



MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE

MEETING AGENDA

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, December 7, 2020 at 4:00 P.M.**
Meeting Location: **Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, 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.*

Task Force 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, 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.

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: 1-408-418-9388 Access Code: 962 376 748. If you are prompted to provide an "Attendee Identification Number," enter the "#" sign. No other number is required to participate in the telephone conference. When you enter the telephone conference,

PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC COMMENTS (15 minute limit)
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2020 AND NOVEMBER 16, 2020 BROADBAND TASK FORCE MEETINGS

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4. UPDATE ON STATE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR THE WITTENBERG TELEPHONE FIBER TO THE HOME AND THE MARATHON COUNTY WIRELESS BROADBAND EXPANSION PROJECTS
5. UPDATE ON WIFI ACCESS AT LIBRARY FACILITIES

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

6. DISCUSSION OF TASK FORCE 2021 WORKPLAN
7. DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR ALLOCATING COUNTY RESOURCES FOR FUTURE PROJECTS
 - a) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
8. EVALUATE COUNTY ROLE IN RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND AUCTION
 - a) ACCELERATE TIMELINE, EXPAND CAPACITY OR OTHER IMPROVEMENTS
9. EVALUATE FINANCING TOOLS, INCLUDING CONDUIT BONDING
10. DEVELOP RECOMMENDATION ON POLICY FOR USE OF COUNTY TOWERS AND FACILITIES FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION
11. DEVELOP A PROCESS TO LEVERAGE COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT BROADBAND EXPANSION
 - a) IDENTIFY FUNDING PARTNERS
 - b) DEVELOP ENGAGEMENT PLAN
12. NEXT MEETING LOGISTICS AND TOPICS
13. NEXT STEPS
14. 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 or e-mail infomarathon@mail.co.marathon.wi.us 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)

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE

FAXED BY: T. Ranallo
FAXED DATE: 12/02/2020
FAXED TIME:

BY: T. Ranallo
DATE: 12/02/2020
TIME:



BROADBAND TASK FORCE MINUTES

Monday, October 26, 2020
212 River Drive, Room 5, Wausau WI 54403

Attendance:

Present

Melinda Osterberg

Absent

Katrina Becker

Also Present:

VIA Web or Phone:

Nancy Anderson
Eric Budleski
Wade Carroll
Sandi Cihlar
Randy Fifrick
Jonathan Fisher
Kurt Gibbs
Sara Guild
Gerard Klein
Jacob Langenhahn
Lance Leonhard
Amanda Ley
Emmet McBride
Vicki Resech, MCDEVCO
John Robinson, Chair

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

Meeting was called to order by Chair J. Robinson at 4:00 pm. All participants welcomed.

2. **Public Comments**

No public comments

3. **Approval of the Minutes of the October 5, 2020 Meeting.**

Motion to approve by S. Cihlar

Second by: E. Budleski

All in favor, motion carried.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

4. **MCDEVCO's Role in Facilitating Broadband Access Efforts (Short and Long Term)**

V. Resech, MCDEVCO, stated that at this time, they do not have the capacity to help with the grant applications that are due (Dec. 1). They are still interested in working with this task force in the long term. J. Robinson thanked V. Resech and MCDEVCO for their interest and willingness to work with us.

5. **Updates on Routes to Recovery Efforts**

G. Klein reported that work continues with R. Illick to improve wireless access outside the library locations. Task force members are also working on an opportunity to run fiber to improve the internet connection at the Hatley Library and the Hatley DC Everest Elementary School. These two projects will use the funds that municipalities have re-allocated to the county. Internally, projects have been focusing on conference rooms and making them more compatible for working remotely, i.e., pulling down smart boards, installing TVs, purchasing video conferencing systems. Per L. Leonhard, the county will be able to submit the costs for reimbursement to cover

above and beyond what is being spent on all of these projects. G. Klein also reported that he submitted a grant for a fiber connection at the Solid Waste Facility for staff to work remotely and access systems and the Hatley Highway Facility which would allow more people to work at that space.

POLICY DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

6. Refine Evaluation Criteria and Process for Use of Marathon County Funds for Broadband Projects

The evaluation criteria has been updated and organized. If this criteria is adopted, it should be adapted into an application process to send to the Internet Service Providers. Discussion was held on the criteria being consistent with state requirements and making sure that we are serving our rural constituents. S.Cihlar asked if anything has come out of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband. M. Osterberg will invite Andy Faust, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, to speak at our next task force meeting. E. McBride made a motion to accept the criteria and the process. S. Guild seconded. Motion carried.

Chair Robinson shared with members that in the interest of time and resources, the task force keeps moving our efforts in expanding broadband services to the underserved businesses and residences in Marathon County and should limit our discussion on internal projects unless they impact broadband expansion to the residences and businesses in the county.

7. Identify Potential Partners for Funding and Supporting Future Broadband Expansion Efforts

Updates were made by task force members highlighting the meetings with the parties that are interested in expanding broadband services in Marathon County through the PSC grant application process or the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction. Discussion was held on how we can move forward with providers as well as identifying other partners as we move forward on the PSC grant applications. (Please refer to Packet.) G.Klein reported on Northwoods Connect's 5 tower proposal, each at 250-300 feet and a price of \$300,000 ea. It still does not address the area northwest of Athens. In discussions with the Athens School District, there may be another school joining that district which would make the need greater for broadband service. M. Osterberg reported on the Cirrinity proposal which is approximately 7 miles of fiber from the Hatley area serving 83 homes. The cost would be just under \$200,000 to be competitive for this grant cycle and would allow them to continue on Hwy Q and Hwy J expanding access. E. Budleski mentioned that Spectrum services the town of Hatley and their service runs down Highway Y to Highway 153. J. Robinson spoke on behalf of D. Sweeney, Network Professionals, who was planning on attending today. The proposed project would consist of silos and towers in the Trapp River Golf Course area in the town of Texas as well as the Little Chicago area. They are also looking at putting equipment on the new Wausau water tower that would serve in the town of Stettin. W. Carroll stated that Starlink is open for beta and Marshfield Clinic has a number of physicians on the system. They are looking at rural areas to test their technology. W. Carroll will send M. Osterberg the link to share so people can "sign-up" for this opportunity. L. Leonhard reported on Bug Tussel. They have the technology, integrating wireless delivery with the provision of cell service. They partner with AT&T and are interested in growing in our area. They also bring an educational component with their service.

J. Robinson reported on a meeting held with the Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership and an opportunity to partner with them in the short term.

S Cihlar suggested looking at the Land O Lakes American Connection Project Broadband Coalition. She will contact them for more information.

W. Carrol reported on About Health and the possibility of a partnership.

8. Public Service Commission Grant Opportunity

Round 1 will begin this week on October 29th. There are a number of vendors that have been approved to bid and there is potential opportunity to work with those parties. As we are still learning about the auction, we are looking at our role and how we can leverage our dollars to accelerate and expand the service in those census tracts.

Senator J. Petrowski reached out to G. Klein to see what could be done legislatively for the broadband effort. S. Cihlar asked if the Wisconsin Counties Association could help, legislatively.

9. **Next meeting logistics and topics**

J. Robinson recommended creating a work group of people to review the proposals to ensure that these companies are applying our criteria. He would like the group to meet between now and our next task force meeting which is scheduled for November 16. E. Budleski, C. Fallin, Aspirus, E. McBride, G. Klein and M. Osterberg will make up the work group and meet accordingly.

10. **Next Steps**

- Grant application process with potential partners
- Report from work group relative to PSC grant process
- What is our role in the auctions, what process should we utilize
- Learn more about SpaceX, About Health, Land o Lakes Cooperative and the Greater Wausau Prosperity Partnership

11. **Adjourn**

There was no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nancy Anderson



MARATHON COUNTY BROADBAND TASK FORCE - BROADBAND PROJECT EVALUATION WORK GROUP SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES

Friday, November 6, 2020 at 12:00 PM
Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau, WI

Attendance:

Present

M. Osterberg

Absent

Also Present:

VIA Web or Phone:

N. Anderson
R. Barrett, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
E. Budleski
V. Carrillo
K. Gibbs
G. Klein
L. Leonhard
E. McBride
J. Robinson
P. Weinschenk, Record Review

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair J. Robinson at 12:00 pm. All participants welcomed.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

3. REVIEW OF PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BROADBAND PROJECTS IN MARATHON COUNTY

J. Robinson gave a summary of what Marathon County has done, and where we are now, to date, in the pursuit of expanding broadband access to meet the needs of the unserved and underserved areas. The county's Broadband Task Force is moving forward with Public Service Commission grants and other opportunities. There are four (4) parties that have expressed an interest in working with the county and the task force has developed criteria based on the Public Service Commission grant process. M. Osterberg shared the document she created which is based on that criteria and encouraged the group to come up with additional ideas to evaluate the proposals. The level of service will be added for "extra points" as well as providing broadband service to priority locations that currently cannot call 911 for services. Members agreed to request, in the cost section of the evaluation, the cost per connection for business or residence. Negative points will be assigned for data caps.

4. EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL GRANT REQUESTS

Because of the due date of December 1 for the Public Service Commission grant application, we have 3 weeks to put together a partnership and a proposal. A resolution will be brought before the county board at the Nov. 10, 2020 meeting that will authorize appropriate county board officials to partner with one or more Internet Service Providers to provide services consistent with our recommended criteria.

M. Osterberg recommended that once the task force members develop and finalize the scoring sheet, we can send the same to each Internet Service Provider and inform them that this is how we will be assessing their final proposals. We will also ask for clarification on coverage, technology, level of service, and their expectation from Marathon County. E. Budleski suggested a field trip to the location(s) to test the service they offer would be very beneficial.

5. DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTY PARTICIPATION IN BROADBAND GRANT APPLICATIONS

J. Robinson and M. Osterberg will revise the evaluation and score card based on discussions today and will reach out to the Internet Service Providers requesting the information required by the task force to assess each proposal. We anticipate receiving that information by Wednesday of next week.

6. NEXT MEETING LOGISTICS AND TOPICS

7. NEXT STEPS

We will meet again next Friday, November 13th at noon, and make our recommendation based on the assessments. From there we will prepare our letters of support.

8. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 1:15pm.

Notes Prepared by:

Nancy M. Anderson



Melinda Osterberg
Community Development Educator
Cell: 715-252-9459
Melinda.osterberg@wisc.edu

Update on State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission Grant Applications

Marathon County was able to obtain 71 letters of support for the Marathon County/Wittenberg Telephone FTTH Phase One project and 67 letters in support of the Marathon County Wireless Broadband Expansion project. In addition, through this outreach process, the Marshfield Clinic will contribute up to \$30,000 for broadband expansion in Marathon County. Correspondence seeking letters of support for the projects is attached for your reference.

As of December 1st, we have confirmation from Bug Tussel and Wittenberg Telephone that they have submitted their applications to the Public Service Commission. Wittenberg Telephone has also shared the following information regarding their application:

Your Filing with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin has been accepted.

Document ID: [400587](#)

Date 11/30/2020 09:48:00 AM

Filed/Received:

Docket: 5-BF-2021

Document Type: Application

Document BB App Wittenberg Wireless LLC, Marathon County/Wittenberg Telephone

Description: FTTH Phase 1

Original File Name: Wittenberg Wireless LLC - Marathon County - Wittenberg Telephone FTTH Phase 1.pdf

Accept Date: 11/30/2020 09:53:15 AM

PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BROADBAND PROJECTS IN MARATHON COUNTY

(October 22, 2020)

Definitions:

“Broadband service” means a communications service providing to end users, at a minimum, two-way data transmission with speeds of at least 50 mbps for download transmission and 10 mbps for upload transmission, but does not include a commercial mobile radio service or a broadband service in which a stand-alone satellite provider connects directly to the end user with a satellite connection.

“Scalable” means, with respect to a project for a broadband network, that the broadband network has the ability to maintain the quality of its service while increasing parameters relating to the size of the network, such as the number of users, the number of network nodes, the number of services provided, or the network's geographic spread.

“Underserved” means served by fewer than 2 broadband service providers.

“Unserved area” means an area of this state that is not served by an Internet service provider offering Internet service that is all of the following:

1. Fixed wireless service or wired service.
2. Provided at actual speeds of at least 20 percent of the upload and download speeds for advanced telecommunications capability as designated by the federal communications commission in its inquiries regarding advanced telecommunications capability under [47 USC 1302 \(b\)](#).

The intent of this program is to expand broadband access to areas that are not currently served by at least two providers meeting the service delivery speeds outlined above. Projects must demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more unserved or underserved areas in the county.

The criteria shall give priority to projects that:

- include matching funds,
- that involve public-private partnerships,
- that affect unserved or underserved areas,
- that are scalable,
- that promote economic development,
- that will not result in delaying the provision of broadband service to areas neighboring areas to be served by the proposed project, or that affect a large geographic area or a large number of unserved or underserved individuals or communities,
- projects which address unserved or underserved areas in the towns north of Hwy 29 will be given priority when allocating county funds

The criteria shall prohibit grants that have the effect of subsidizing the expenses of a provider of telecommunications service, or the monthly bills of customers of those providers

When evaluating grant applications under this section, the county shall consider:

- the degree to which the proposed projects would not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure, information about the presence of which is provided by the applicant or another person within a time period designated by the county;
- the impacts of the proposed projects on the ability of individuals to access health care services from home and the cost of those services; and
- the impacts of the proposed projects on the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home; and
- the impacts of the proposed projects on the ability of individuals and businesses to access telework opportunities from home.

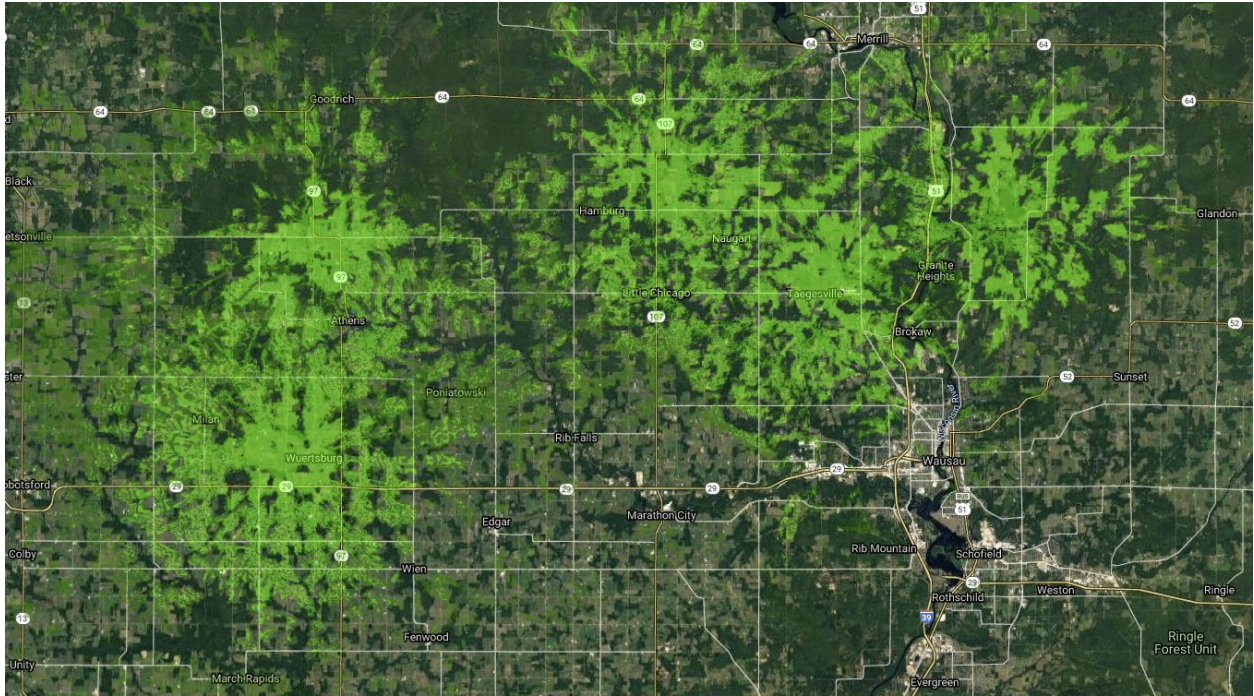
An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:

Potential and expected number of households served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.

- Potential and expected number of businesses served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.
- Expected number of seasonal residents and tourists served.
- Estimated download and upload speed of the broadband service packages available for purchase.
- A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.
- A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.
- A description the area of the county that will be affected by the proposed project
- A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.
- A proposed budget for the proposed project, including the capital costs of the project and the expected revenue sources including contributions from partners.

Internet Service Provider Interest in PSC Grants

Please see the following correspondence and maps from Northwoods Connect and Cirrinity in response to Marathon County's inquiry if they were interested in partnering on a Public Service Commission Grant for the 2020 grant cycle.



Matt Osterman <matt@northwoodsconnect.com>

Thu 10/15/2020 5:17 PM

To: Melinda Osterberg <melinda.osterberg@wisc.edu>

Cc: john.robinson <john.robinson@co.marathon.wi.us>; sara.guild@co.marathon.wi.us <sara.guild@co.marathon.wi.us>; vresech@mcdevco.org <vresech@mcdevco.org>; lance.leonhard@co.marathon.wi.us <lance.leonhard@co.marathon.wi.us>; gerard.klein@co.marathon.wi.us <gerard.klein@co.marathon.wi.us>

1 attachments (3 MB)

Marathon5TowerExample.png;

Hey All,

Thanks again for the great conversation on Tuesday. As promised, we wanted to see what the coverage looked like for the areas that you identified, so we put a map together (attached) that should be a great kickoff to the deeper discussion. The actual tower locations are obviously TBD, but consider this a place to start. We've historically had the best luck finding sites owned by the county or a town as they understand the collaborative goal a bit better.

Anyway, as you'll see, the maps look decently impressive. We find they're about 75% accurate given any particular rooftop, but I went conservative in our approach so we aren't making unobtainable promises. These towers are all simulated at 300' and would require FAA approval. Most towers under 200' wouldn't have this hurdle, but coverage wouldn't be quite as ubiquitous (but probably still pretty good given the amount of open spaces in that region).

In a vacuum, we believe this is worth chasing. The obvious challenge is how do we make the numbers work. And given that we'd be expanding our footprint a county over, it wouldn't be worthwhile for us as a company to do this for 1 or 2 towers. Five towers would be ideal to hit the coverage you need, but the budget and matching funds might be a little tight in that scenario. It might come down to finding additional partners for matching funds, removing a tower, or dropping heights to below 200'. Either way, Northwoods Connect would be happy to add in a significant amount of our internal engineering and labor costs as matching funds to help make it happen.

We're all super sensitive to the amount of time we have left to get this done, so I'm happy to answer any questions to keep the ball rolling.

Thank you!!!!

Matt

Thu 10/22/2020 10:01 AM

To: Melinda Osterberg <melinda.osterberg@wisc.edu>

📎 1 attachments (2 KB)

Marathon County Grant.kmz;

Melinda,

I don't have John's email so please pass this on to whomever you need to.

Attached is a .KMZ file of the plan we came up with. No sooner did I hang up the phone with you and John, my engineer got me the info and we changed paths slightly. We'll come South from Hatley down County Y to Townline road and also pick up down County Q to the south so we can get to the subdivision at Joe's road. All this can be seen on the map.

Our initial review is this:

Build is 7.35 miles

83 homes are passed with Gigabit capable Fiber to the Home

Initial full cost of the project \$360,150

If we grant at 52%/48% which the PSC likes to see: \$187,278 funding needed / Grant money to apply for = \$172,872

With our plate getting full for next year we'd have to see what portion of the \$187,278 the County would be willing to supply before we go ahead with the grant.

As I noted on the call, this will be engineered and built to set us up for future builds to the North on Q as well as to the South towards Plover River Rd and County J.

I hope this helps and as always let me know what questions you have for me.

Scott Nyman

General Manager/CEO Wittenberg Telephone Company/Cirrinity

snyman@cirrinity.net

7152532114

▼ Search

Search

ex: Computer repair near Boston

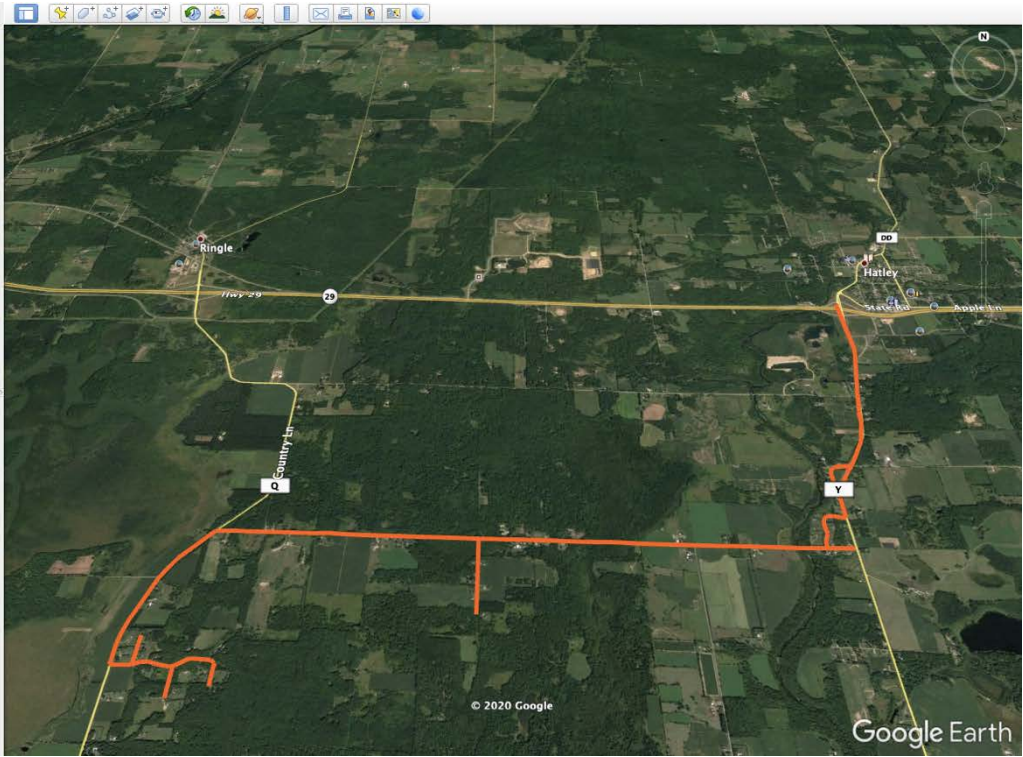
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- Temporary Places
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▼ Layers

- Primary Database
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 - Photos
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 - 3D Buildings
 - Weather
 - Gallery
 - More
- Terrain





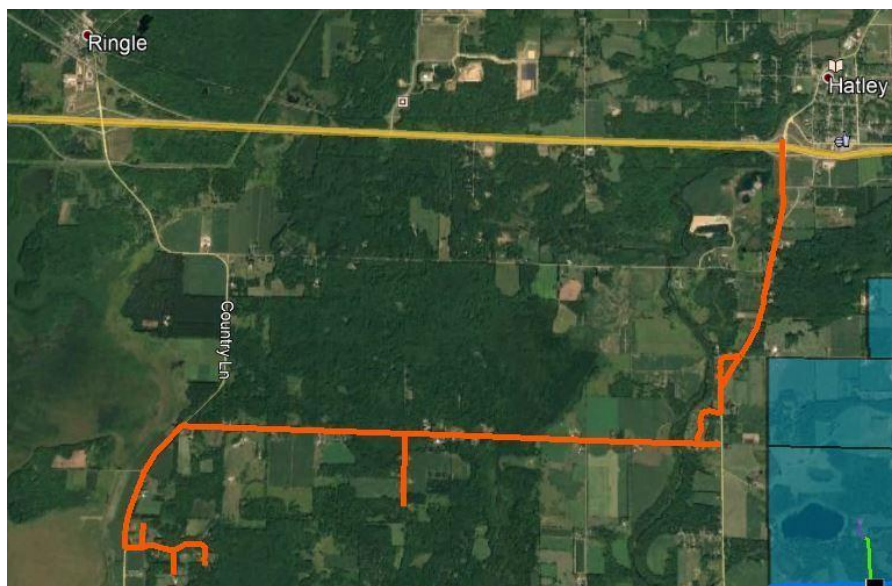
November 17, 2020

Dear Marathon County Stakeholder,

We are excited to share that Marathon County is partnering with area internet service providers on two projects to expand internet access in Marathon County. These projects would significantly increase access to high speed internet throughout the County.

Marathon County/Wittenberg Telephone FTTH Phase 1

Marathon County and Wittenberg Telephone Company are partnering on a WI Public Service Commission grant to expand high speed internet access in the Town of Reid and a small portion of the Town of Ringle, southwest of the Village of Hatley. The project includes 7.35 miles of fiber to the home service, extending from south from the Village of Hatley along County Road Y, to Townline Road then to County Road Q, to provide service to the Joe's Road subdivision.

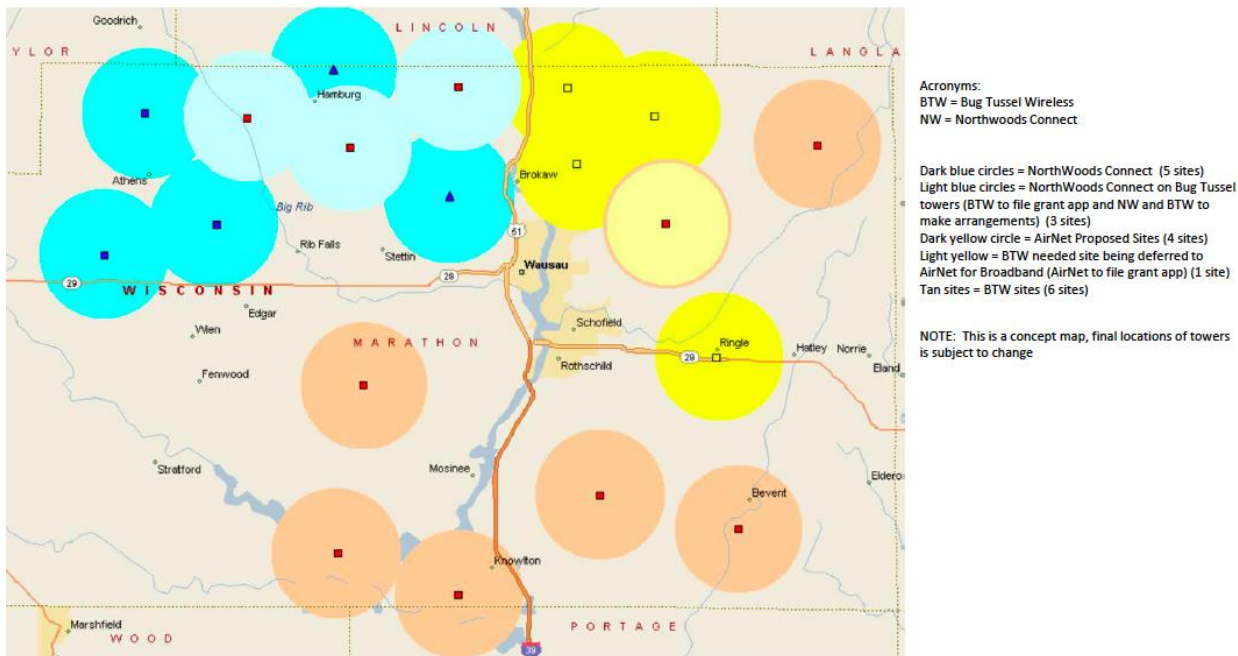


The Marathon County/Wittenberg Telephone FTTH Phase 1 project would provide high speed fiber service to 85 residences and three businesses in this area. Fiber broadband service is the fastest, most reliable technology currently available, providing a minimum speed of 100 Mbps download/100 Mbps upload.

Marathon County Wireless Broadband Expansion Project

Marathon County is also partnering with Bug Tussel Wireless, Northwoods Connect and Network Professionals in applying for State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission grants to expand high speed internet access throughout Marathon County. The collaborative Marathon County Wireless Broadband Expansion Project includes fixed wireless infrastructure at 19 existing and proposed tower locations. The northern tier of Marathon County is a priority area due to the current lack of high speed internet, cellular, and landline phone service.

While the exact tower locations and service areas are subject to change, a concept map of the project is provide below.



Once complete, residents and business owners in these areas will have access to high speed fixed wireless internet service.


Public Service Commission grants are highly competitive, particularly with increased demand for broadband access this grant cycle due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the County's grant application, we need your assistance! Letters of support are crucial to ensure that our application ranks highly.


We would greatly appreciate it if you could return **two letters of support** (one for the fiber project and one for the wireless project) on your organization's letterhead by email no later than **November 20, 2020**. We have attached template letters of support for your convenience. Due to the tight grant deadline, use of traditional mail is not an option. Please email your response to Melinda.osterberg@wisc.edu, you may also contact Melinda with any questions you may have about this project or about broadband expansion generally in Marathon County.

Thank you for your assistance and support as we seek to expand broadband access throughout Marathon County!

Sincerely,


Lance Leonhard
Marathon County Administrator


Kurt Gibbs
Marathon County Board Chair


John Robinson
Broadband Task Force, Chair
Marathon County Board