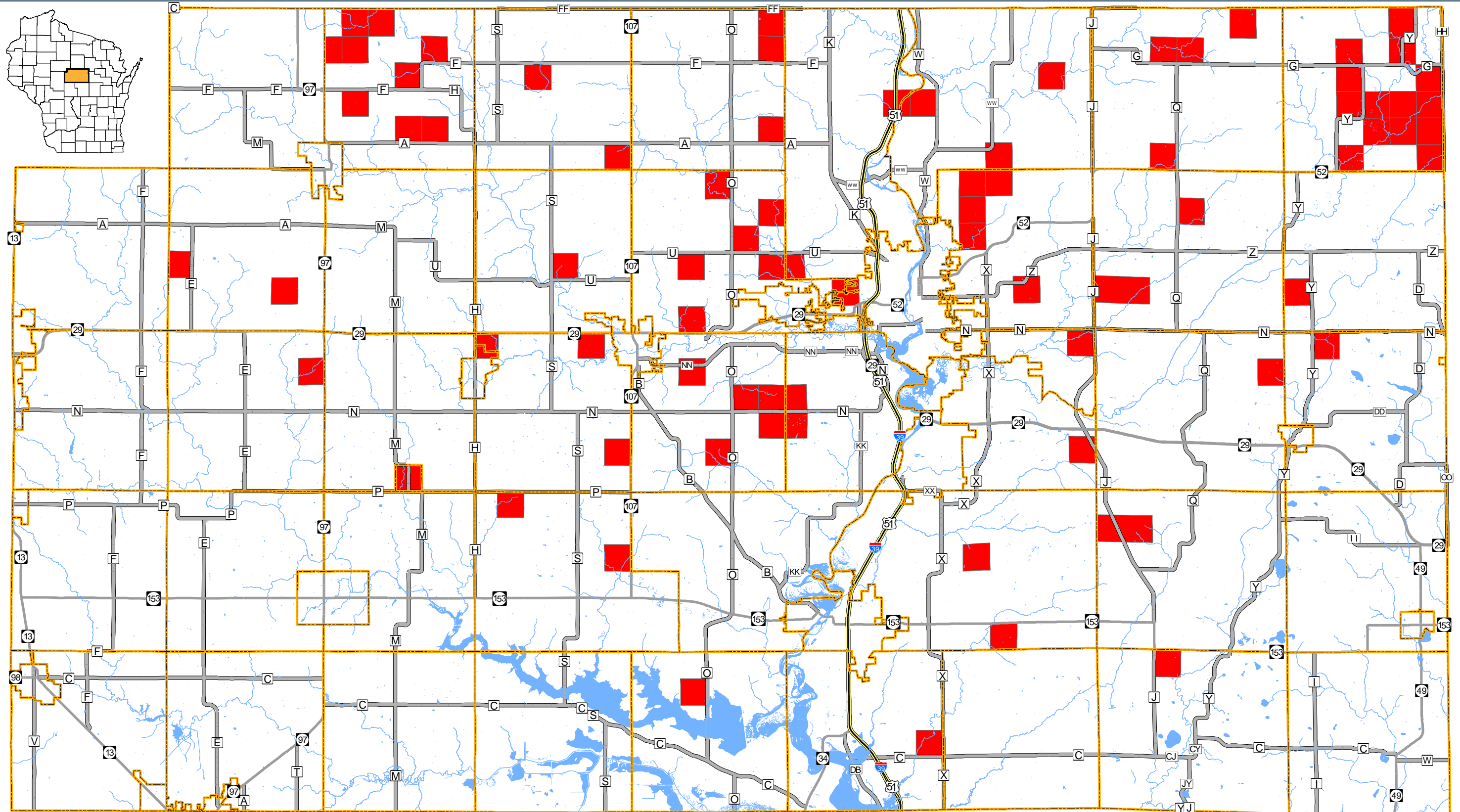


Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- No Service Reported

No Service 5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



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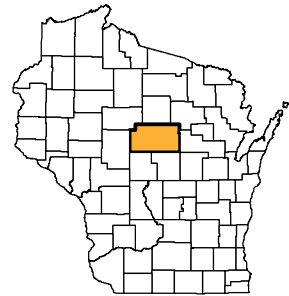
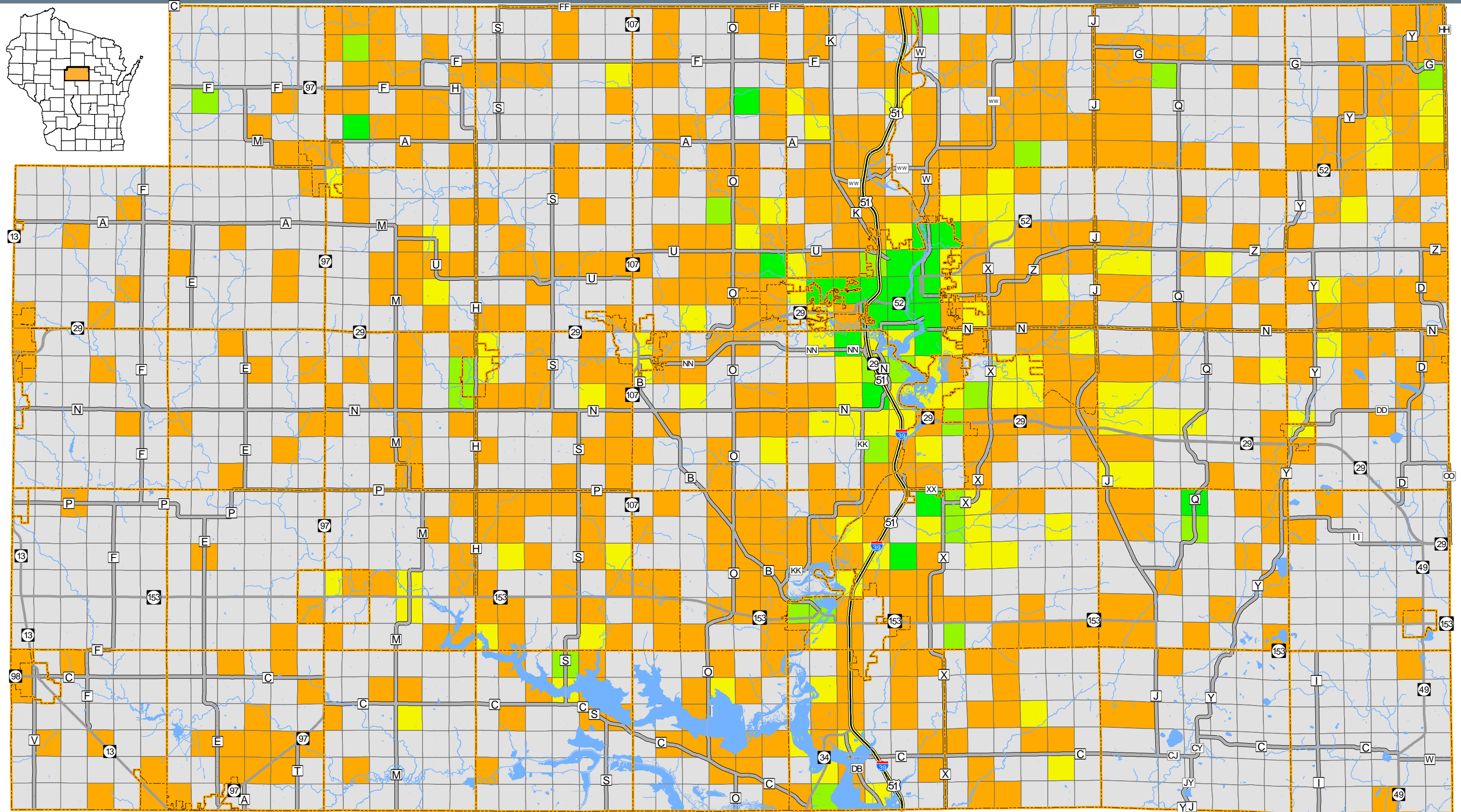
Legend

- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Minor Civil Divisions
- Water
- Total Tests**
- 0
- 1 - 4
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 136

Number of Speedtests

5/13/2022

Marathon County, Wisconsin



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