



# BROADBAND TASK FORCE

## MEETING AGENDA

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, July 27, 2020 at 10:30 A.M.**

Meeting Location: **212 River Drive - Room 5, Wausau, WI**

**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.*

**Members:** Katrina Becker, Eric Budleski Sandi Cihlar, Sara Guild, Jacob Langenhahn, Emmett McBride, Kent Olson, and John Robinson

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, Committee 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.

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the **telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number: 1-415-655-0001. Access Code: 120 094 6757 Password: 27623226**

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

### AGENDA ITEMS:

- 1. CALL TO ORDER;
- 2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS;

### POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

- 3. REVIEW OF BROADBAND TASK FORCE CHARTER
- 4. PAST MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND EFFORTS/STUDIES
  - A. DESIGN NINE
  - B. INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER MEETING IN MARCH 2020
  - C. PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS
  - D. ROUTES TO RECOVERY AND OTHER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

- 5. PRESENTATION ON THE STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR PROVISION OF BROADBAND BY JEFFREY GLAZER, *Clinical Associate Professor UW-Madison Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic*

### NEXT MEETING LOGISTICS AND TOPICS

- 6. NEXT STEPS.
- 7. FUTURE MEETINGS AND SCHEDULE.
- 8. ADJOURN.

*“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 one business day before the meeting.*”

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

FAXED TO:  
 News Dept.at Daily Herald (715-848-9361), City Pages (715-848-5887)  
 Midwest Radio Group (715-848-3158), Marshfield News (877-943-0443)  
 TPP Printing (715-223-3505)  
 FAXED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FAXED DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FAXED TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE  
  
 BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

*Broadband Task Force*

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(a)

*[Reporting relationship.] Reports to Infrastructure Committee.*

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(b)

*Mission/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 9 and develop broad policies and partnership recommendations relating to the expansion of broadband/internet services throughout Marathon County

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(c)

*Statutory Responsibilities:* None.

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(d)

*Membership:* The Task Force shall be comprised of 9 members Four members of the Marathon County Board including members from EEEDC and Infrastructure Committees; and five community members with interest and/or expertise in the internet/broadband services.

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(e)

*Member terms:* Concurrent with terms on the County Board.

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(f)

*Duties and Responsibilities:* By April 1, 2021:

Review the report: Broadband for Marathon County Broadband Assessment and Plan prepared by Design 9 and information received from Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and identify potential options for the County to pursue relating to expansion of broadband throughout the county.

Identify strategies, partners and potential funding sources that will support the expansion of broadband services to underserved areas.

Make recommendations to the County Board on the role of Marathon County relating to it's role in facilitating the expansion of broadband services to the residents of Marathon County

Establish priorities for the allocation of resources to meet public safety and access needs for residents in the county.

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**ORDINANCE #O- 14 -20  
TO CREATE SEC. 2.05(XX), GEN. CODE ORD.  
BROADBAND TASK FORCE**

**WHEREAS**, on April 21, 2020, the Board of Supervisors for the County of Marathon adopted Sec. 2.01(14) of the General Code of Ordinances for Marathon County, #O-12-20, establishing the mechanism for the creation of governance subgroups; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 4, 2020, the Marathon County Infrastructure Committee met to discuss the need to develop recommendations to the County Board regarding policies and partnership recommendations relating to expansion of internet/broadband services throughout Marathon County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Committee determined that a task force should be organized including members of the County Board as well as other community members with interest in the internet/broadband services to develop said recommendations.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND RESOLVED** by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon that Sec. 2.05(XX) of the General Code of Ordinances is hereby created as provided in the attached charter.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED** that the Task Force will begin meeting in July 2020 and shall sunset upon the delivery of its recommendation(s) to the Infrastructure Committee (by 4/1/2021).

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED** that expense reimbursement and travel for task force members who represent Marathon County shall be subject to Rule 20 of the Marathon County Board Rules of Procedure.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED** that said ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication as required by law.

Respectfully submitted this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of June, 2020.

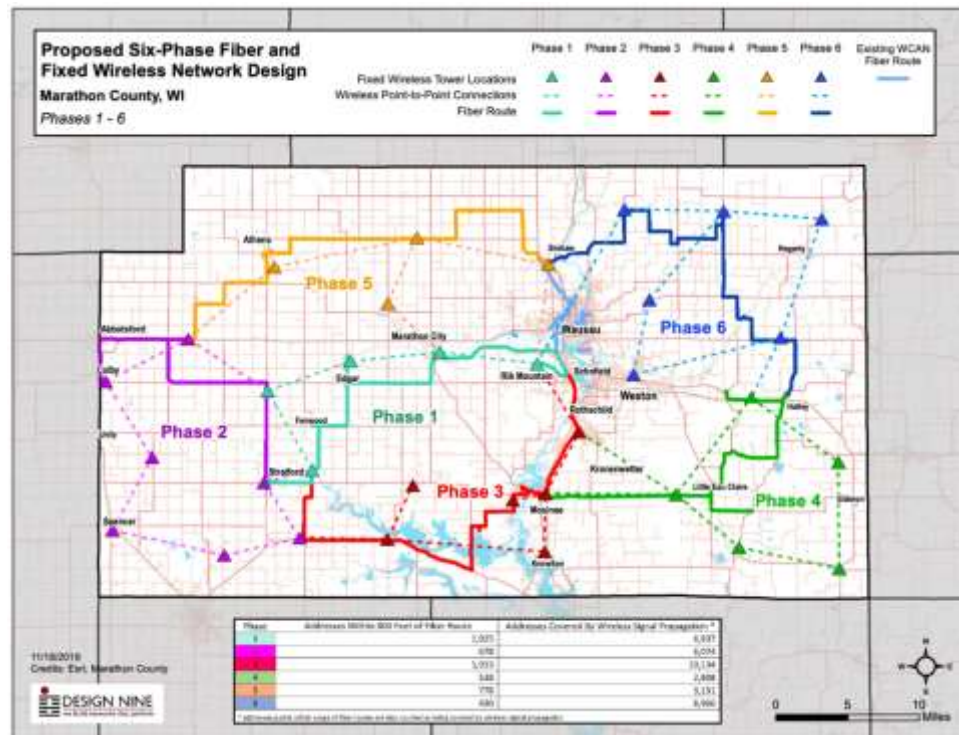
**INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**


Fiscal Impact: Expense reimbursements and travel of the task force members from Marathon County will be paid through the Marathon County Clerk's Office.

### July 27, 2020 Broadband Task Force Meeting

It may be beneficial to review the following resources and documents prior to the first Broadband Task Force meeting on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

- [Design Nine Broadband Feasibility Study](#). This study was completed in January 2020 and sets forth a long term plan to provide high speed internet access to 89% of households in Marathon County. The Study followed the FCC definition of broadband being speeds of 25/3 Mbps and outlined a hybrid fiber/fixed wireless network.



- [Previous Planning Efforts, including 2009 Broadband Gap Analysis](#) The Gap Analysis found that there were large areas without access to high speed internet in the County, unfortunately, many of these areas still remain unserved. Although this study is 11 years old, the broadband environment has not changed substantially since initial plan development.
- [UW-Madison Center for Communities & Economic Development WIndicator Broadband in Economic Development](#) outlines the economic cost of no having available high speed internet.
- The July issue of the [Wisconsin Counties Association Magazine](#) contains an article summarizing the State's broadband environment. Although the mapping is visually appealing, it is based on self-reported data to the FCC by census tract, so may not provide an accurate picture of service available within Marathon County.
- March 2020 Marathon County-Internet Service Provider Meeting Summary (following page)



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### March 6<sup>th</sup> Marathon County Internet Service Provider Meeting

#### Background

The Marathon County Broadband Assessment Study was finalized in January 2020. As a next step, Marathon County Extension organized a meeting between County Administration, CCITC Director, Chairs of the Infrastructure and Extension, Education and Economic Development Committees and incumbent internet service providers (ISPs) to gather input on the Study and discuss potential next steps.

Participants included:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
John Robinson	Marathon County Board
Lance Leonhard	Marathon County Administrator
Sara Guild	Marathon County Board
Terry Birk	NSight
Jason Weister	WTC/Cirrinity
Scott Nyman	WTC/Cirrinity
Justin Huebner	Solarus
Mark Voss	Reach Amplification
Rick Letto	Amherst Telephone Company
Jamey Lysne	Solarus
Damien Sweeney	Network Professional/AirNet
Mike Hill	Charter Communication
Jeff Knlaf	Charter Communications
Cory Heigl	Astrea (formerly Packerland)
Paul Osterman	Northwoods Connect
Matt Osterman	Northwoods Connect
Rep. Pat Snyder	WI State Representative from the 85 <sup>th</sup> District
Bill Flood	AirRunner Networks
Phil Gregoire	Air Runner Networks
Jeremy Carolf	Country Wireless
Gerry Klein	CCITC
Melinda Osterberg	UW-Madison Extension Marathon County

The following is an outline of the items discussed at the March 6, 2020 meeting.

#### **Items that Marathon County can do to Expand High Speed Internet Access**

ISPs indicated that the following could expand high speed internet access:

- Provide grant writing support and matching funds
- Educate the community on broadband technologies and existing service to increase take rate
- Construct towers where ISPs could lease space
- Create a Broadband Task Force/Steering Committee that includes ISP representatives
- Internet service providers indicated that they were generally not interested in access to low interest, long term loans or in leasing fiber from Marathon County

- Development of low interest neighborhood loans for installation of towers

### **General Information to Consider When Applying for Grants**

State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission Grants:

- 50% of project costs needed in matching funds
- Successful projects typically have a 25% local cost share, 25% ISP funds to obtain 50% in grant funding
- Historically, the PSC has distributed \$2 million dollars annually in grant funds

Federal Grants:

- Generally, USDA grants would not be feasible in Marathon County. These grants require a population density of less than 6 people per square mile.
- The opportunity to bid on census blocks under the CAF II funding will be in Fall 2020
- HUD Grants are difficult to obtain

### **Feedback on the Broadband Assessment Study**

- The cost estimate should be increased by 10% to account for the need for boring
- Letter of credit to meet the build out requirement for full construction of planned improvements would be difficult for smaller providers
- Fixed wireless may be a way to begin implementing the Broadband Assessment, as fixed wireless structures are inexpensive and can be installed quickly

### **General Comments on the Current High-Speed Internet Environment**

- Wireless providers can locate backhaul route and incumbent providers are able to lease fiber
- Frequency space can limit wireless deployment
- There is at least a one to two-year planning horizon for fiber while the planning horizon for wireless is days to weeks
- The County should prioritize areas for expansion based on law enforcement needs, increasing public safety and existing telecommunication service level

### **Potential Next Steps**

- The County could establish a uniform set of criteria to prioritize implementation of the Broadband Assessment study
- After the County prioritizes areas, meet with ISPs to address how to best provide service to identified areas
- Develop a Request for Proposals process that engages interested ISPs in a fair manner

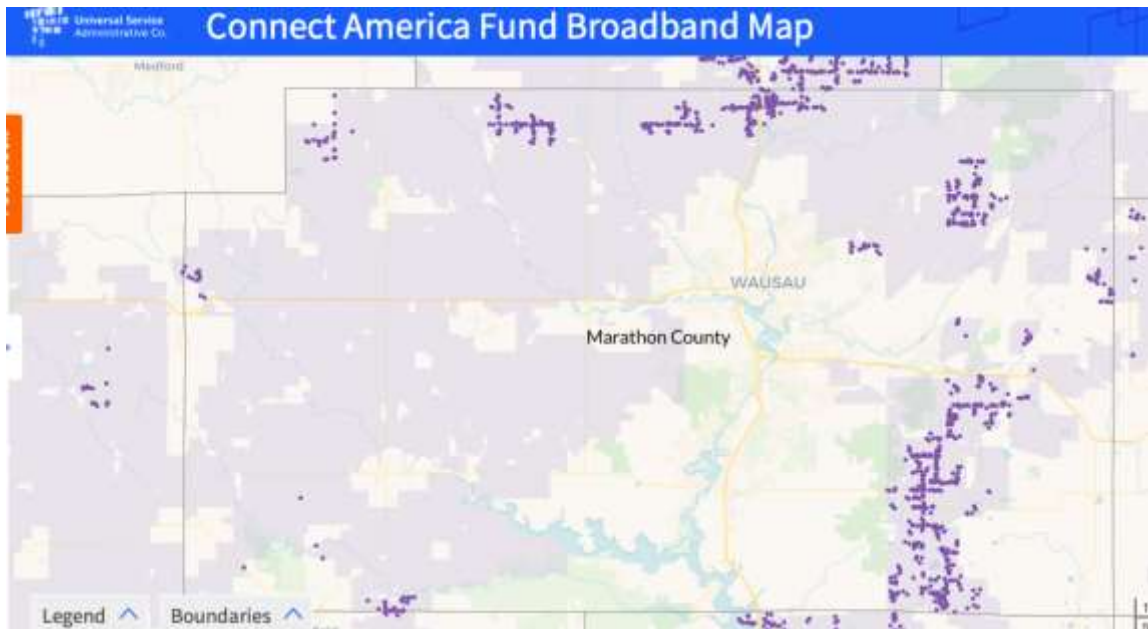
## Use of CAF-II Funds in Marathon County

### Background

At the June EEECD Committee meeting, the Committee requested that staff examine how CAF-II and PSC Grant funds have improved broadband access within Marathon County.

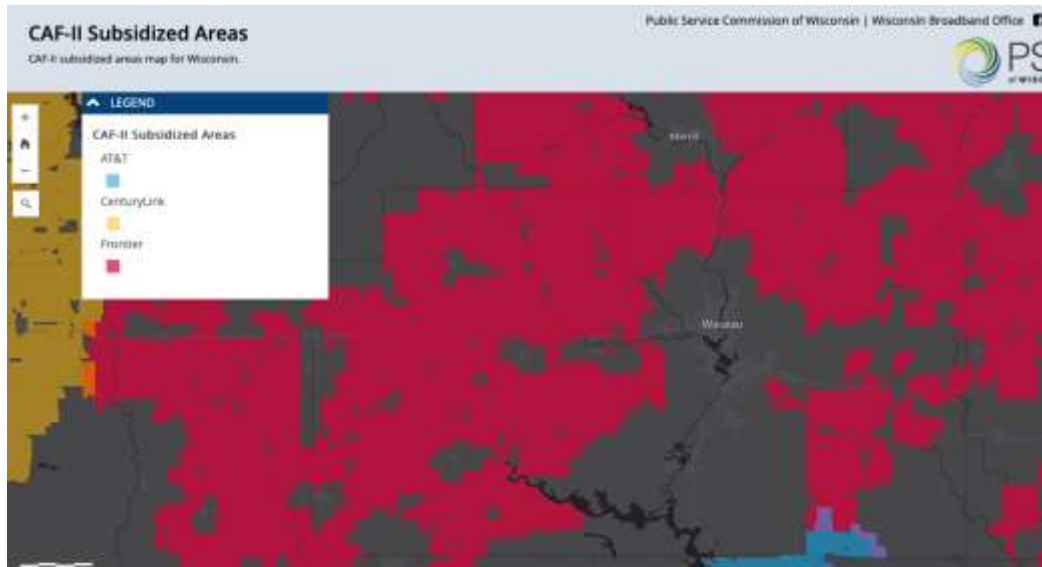
### Frontier's Use of CAF-II Funds in Marathon County

For several months CCITC Director Gerry Klein attempted to obtain this information from Frontier. Through multiple phone calls, meetings and emails, he repeated requested specifics about the number of households served and the speed of broadband service. Through these efforts Frontier directed the County to the following Connect America Fund Broadband Map: <https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/> which contains the following information for Marathon County.



The map depicts the areas that obtained service through CAF-II funding prior to 2019, the website indicates that the map will be updated with 2019 data in the next several weeks. Generally, the purple dots represent areas where Frontier expanded access. Generally, with 10 Mbps download /1 Mbps upload speeds.

The Wisconsin Public Service Commission also maintains a [map](#) that depicts the areas that were included as part of the CAF-II Auction. Service could be extended to any of the areas depicted in red on the map.



### **Lack of Transparency in use of CAF-II Funds**

Marathon County isn't the only jurisdiction struggling to understand how CAF-II funds have been used within their community. As one article stated, "Another issue with the CAF II program is its lack of transparency. CAF II does not require participating providers to share or report on any specifics in their network plans beyond the total number of households to be served." As Gerry found even trying to get the number of households served is extremely difficult to determine.

The Blandin Foundation in Minnesota completed a [study](#) to determine how CAF-II funds had changed access to broadband. In short, after lengthy field work to determine the location of the improvements, they found that most areas were left unserved and those that did have access only had moderately better service. To determine this, the Foundation had to verify the location of improvements in the field and conduct a survey of residents within the CAF-II auction area.

### **Summary**

It will be extremely difficult to determine how CAF-II funds were used and the impact of those funds within the County. The structure the Blandin Foundation used could work in Marathon County, but would be extremely time consuming. Ideally, internet service providers would supply this information and the County is examining ways to more formally encourage sharing of information through adoption of Dig Once Policies.

I have also reached out to the Center for Community and Economic Development at UW-Madison to see about the potential to examine this issue at a State level. Given funding and staff levels, I do not know about the feasibility of their being able to tackle a project of this scope. I do believe that they may address this issue as part of their report on Broadband as part of their Wisconsin Economy series.

### **PSC Grants in the Weston Area**

In 2015, the Village of Weston was awarded a State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) grant to extend Charter cable under Highway 29, east of Wausau to two business parks. This project now serves four customers and will extend service to seven lots within one industrial park and to 38 potential business condo units in the second park. The Public Service Commission indicates that this project has been completed and the applicant has met the standards contained within the grant agreement.



In 2017, Frontier received a PSC grant to build a 10-mile fiber route, upgrading the existing DSL service at three remote terminals, and install one new terminal in a housing subdivision southeast of Wausau in the Town of Weston. The project provided approximately 1,245 households with broadband service with a maximum speed of 25/3, and 2,333 households with a maximum speed of 10/1. The project area includes 41 business locations as well. The PSC has indicated that the DSL service is a bit slow as speeds decrease from nodes and maintenance was an issue even prior to the bankruptcy.

I have contacted the PSC to request additional information about projects within the County. It should be noted that an applicant can request that the project status report have confidential filing, meaning that the PSC staff would not be able to disseminate information.