

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

Memorandum

November 11, 2015

FOR COMMISSION AGENDA

TO: The Commission

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RE: Fiscal Year 2016 Broadband Expansion Grants 5-BF-100
Fiscal Year 2016 Broadband Expansion Grant Awards

Suggested Minute: The Commission (approved/did not approve) the request of Wittenberg Telephone Company, d/b/a Wittenberg Wireless LLC, to supplement its grant application.

The Commission reviewed the applications for broadband expansion grants and determined the applicants to which funds should be awarded for Fiscal Year 2016.

Award Process

On August 5, 2015, the Office of the Governor announced the availability of Broadband Expansion Grants for Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16). The state appropriated \$1.5 million for this year's grant competition. On September 30, 2015, the Commission received 28 applications requesting a total of \$4,413,096 in grants. A list of the applications is attached as Attachment A. ([DL: 1273116](#).) There is also a map attached to this memo that illustrates the location of the 28 proposals. ([DL: 1273120](#).)

For this year's grant cycle, the Commission provided a three-week period in which the public could comment on the filed applications. A list of the comments filed in response to the filed applications is attached as Attachment B. ([DL: 1273117.](#))

This is the third year that the Commission has awarded Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission awarded \$500,000 to seven applicants in Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) and \$452,579.31 to seven applicants in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15).

Request to Supplement an Application

On September 30, 2015, Wittenberg Telephone Company, d/b/a Wittenberg Wireless LLC (Wittenberg), submitted a grant application for its Silver Birch Ranch project. After the deadline for submitting grant applications had closed, Wittenberg filed two additional letters in this proceeding, on October 20, 2015, and on November 5, 2015. The first letter was received during the public comment period. The second letter was received after the public comment period had closed. Both letters were addressed to the docket coordinator. However, it is appropriate to treat both letters as a request from Wittenberg, addressed to the Commission, to supplement its grant application after the filing deadline. The Wittenberg letters may be found at: [PSC REF#: 276634](#) and [PSC REF#: 277548](#).

The first letter reports that the Town of Wolf River, by its board, adopted an agreement to participate in the Wittenberg Wireless Silver Birch Ranch project as a partner. The second letter reports that Langlade County, by resolution of its Board of Supervisors, adopted a similar agreement to participate in the Wittenberg Wireless Silver Birch Ranch project as a partner. A public-private partnership is one of the five priority factors the Commission uses to evaluate the merit of a given project. Thus, if accepted, these letters would provide a material improvement to Wittenberg's Silver Birch Ranch grant application. The first letter explains that it was not

possible to complete the partnership agreement with the Town of Wolf River prior to the application deadline due to the limited availability of the Town Board members at the time of the application filing. The second letter explains that the Langlade County Board initiated its partnership in this application to promote the current and future broadband projects in the county.

Discussion

The applications were evaluated by a four-member screening panel.¹ The screening panel considered both the eligibility and merit of each application. This memorandum discusses the evaluation and recommendation of the screening panel, and requests a final decision from the Commission regarding which of the 28 applications should receive an award. A summary of the panel's recommendation is included as Attachment C. ([DL: 1274012.](#))

A. Eligibility

The statute contains two complementary eligibility requirements that each application must meet. First, an applicant must be either an organization operated for profit or not for profit, a telecommunications utility, or a public entity that has entered into a partnership with an eligible organization or telecommunications utility. Second, the statute authorizes the Commission to make grants to eligible applicants to construct broadband infrastructure in underserved areas. This would eliminate applications proposing to build in areas regarded as served.

The screening panel found 27 of the 28 applicants in this grant cycle to be eligible. The comments below discuss eligibility-related issues that Commission staff identified or that came up in opposition comments filed in this docket.

¹ The screening panel consisted of Angie Dickison, Peter Jahn and Dennis Klaila of the Commission staff, and Kara O'Connor, Government Relations Director, Wisconsin Farmers Union.

Reedsburg Utility Commission application

In its comments, CenturyLink questioned whether Reedsburg Utility Commission (RUC) was eligible. CenturyLink commented that both the City of Reedsburg and Reedsburg Utility Commission should both be considered public entities since they are both part of the same municipality. In response, RUC first points out that it is eligible under the statute as a telecommunications utility. The statute does not qualify the term “telecommunications utility.” The statute simply states that a telecommunication utility is eligible to apply for a grant. RUC is certified as a telecommunication utility (AEC) in this state.

RUC also points that it has additional partners with this application. The City of Reedsburg, acting through Reedsburg Utility Commission, is the public partner. RUC is contributing \$213,300 in matching funds, managing the construction, and will own and operate the facility when construction is complete. The Buckhorn Property Owners Association, Inc., is a private partner and will contribute to the project by assisting with the marketing of the broadband service to the homes within the two subdivisions. Calix is a second private partner with this application. Calix supplies telecommunications equipment for RUC’s fiber-to-the-home service. The screening panel found that RUC’s status as a telecommunications utility and its working arrangement with the other private parties were sufficient to establish eligibility for the grant application.

Town of Delavan application

As discussed below, the Town of Delavan submitted a very brief grant application. The Town is clearly a public entity and requires a private partner to be eligible for a broadband grant. Charter Communications provided a letter of support that expresses a public-private partnership

with the Town.² Charter would install, own, and operate the cable service. The Town, acting on behalf of the 16 homes, is responsible for the application and would act as fiscal agent for the grant project. This letter and working arrangement may not be sufficient to establish eligibility for the grant application. If the Commission chooses to award a grant to the Town of Delavan, it could do so conditionally and require a sufficient partnership agreement prior to disbursing funds.

Eligible Service Areas

Several of the carriers that filed comments in opposition to applications brought up existing service arrangements as a reason to deny a particular application. The panel used the following approach to identify and assess served, underserved, and unserved areas.

First, the application instructions included the following definition for broadband service:

Broadband service means a communications service providing to end users, at a minimum, two-way data transmission with speeds of at least 25 mbps for download transmission and 3 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.

This was a change from the definition used in prior grant cycles. For this year's application, the Commission used the definition adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for the term "advanced telecommunications capability" in its February 2015 Broadband Progress Report – advanced telecommunications capability requires access to actual download speeds of at least 25 mbps and actual upload speeds of at least 3 mbps (25/3).³ Also,

² It is not clear that a "fiscal agent" relationship is sufficient compliance for with the requirement in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1)(a)3., that a public entity have a "partnership" with another eligible applicant. This requirement requires a minimum legal demonstration that a partnership (or joint venture) has been in fact established. Previously, the Commission required such evidence to be filed before funding an otherwise qualified awardee.

³ 2015 Broadband Progress Report and Notice of Inquiry on Immediate Action to Accelerate Deployment, *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as Amended by the Broadband Data Improvement Act*, 30 F.C.C.R. 1375 ¶ 3 (2015).

for purposes of evaluating eligibility, the PSC definition excludes satellite and cellular wireless from the analysis. This definition of broadband service includes those services provided by fiber-to-the-home, cable over either co-axial or fiber circuit, digital subscriber line (DSL) over copper telephone circuit, and fixed wireless service (collectively, the designated providers).

Using this definition, the application instructions define a “served area” to be an area served by two or more designated providers offering 25/3 service, an “underserved area” to be an area served by one designated provider offering 25/3 service, and an “unserved area” to be an area with no designated providers offering 25/3 service. The intent of the change in definition was to open more areas of the state to the broadband grant program and also to challenge the providers in this state to move toward the broadband service standard the FCC has set for the country.

The State Broadband Office has developed and posted online a map illustrating the extent of broadband service coverage throughout the state. In the application instructions, the Commission stated that the map can be relied on as evidence that an area is underserved. However, the map has some limitations. It is built up from data provided by census block. Service to even a small area within a census block causes the census block to be designated as served. Also, many of the projects proposed in this competition involve project areas much smaller than a census block. For both of these reasons, the Commission further provided that an applicant can submit evidence with its application demonstrating the actual level of service in a project area is inadequate even though the broadband map indicates the area to be served.

Finally, the instructions provide that objections to an application based upon confidential or other non-public service data will not be given weight. The reason for this was just simple fairness. This rule prevents objecting parties from criticizing an application with a last-minute

recourse to non-public service information. If those parties want their service data taken into consideration, it can be submitted to the Broadband Office and incorporated into the data files used to generate the broadband map.

Based upon these considerations, the panel found that all 28 applications proposed to build in project areas that were either unserved or underserved. Thus, all of the projects are eligible for the grant program. Additional comments concerning the extent of existing broadband service in specific project areas are provided below in the discussion of individual applications below.

B. Evaluation of Priority Factors

Wis. Stat. § 196.504 gives the Commission authority to establish criteria for evaluating grant applications. The statute requires that the criteria adopted by the Commission give priority to applications that include any of five factors:

1. Matching funds.
2. Public-private partnership.
3. No existing broadband service.
4. Size of underserved population served.
5. Scalability.

Matching funds

Several of the applications propose to invest a substantial amount of matching funds in their respective projects. This year's applications are different from past years in that a majority of the applications (19 of 28) proposed to contribute matching funds of 50 percent or better. The applications listed below stand out as contributing a high percentage of the total project cost:

| <u>Applicant</u> | <u>Match %</u> | <u>Match Amount</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Siren Telephone (Voyager project) | 89.3% | \$ 778,854 |
| Siren Telephone (Webster project) | 83.8% | \$ 778,854 |
| Amery Telecom Inc. | 79.9% | \$ 93,200 |
| Reedsburg Utility Commission | 66.0% | \$ 213,000 |
| Wittenberg Wireless (Silver Birch) | 64.0% | \$ 266,125 |
| Cochrane Coop. Tel. Company | 62.3% | \$ 577,758 |

Public-private partnerships

Eleven of the 28 applications propose a public-private partnership. Some of these partnerships do little more than establish program eligibility for the application. Others are more substantial. The applications listed below stand out because of the financial commitment of the public partners.

| <u>Applicant</u> | <u>Public Partner</u> | <u>Match Amount</u> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Chequamegon Cooperative | Town of Cable | \$ 5,000 |
| Chippewa County, WIN | Chippewa County | \$ 130,000 |
| ChoiceTel | Town of Land O'Lakes | \$ 249,093 |
| GogebicRange.net | Iron County | \$ 15,000 |
| Oneida County EDC | Oneida County | \$ 13,000 |
| | Town of Newbold | \$ 23,000 |
| Sheboygan Falls | Sheboygan Falls | \$ 48,337 |

The use of public funds in this manner may signal the importance that some local governments presently place on securing access to up-to-date communications services in their areas.

No Existing Broadband Service

All of the applications were filed to address perceived deficiencies in broadband service availability in the project areas. The following eight applications stand out because the applications propose to provide broadband service in areas that are presently unserved.

Applicant

Amery Telecom, Inc.

Big Top Chautauqua

John Blanchard

Chequamegon Communications Cooperative, Inc.

CenturyLink Cumberland project

Town of Delavan

Wittenberg Wireless LLC (Silver Birch Ranch)

Wittenberg Wireless LLC (Village of Mattoon)

Project impact

A meaningful comparison of projects that have different goals and that deploy different technologies to meet those goals is difficult to do. The panel highlights five applications below that stand out due to the ambition or scale of the proposal. In each case, these five applications propose projects that promise to make a lasting contribution to the economy and lifestyle of the residents within the project area. But the panel would also emphasize that the other projects not listed here have merit and intend to improve the lives of the residents in their respective project areas as well.

Applicant

Chippewa County

ChoiceTel Land O'Lakes project

Cochrane Communications City of Alma project

Siren Telephone Co. Village of Webster project

Wittenberg Wireless LLC Silver Birch Ranch project

Scalability

Several applications offered a specific plan to build from the current project to reach new customers in the future. Generally, these projects will use grant funds to build a fiber route to a specific set of customers, and then later use spare capacity within the fiber route to extend service to areas in addition to the project area. Five applications that stand out in this regard are:

Applicant

CenturyLink Cumberland project

CenturyLink Sullivan project

ChoiceTel Land O'Lakes project

Siren Telephone Company Village of Webster project

Wittenberg Wireless LLC Silver Birch Ranch project

C. Other factors

Below are some additional factors that have been raised in the applications that may be relevant in assessing the overall impact that a given project might have.

Prior applications

Two applicants have reapplied this year for a grant after the Commission denied their applications in a prior grant cycle.

Applicant

Town of Sumpter

Wittenberg Wireless LLC Silver Birch Ranch project (Silver Birch Ranch applied in FY14 for a grant to fund a wireless route connecting to a Cellcom tower in Suring, Wisconsin).

Telephone exchange boundaries

Several of applications submitted by an incumbent local exchange carrier or an affiliate propose to extend fiber broadband service to areas outside their traditional telephone exchange service area. The Commission has previously awarded one grant for this type of service extension in the FY15 grant cycle—the Somerset Telephone Company’s grant to provide fiber-to-the-home service to 80 residents located in the traditional AT&T Houlton telephone exchange. This year, Cochrane Cooperative, Reedsburg Utility Commission, Siren Telephone Company, and Wittenberg Telephone Company propose similar broadband projects in areas that 20 years ago would have been regarded as the territory of another telephone company.

In its comments, CenturyLink and TDS object to this type of service extension. These companies characterize this as overbuilding an existing served territory and recommend that the grant funds be directed to other projects. Both CenturyLink and TDS are concerned that the proposed projects would take the more profitable customers in their territories, leaving the telecommunications providers with a less profitable customer base.

The panel did not consider the CenturyLink’s “overbuilding” objection. In 1994, the state made local exchange service territories non-exclusive and thus open to competition. *See* 1993 Wisconsin Act 496. The panel evaluated each project on its merits without regard to the traditional telephone exchange boundaries that used to exist. The panel did lower the rank of the Cochrane Cooperative proposal, in part, because of the impact the project would have upon the existing telephone service provided by TDS/Tenney Telephone Company in the Alma exchange.

Overlap of the federal Connect America Fund Phase II program

In 2015, the FCC approved an order authorizing 10 price-cap telecommunications carriers to receive funds from the Connect America Fund over a six-year period to improve the broadband service infrastructure in rural areas throughout the country. (This program is referred to as Connect America Fund Phase II, or CAF II.) Three Wisconsin carriers were among those receiving authorization from CAF II:

| Carrier | Homes and businesses to be served in Wisconsin | Support amount |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| AT&T | 24,513 | \$9,070,392 |
| CenturyLink | 129,203 | \$55,384,589 |
| Frontier | 76,735 | \$30,983,715 |
| Total | 230,451 | \$95,438,696 |

The FCC order does not determine when the CAF II funding will be used in Wisconsin. The carriers are entitled to prioritize construction within and between states in a given year. The timing of the construction projects is subject to overall deployment milestones: 40 percent complete by the end of 2017, 60 percent by the end of 2018, 80 percent by the end of 2019 and 100 percent complete by the end of 2020.⁴

In their comments, CenturyLink, Frontier and TDS each opposed certain projects by stating that the projects overlap census blocks for which the carriers have received CAF II funds or, in the case of TDS, expects to receive an award in the CAF II order for rate of return companies that could be released by the end of this year. The carriers argue that approving

⁴ *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90; *ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket No. 14-58; *Petition of US Telecom for Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c) from Obsolete ILEC Regulatory Obligations that Inhibit Deployment of Next-Generation Networks, Report and Order*, 29 F.C.C.R. 15644, para. 36 (2014).

projects that overlap CAF II census blocks would misuse the benefit of federal dollars approved for the state, and would reduce the customer base and increase the cost of CAF II construction projects. The three carriers recommend postponing or denying proposed projects that overlap CAF II census blocks.

The panel did not consider the overlap of CAF II funding in its evaluation of the grant applications. The panel evaluated each project on its merits without regard to the impact that federal funding might have on broadband service in a given project area. Also, the panel did not consider in its evaluation process any of the offers from CenturyLink to adjust its CAF II construction schedule in exchange for denying a broadband expansion grant.

D. Discussion of Individual Grant Applications

Below is a short discussion of each application in alphabetical order. The panel's recommendation in rank order may be found in Attachment C.

1. Amery Telecom, Inc.

Grant Request \$99,000 (20.1%), Match \$393,200 (79.9%)

The Amery Telecom, Inc. (Amery), Town of Vance Creek Project would build a fiber route along rural roads in southwest Barron County. The fiber route would pass about 150 locations. Amery projects that it will initially install service to 110 of those locations, and will fill in and expand its fiber service in the area over time. The Amery application does not propose a public-private partnership.

The Vance Creek project is located within the Amery Clayton exchange and does not extend into the service territory of another telephone company. This project will replace the copper service Amery currently provides with fiber service. There is no existing broadband

service. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps.

2. Bertram Communications

Grant Request \$89,055 (50%), Match \$89,055 (50%)

Bertram Communications (Bertram) proposes to build five wireless towers in five different locations within the state. Bertram does not propose a public-private partnership for any of its project locations. Bertram generally projects that its five tower projects will reach a potential of 2,130 homes and businesses and a potential of 8,520 people. Bertram does not offer any speculation regarding the actual market share it is likely to attract.

Doylestown, Columbia County

This is an underserved area on the broadband map. Currently, there are four wireless carriers offering service at speeds less than 10 mbps. In its objection, CenturyLink states there are 258 locations within the footprint of the Bertram Doylestown project.

Friesland, Columbia County

This is an underserved area on the broadband map. Currently, there are four wireless carriers generally offering service at speeds less than 10 mbps. There are areas of better wireless and DSL service within the footprint within the city limits of Friesland itself and also in the direction of Cambria to the southwest and Randolph to the southeast. In its objection, CenturyLink states there are 300 locations within the footprint of the Bertram Friesland project.

Lamartine, Fond du Lac County

This is an underserved area on the broadband map. Currently, there are nine wireless carriers, including Bertram Communications, offering service at speeds less than 3 mbps.

However, within the footprint is Highway 151, just west of Fond du Lac. The service near the highway is better.

Pulaski, Brown County

This is an instance where a wireless project overlaps both served and underserved areas. In the area of Pulaski itself, and in the direction of Green Bay to the east and the City of Green Bay to the southeast, there is substantial existing broadband service including six wireless carriers, a cable television provider and a landline telephone provider. To the west and northwest of Pulaski, the area is generally more rural and is underserved on the broadband map.

Two Creeks, Manitowoc County

This area currently has some broadband service. The broadband map indicates that seven wireless carriers and one landline telephone company provide broadband service at speeds less than 25 mbps. As with much of the state, there are pockets of underserved customers located within and between the areas of good service. The Bertram Two Creeks project may be able to reach some of those customers, although its service projections are limited, and it is difficult to assess from the application discussion.

3. Big Top Chautauqua

Grant request \$42,030 (100%), Match \$0

The Big Top Chautauqua project would build a fiber route along a rural road to serve its location. The installation would serve one business, but would also provide network support for a Wi-Fi network the customer would construct.

The Big Top Chautauqua application does not propose a public-private partnership. There is no existing broadband service that can provide the service the applicant seeks for itself and its customers.

In its opposition, CenturyLink criticizes the application as a request for a service extension and connecting customer premises equipment that, in other circumstances, would normally be borne entirely by the customer.

4. John Blanchard

Grant Request \$86,520 (100%), Match \$0

This is a request to fund an extension of cable television service to a subdivision located in Washington County north and east of Allenton. If built, the service installation would pass 26 homes. This subdivision is located in an underserved area adjacent to areas with substantial services options.

5. CenturyLink (Cumberland project), Barron County Economic Development Corporation

Grant Request \$222,000 (50%), Match \$222,000 (50%)

The CenturyLink Cumberland project would build out DSL service in three project areas south and east of Cumberland, Wisconsin, in Barron County. The project area includes 34 businesses and 490 residences. CenturyLink expects to serve an initial base of 190 broadband customers, and an additional 140 within 24 months after project completion.

The CenturyLink application includes an agreement of the Barron County Economic Development Corporation and participating communities for a public-private partnership. The project area is underserved. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps. The broadband map indicates that Mosaic and CenturyLink provide landline service. However, CenturyLink comments in its application that customers in the project area actually have no access to fixed broadband service.

6. CenturyLink (Sullivan project)

Grant Request \$228,600 (60%), Match \$152,400 (40%)

The CenturyLink Sullivan project would build out DSL service (or fiber to the node) in two project areas, one northeast of Sullivan and the other west of Sullivan in Jefferson County. The project area includes 15 businesses and 242 residences. CenturyLink expects to serve an initial base of 170 broadband subscribers, and an additional 47 subscribers within 24 months after project completion.

The CenturyLink application does not include a public-private partnership. The project area is underserved. Five wireless carriers provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of up to 25 mbps. The broadband map indicates that Charter Communications and CenturyLink provide landline service in the Sullivan area. However, in its application, CenturyLink states that the residents in the project area are not able to receive a broadband service with a download speed greater than 1.5 mbps.

7. Chequamegon Communications Cooperative, Inc. (d/b/a Norvado); Town of Cable

Grant Request \$98,000 (44.3%), Match \$123,095 (55.7%)

The Chequamegon Communications Cooperative (CCCI) project in the Town of Cable would build a fiber route along rural roads in southern Bayfield County. CCCI would initially install service to 65 locations, all of whom are current CCCI wireline customers with copper service. This project would also provide a foundation for additional broadband service expansion in the rural and forested areas of southern Bayfield County.

This application states that it does not propose a public-private partnership. However, the Town of Cable will provide \$5,000 of the matching funds, and will provide support in securing easements and the use of public rights-of-way as needed in the future. This would appear to be a

partnership within the meaning of the term in the application, even if there is no writing that confirms that relationship.

The Town of Cable project is located within the CCCI Cable exchange and does not extend into the service territory of another telephone company. There is no existing broadband service. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps. CCCI states that, because of the lack of towers and difficult terrain, the wireless service is unreliable and inconsistent.

8. Chippewa County, Wisconsin Independent Network, LLC (WIN)

Grant Request \$286,165 (52.4%), Match \$260,000 (47.6%)

The Chippewa County project in and adjacent to the City of Chippewa Falls would build a 5.4 mile fiber route connecting an existing fiber facility in Chippewa Falls. This project will complete a fiber ring that runs through Chippewa Falls, under the river and connects to two business parks on the south side of the river. This project is limited to the construction of the fiber backbone; but once completed, the county and WIN can install lateral connections from the fiber ring to support a variety of future broadband service applications.

This application proposes a public-private partnership. Chippewa County and WIN will each contribute \$130,000 in matching funds toward the project cost. Other project responsibilities are divided between the two entities. WIN will provide operational management and maintenance of the facility and allocate fibers to private entities. The county will oversee construction and allocate fibers to public entities.

Whether there is existing broadband service in the project area is a disputed point. The application states that a major objective of this project is to extend fiber broadband service to the two business parks on the south side of the Chippewa River. The application partners assert that

neither AT&T nor Charter Communications have extended service to the two business parks, nor are they prepared to support the communications needs of new and prospective tenants. The President/CEO of the Chippewa County Economic Development Corporation states that several companies have turned down the industrial parks as an expansion location due to the lack of broadband connectivity. On the other hand, Charter Communications asserts that it provides a broadband service throughout the Chippewa Falls area that meets the definition in the application instructions. The PSC broadband map supports Charter's point of view, but it does not provide sufficient information or fine enough scale to determine whether adequate broadband services exist in the project area. However, one telling point in all of this is that Chippewa County has agreed to contribute \$130,000 in matching funds to secure approval for this project; a substantial investment that likely mirrors the needs of its residents in terms of broadband availability and access.

9. ChoiceTel LLC, Town of Land O'Lakes

Grant Request \$249,093 (50%), Match \$249,092 (50%)

The ChoiceTel project would build an 18 mile fiber route along rural roads in the Towns of Conover and Land O'Lakes in Vilas County. The application contemplates at least 2 phases for the build out. The grant request only applies to the first phase of the project. In the first phase, ChoiceTel would run its fiber facility past 59 businesses and 250 residences in Land O'Lakes and provide fiber-to-the-home service to as many of those locations that request service. The fiber backbone facility would be of sufficient size that ChoiceTel could expand its broadband service to additional locations and customers in Conover and Land O'Lakes after the first phase of this project is complete.

This application proposes a public-private partnership. ChoiceTel will construct, own, and operate the broadband facility. The Town of Land O'Lakes will contribute the matching funds—\$249,093. The Town will also contribute an easement for placement of a telecommunications hut. If the grant is approved, the Town has agreed to waive all permitting fees and expenses, zoning fees and municipal easement charges associated with the project.

The project area is underserved. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps. However, their service is not consistently available through the project area. A previous grant recipient, SonicNet, also serves this area with download speeds of 2 to 10 mbps. In its objection to this project, Frontier comments that it will use some of its CAF II funds to build broadband facilities capable of 10 mbps down and 1 mbps up in the Land O'Lakes Township. However, with its comments, Frontier essentially agrees that there is no existing landline broadband service in the project area at this time.

10. Cochrane Cooperative Telephone Company

Grant Request \$350,000 (37.7%), Match \$577,758 (62.3%)

Cochrane Cooperative Telephone Company (CCT) proposes to build a fiber-to-the-home facility in the City of Alma in Buffalo County. The project would build a fiber route along Highway 35 through the city. CCT projects that it will initially install service to about 325 locations, and will fill in and expand its fiber service within the city area over time. The CCT application does not propose a public-private partnership.

The City of Alma project is located within the TDS/Tenney Telephone Alma exchange. CCT is proposing to extend its service into the service territory of another telephone company. In its objection to this application, TDS asserts that it provides broadband service to 89 percent

of the households in the Alma exchange, with at least 10 mbps download speed available to 42 percent of households. TDS also believes the FCC may expand its CAF program to include rate-of-return carriers by the end of the year. With the federal funds, TDS could upgrade its facilities in Alma to provide faster service throughout Tenney's service area.

The PSC broadband map illustrates this dispute quite well. CCT has extended its fiber-to-the-home service throughout CCT's two exchanges. The map identifies the Cochrane exchanges as having broadband speeds in excess of 25 mbps. Immediately north of the Cochrane exchange, broadband service speeds drop off dramatically. TDS offers a DSL service that is sensitive to loop lengths. TDS can provide DSL service in Alma at locations close to the central office with a download speed about 10 mbps. The broadband service available at service locations 2-3 miles from the central office is significantly degraded.

Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) also provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps in Alma as well.

11. GogeicRange.net, Iron County Resource Development Association, Iron County

Grant Request \$41,914 (53.3%), Match \$36,785 (46.7%)

The Iron County project would install equipment on three communications towers in northern Iron County presently used for microwave transmission. The equipment will provide a fixed wireless broadband service for residents in Hurley and the adjacent rural area. There are 30 businesses and 2,293 households within the footprint of the three towers.

This application states that it is submitted by two private partners. The application does not propose a public-private partnership. However, Iron County is participating in the project by providing \$15,000 of the \$36,785 in matching funds. This would appear to be a public-private partnership within the meaning of the term in the application, even if there is no writing that

confirms that relationship. The Commission may be concerned about the lack of a legally established partnership and require that a partnership be created and proof thereof filed with the Commission as a condition of any grant award for this application.⁵

Whether the project area is served or not is a disputed point. The application states that the three towers were selected because they are located in areas that have inadequate broadband service. The letters of support from the communities in the project area do not provide detail, but generally agree that the existing broadband service is inadequate. In its opposition, CenturyLink states that it can provide internet service to 98 percent of the living units in the project area, at various speeds likely dependent upon distance from Hurley; with 17 percent of living units having speeds of 20 mbps or less. However, CenturyLink's own map shows that much of the project area is eligible for CAF II funds. This would indicate that the FCC has found the available broadband service in much of the project area to be inadequate. On balance, it seems reasonable to conclude that the three antennas will have a large footprint and service that will overlap both underserved and unserved areas.

12. MCS Networks Inc.

Grant Request \$53,204 (100%), Match \$0

This project extends fiber service along Crystal Valley Road northeast of Galesville in Trempealeau County. The application requests grant funds for a project that was completed on June 9, 2015. The service presently serves one business and four homes with fiber-to-the-home service. The project is scalable in the sense that MCS is working now to market its service to additional locations along Crystal Valley Road.

⁵ See discussion in Footnote 2 regarding requirement for public-private "partnership" for a public entity to be eligible.

This application does not propose a public-private partnership. This is also an area that has some broadband service presently. The PSC broadband map indicates that three wireless providers and two landline providers offer broadband service in that census block at speeds up to 25 mbps down.

13. Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, Northwoods Connect, LLC, Oneida County, Town of Newbold

Grant Request \$98,204 (62.5%), Match \$58,900 (37.5%)

Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (Oneida County EDC) proposes an expansion of its fixed wireless service in Oneida County. In the FY15 grant cycle, Oneida County EDC received a broadband expansion grant of \$46,450 to install a broadband wireless service on three towers in rural Oneida County. In this cycle, Oneida County EDC proposes to upgrade the broadband service on four existing towers, install broadband service on an existing tower in Malvern, east of Rhinelander, and build a communications tower at the Town of Newbold fire station.

The footprint of this project will overlap 3,728 households in Malvern and Newbold. This would bring the total potential households served by the project to just under 20,000. In its opposition, CenturyLink points out that measuring potential customers within a footprint is inaccurate. Available speeds, quality of service and number of actual customers can vary.

The CCT application proposes a public-private partnership. Oneida County EDC will act as fiscal manager of the project. Oneida County has agreed to contribute \$13,000 in matching funds, and the Town of Newbold will contribute \$23,000. A private partner, Northwoods Connect, LLC, will operate the broadband service and will contribute a match of \$17,500 in cash and \$5,400 in equipment and labor.

In its objection to this application, Charter points out that portions of the project footprint overlap Charter service areas in Rhinelander and along Highways 8 and 17 just outside of town. However, it is not clear that fixed wireless services and coaxial cable service actually compete for the same customers. From other comments, it appears that cable service tends to displace fixed wireless as a service provider. Frontier comments that portions of the footprint overlap areas for which it is eligible for CAF II funding. The PSC broadband map also indicates that the footprint for this project overlaps areas served by four wireless carriers, Frontier and Charter. However, from the comments, it is also true that there are areas within the census blocks in northern Oneida County that lack broadband service and find the Northwoods Connect service to be desirable at this time. As with other applications, the fact that Oneida County and the Town of Newbold are willing to contribute matching funds may indicate that those governments view this project as an appropriate way to address broadband service issues in some areas within the county.

14. Reedsburg Utility Commission, City of Reedsburg, Buckhorn Property Owners Association, Inc., Calix

Grant Request \$110,000 (34%), Match \$213,300 (66%)

City of Reedsburg/Reedsburg Utility Commission (RUC) proposes to extend its Fiber to the Home service to two subdivisions in the Town of Delton in Sauk County. The Buckhorn Lake and Hunter's Glen Circle subdivisions are due east of Reedsburg along Highway 33. The fiber route would pass about 100 residences. RUC expects that about 75 of those residences will subscribe to its service when it is available. RUC projects that it will initially install service to about 110 of those locations, and will fill in and expand its fiber service in the area over time.

The RUC application proposes a public-private partnership, consisting of the City of Reedsburg/RUC as the public partner and the Buckhorn Property Owners Association, Inc., and

a telecommunications equipment vendor, Calix, as private partners. Most of the responsibility for the project will fall on RUC—RUC will manage the construction, furnish the matching funds, and own and operate the broadband communications facility when complete.

The extent of existing broadband service is disputed. The two subdivisions are located at the boundary between the Frontier Reedsburg and CenturyLink Baraboo telephone exchange service areas. In its opposition, CenturyLink states that it can provide internet service at speeds up to 40 mbps to 100 percent of the residences in the project area; with 70 percent of living units having speeds of 20 mbps or less. Frontier also opposes the RUC application, although from its map the initial service area is just inside the CenturyLink Baraboo exchange. Frontier's plans to apply CAF II funds to service improvements in its Reedsburg exchange would certainly be affected by RUC's decision to build out its fiber network along Highway 33 in the direction of Baraboo. On the other side of this dispute, RUC, the Town of Lake Delton and the Buckhorn Property Owners Association all state that the project area is presently unserved. The PSC broadband map generally supports CenturyLink's point of view, but it does not provide sufficient information or fine enough scale to determine whether adequate broadband services exist in the project area.

15. City of Sheboygan Falls, Sheboygan Falls Chamber Main Street, Town of Sheboygan Falls Fire/Rescue Department, Charter Business

Grant Request \$48,337 (50%), Match \$48,337 (50%)

The City of Sheboygan Falls, Charter Communications, and other partners propose to extend Charter's coaxial cable and fiber network from an existing node in Sheboygan Falls, west along Old County Road PP and north along County Highway TT to a new industrial park on the west side of Sheboygan Falls. The park currently has 1 tenant with 14 employees. The city will install curb, street, sewer and water laterals in the spring of 2016. The city proposes to use

broadband grant funds to install Charter broadband service to tenant sites in the park along with the other utility services.

This application proposes a public-private partnership, consisting of the City of Sheboygan Falls, Charter Communications, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Town of Sheboygan Falls Fire/Rescue Department. The city will manage the development and operation of the industrial park, and will contribute matching funds of \$48,337. Charter Communications will own and operate the broadband service facility.

There is no existing broadband service in the project area. The wireless service that exists in the area is not adequate for the business purpose of the park. The city selected Charter over the alternative AT&T DSL option because DSL would only provide a speed of 4 mbps in the project area.

16. Siren Telephone Company (Webster project)

Grant Request \$150,000 (16.1%), Match \$778,854 (83.8%)

Siren Telephone Company proposes to build a fiber-to-the-home facility in the Village of Webster in Burnett County. The project would build a fiber route along Highway 35 between Siren and Webster, and would build past 310 business and residential locations in Webster. Siren expects about 200 of these locations will order broadband service from Siren in the first year. Siren also expects to expand its broadband project to the vicinity around Webster to include about 1,000 businesses and residences in a later phase of this project.

The Siren application proposes a public-private partnership. The public partner is Burnett County Development Association, consisting of several county supervisors and employees, together with business owners in Burnett County. The association exists to promote business growth and economic development in Burnett County.

The Village of Webster project is located within the CenturyLink Webster telephone exchange. Siren Telephone Company is proposing to extend its broadband service into the service territory of another telephone company.

There is a dispute regarding the existing level of broadband service in Webster. In its objection to this application, CenturyLink asserts that it provides internet service to 99.56 percent of the households in the project area at speeds between 5 and 80 mbps; with 17 percent of living units having speeds of 10 mbps or less. However, CenturyLink's own comments show at least a portion of the project area to be eligible for CAF II funding. Siren disputes even the level of broadband service reported to the PSC for its broadband map, arguing that current wireline and wireless services are limited and not consistently available in the project area. The letters of support provided by Siren, as well as the number of customers indicating an interest in the Siren service, may provide some evidence that the existing broadband service in the Webster area is inadequate.

The PSC broadband map indicates the project area to be underserved. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps in the census block. According to the broadband map, CenturyLink and Starwire Communications also offer broadband service in the Webster area at a speed less than 10 mbps down.

17. Siren Telephone Company (Voyager Village project)

Grant Request \$200,000 (14.2%), Match \$778,854 (89.3%)

Siren Telephone Company proposes to build a fiber-to-the-home facility in the Voyager Village resort area adjacent to Birch Island Lake in the northeast corner of Burnett County. The project would build past about 200 homes in the vicinity of the resort as well as provide service

to the resort itself. Siren expects about 160 of these locations will order broadband service from Siren in the first year. Siren also expects the Voyager Village area to expand 1,150 full-time, seasonal and retirement homes in the future.

The Siren application proposes a public-private partnership. The public partner is Burnett County Development Association, consisting of several county supervisors and employees, together with business owners in Burnett County. The association exists to promote business growth and economic development in Burnett County.

The Voyager Village project is located at the junction of the CenturyLink Spooner, Webster and Webb Lake telephone exchanges. Siren Telephone Company is proposing to extend its broadband service into the service territory of another telephone company.

There is a dispute regarding the existing level of broadband service in Webster. In its objection to this application, CenturyLink asserts that it provides internet service to 99.77 percent of the households in the project area at speeds between 4 and 40 mbps; with 60 percent of living units having speeds of 20 mbps or less. However, CenturyLink's own comments show at least a portion of the project area to be eligible for CAF II funding. Siren disputes even the level of broadband service reported to the PSC for its broadband map. In Siren's view, the existing broadband service in the project area is severely limited. A letter of support from the Burnett County Economic Development Association states that the Voyager Village area has very limited, if any, access to broadband service.

The PSC broadband map indicates the project area to be underserved. Two Tier 1 wireless carriers (AT&T and Verizon Wireless) provide wireless broadband service at download speeds of less than 10 mbps in the census block. According to the broadband map, CenturyLink

and Mosaic Communications also offer broadband service in the Voyager Village area at a speed less than 10 mbps down.

18. SonicNet Inc., Vilas County Economic Development Corporation, Town of Manitowish Waters, Town of Presque Isle, Town of Boulder Junction

Grant Request \$43,388 (50%), Match \$43,387 (50%)

SonicNet, Inc., proposes to build four wireless towers in northwestern Vilas County to expand its fixed-wireless internet service. SonicNet states that there are 20 businesses and 818 residences in the footprint of the four towers. SonicNet currently offers 10/2 mbps service from many towers in its network, and plans to upgrade its equipment to provide 15/3 mbps service in the future.

The SonicNet application proposes a public-private partnership. The public partners are Vilas County Economic Development Corporation (VCEDC), and the Towns of Manitowish Waters, Presque Isle and Boulder Junction. SonicNet will own and operate the towers and contribute \$43,388 in matching funds. VCEDC will communicate with town boards, landowners and affected parties, act as an agent for some Towns in dealing with SonicNet, and assist SonicNet in securing Land Use Agreements and Intergovernmental Agreements.

The existing level of broadband service in the project area is disputed. SonicNet states that the project area is underserved. CenturyLink contends that it provides internet service in the area with speeds up to 80 mbps. The PSC broadband map indicates that the Manitowish Waters and Boulder Junction area is underserved, with some internet service in the area with speeds in excess of 25 mbps down. Presque Isle is underserved with current available speeds less than 10 mbps.

CenturyLink opposes the SonicNet application. CenturyLink first states that it intends to spend some of its CAF II funds in Vilas County and recommends that the Commission not

approve a broadband grant that would overbuild the service area in which it plans to build.

CenturyLink also comments that a fixed-wireless service has significant limitations that arise due to the customer's distance from the antenna, the topography of the area, and the fixed-wireless technology itself. However, as pointed out before, CenturyLink's opposition can be read as confirmation that the project area is presently unserved, and that the fixed-wireless technology that SonicNet is using is not a competitive alternative that that would prevent CenturyLink's market entry using its DSL product when its CAF II funds are available.

19. Star Communications

Grant Request \$22,312 (50%), Match \$22,312 (50%)

Star Communications proposes to build eight new access points for its fixed-wireless internet service in Outagamie, Waupaca and Winnebago Counties. Star Communications states that there are 930 households in the project footprint. Star Communications expects to sell its service to at least 300 of those households.

The Star Communications application does not propose a public-private partnership.

The existing level of broadband service in the project area is disputed. Star Communications asserts that there is DSL service in about 60 percent of the project area with effective speeds less than 2 mbps down. Star states believes the remaining 40 percent of the project area is unserved with no existing broadband internet service.

In its opposition, Charter Communications asserts that it offers service in the project area with a speed of at least 60 MHz to residential customers and up to 10 GHz for commercial customers. However, Charter's service map demonstrates that a portion of Star's eight proposed project areas are presently unserved. In its comments, CenturyLink states that it provides an internet service in the project area with speeds up to 80 mbps; with 52 percent of living units

having speeds of 10 mbps or less. However, CenturyLink also states that all eight of Star's service areas contain CAF II eligible census blocks. Thus, the FCC considers much of the project area to be underserved. The PSC broadband map indicates that this project would overlap areas with substantial existing service in Winneconne, Weyauwega, New London, Shiocton and Clintonville. However, the broadband map is not sufficiently detailed to evaluate Star Communication's claim that 40 percent of its project area is unserved. On balance, it is reasonable to conclude that this project has a moderately large footprint that overlaps both unserved areas and served areas with a mix of broadband speeds and service capabilities. A fixed-wireless service appears to be an unlikely competitive alternative to Charter's cable service, where available. The Star Communications fixed wireless service may affect CenturyLink's expansion of its DSL service when the CAF II funding becomes available.

20. Town of Delavan, Charter Communications

Grant Request \$37,967 (100%), Match \$0

This is a request to fund an extension of Charter Communications' cable television service to 16 homes located in rural Walworth County adjacent to Highway 50 between Delavan and Williams Bay. This application is very sparse, but includes a letter of support from Charter Communications to establish a modest form of a public-private partnership. Charter would install, own and operate the cable service. The Town, acting on behalf of the 16 homes, is responsible for the application and will act as fiscal agent for the grant project.

As indicated above, this letter and working arrangement may not be sufficient to establish eligibility for this grant application. If the Commission chooses to award a grant to the Town of Delavan, it could do so conditionally and require a sufficient partnership agreement prior to disbursing funds.

The project area is unserved. This subdivision is located in an area adjacent to and between areas with substantial service options. However, the existing providers have been unwilling to build out from the City of Delavan or from the Lake Geneva/Williams Bay area to serve this rural area.

21. Town of Sumpter

Grant Request \$148,311.50 (74.8%), Match \$50,000 (25.2%)

The Town of Sumpter proposes to build a fiber-to-the-home project along rural roads just west of the old Badger Ordinance property in Sauk County north of Prairie du Sac. The fiber route would pass about 61 residences, 7 farms and 2 businesses. Sumpter also projects that this project will make a further service extension in the Town of Honey Creek possible in the future.

The Sumpter application proposes a public-private partnership with Merrimac Communications. Merrimac will construct, own and operate the communications network, and will contribute the \$50,000 in matching funds. The Town of Sumpter is responsible for preparing the grant application and will assist Merrimac Communications with the service applications.

There is very limited broadband service in the area. Two wireless carriers, U.S. Cellular and Bug Tussel, provide service along Highway 12 (the eastern boundary of the project area). The farms and residents on the west side of the project area have no broadband service at this time.

This is the second year that Sumpter has applied for a broadband grant. Last year, the Town of Sumpter submitted a similar application, but was denied because of limited funds and other competitive applications.

22. U.S. Cellular Corporation No. 1 (Arena project)

Grant Request \$297,799 (50%), Match \$297,799 (50%)

U.S. Cellular proposes to build one cellular tower and deploy its 4G LTE wireless service in the vicinity of Arena, adjacent to Highway 14 in Iowa County. U.S. Cellular projects that there are 9,700 people residing within the footprint of its proposed tower. The U.S. Cellular application does not propose a public-private partnership.

U.S. Cellular views this project area as underserved. Charter Communications serves the area, but information regarding the quality of its broadband service is not available. Frontier comments that it is able to invest some of its CAF II funds in the area when those funds become available. The FCC has identified portions of the project area as eligible for CAF II investment. Thus, the FCC views this area as underserved. The PSC broadband map indicates a portion of the project area is served and a portion is underserved. On balance, it would appear reasonable to find that a portion of the project area has some service. Several wireless carriers cover Highway 14 well. However, it is also correct that there is limited landline and fixed wireless in the area north and south of the highway. It is reasonable to find that this portion of the project area is underserved.

23. U.S. Cellular Corporation No. 2 (Cambridge project)

Grant Request \$297,799 (50%), Match \$297,799 (50%)

U.S. Cellular proposes to build one cellular tower and deploy its 4G LTE wireless service in the vicinity of Cambridge, adjacent to Highway 12 in Dane County. U.S. Cellular projects that there are 1,457 people residing within the Village of Cambridge and more residing outside the village, but within the footprint of its proposed tower. The U.S. Cellular application does not propose a public-private partnership.

U.S. Cellular views this project area as underserved. Charter Communications serves the area, but information regarding the quality of its broadband service is not available. Frontier comments that it is able to invest some of its CAF II funds in the area when those funds become available. The FCC considers much of the Village of Cambridge to be served. The FCC has identified areas east and south of the village as underserved and eligible for CAF II investment. On the other hand, the PSC broadband map indicates that much of the project area is served. On balance, it is reasonable to find that this portion of the project area is underserved.

24. U.S. Cellular Corporation No. 3 (Fall River project)

Grant Request \$297,799 (50%), Match \$297,799 (50%)

U.S. Cellular proposes to build one cellular tower and deploy its 4G LTE wireless service in the vicinity of Fall River in Columbia County. U.S. Cellular projects that there are 1,712 people residing within the Village of Fall River and up to 20,000 residing outside the village, but within the footprint of its proposed tower. The U.S. Cellular application does not propose a public-private partnership.

U.S. Cellular views this project area as underserved. CenturyLink opposes this application because the U.S. Cellular service would overlap its landline service. However, CenturyLink also points out that over half of the living units in the project area are eligible for CAF II funding. Thus, the FCC considers much of this area to be underserved. The PSC broadband map indicates that all of the Fall River area is underserved.

25. U.S. Cellular Corporation No. 4 (Ridgeway project)

Grant Request \$297,799 (50%), Match \$297,799 (50%)

U.S. Cellular proposes to build one cellular tower and deploy its 4G LTE wireless service in the vicinity of Ridgeway adjacent to Highway 151 in Iowa County. U.S. Cellular projects that

there are 653 people residing within the Village of Ridgeway and up to 13,000 more residing outside the village, but within the footprint of its proposed tower. The U.S. Cellular application does not propose a public-private partnership.

U.S. Cellular views this project area as underserved. Charter Communications serves the area, but information regarding the quality of its broadband service is not available. Frontier comments that it is able to invest some of its CAF II funds in the area when those funds become available. The FCC has identified a small portion of the Ridgeway project area as eligible for CAF II investment. The PSC broadband map indicates that much of the Ridgeway project area is served.

26. U.S. Cellular Corporation No. 5 (Wauzeka project)

Grant Request \$297,799 (50%), Match \$297,799 (50%)

U.S. Cellular proposes to build one cellular tower and deploy its 4G LTE wireless service in the vicinity of Wauzeka in Crawford County. U.S. Cellular projects that there are 711 people residing within the Village of Wauzeka and up to 3,000 more residing outside the village, but within the footprint of its proposed tower. The U.S. Cellular application does not propose a public-private partnership.

U.S. Cellular views this project area as underserved. CenturyLink opposes this application because the U.S. Cellular service would overlap its landline service. The PSC broadband map indicates that all of the Wauzeka area is underserved. Of the five U.S. Cellular applications, the proposed tower in Wauzeka is the one that best extends a decent broadband option (4 mbps down/1 mbps up) into an area with limited broadband alternatives.

27. Wittenberg Telephone Co. (Silver Birch Ranch project)

Grant Request \$150,000 (36.0%), Match \$266,125 (64.0%)

This is an ambitious project with several key pieces. First, Wittenberg proposes to extend its fiber network to the vicinity of Sawyer Lake and the Silver Birch Ranch camp area. The fiber route will pass 305 permanent and seasonal residences. The fiber route will also connect to the Silver Birch Ranch campsite and provide fiber support for a Wi-Fi service for as many as 1,000 seasonal campers.

Second, this project will connect the fiber route to a Cellcom Cellular tower north of White Lake. Cellcom will use this expanded broadband connection to provide 4G LTE data service to as many as 1,500 wireless connections in a service area within about a 6-mile radius, encompassing Elton to the west, the Silver Birch Ranch area to the north and Johns Springs Management area in the Nicollet Forest to the east.

Third, if the first two phases of this project receive funds, Wittenberg contemplates extending its fiber route to the Village of White Lake, and would provide fiber-to-the-home service to the village residents in 2017.

This Wittenberg application proposes a public-private partnership with the Town of Wolf River, which includes the Silver Birch Ranch area. The Town of Wolf River will contribute in-kind assistance in the form of waived fees and expenses for permitting, zoning and easements necessary for the project to build its fiber route through the town. In addition, Cellcom will contribute \$60,000 in matching funds, Silver Birch Ranch will contribute \$50,000 in matching funds, and Wittenberg will contribute \$156,125.26 in matching funds as well as manage the construction and own and operate the fiber network.

There is no existing broadband service in the project area. In its opposition to the application, Frontier simply states that it is eligible for CAF II funding in areas that overlap Wittenberg's construction plans and recommends that the Commission direct its grant funds to other projects that do not compete with the federal program. However, this is also an admission that the project area is presently underserved.

This is the second year that the Silver Birch Ranch has applied for a broadband grant. In 2014, the Silver Birch Ranch applied for funds to build a wireless route connecting the camp area to Cellcom's wireless network in Suring, Wisconsin. That application was denied due to limited funds and other competitive applications.

28. Wittenberg Telephone Company (Village of Mattoon project)

Grant Request \$70,000 (48.7%), Match \$73,608 (51.3%)

Wittenberg proposes to build a 3.4 mile fiber route from the Village of Phlox on Highway 47 south to Village of Mattoon, provide fiber-to-the-home service a potential 15 businesses and 180 residences in Mattoon, and an additional 20 residences along the fiber route.

The Wittenberg application proposes a public-private partnership with the Village of Mattoon. The Village of Mattoon will contribute in-kind assistance in the form of waived fees and expenses for permitting, zoning and easements necessary for the project to build its fiber route to and through the village. Wittenberg Wireless will contribute \$73,608.96 in matching funds as well as manage the construction and own and operate the fiber network.

There is no existing broadband service in the project area. Charter Cable abandoned the village five years ago, leaving no cable television provider. Frontier provides copper service to the village, but has indicated no plans to upgrade that service to provide broadband

communications. The PSC broadband map may be inaccurate at this location. The map shows a level of service that is different from that described in the comments. The village president describes a total lack of any advanced telecommunications service. In his comments, the Village has only basic copper telephone service.

Commission Decision Options

The Commission is not bound by the panel recommendation. It is offered as a useful opinion on the relative merits of the various applications.

While Wis. Stat. § 196.504 sets forth the priority factors discussed above; the statute does not specify how the Commission should weight those factors. The Commission could evenly weight the five factors, or it could give greater weight to one or more factors that it finds to be of greater importance.

The Commission is not bound by the amount of the grant request. The Commission may make an offer of a partial award and request the applicant inform the Commission whether it will go ahead with the project

Decision Option 1:

The first decision option concerns the request of Wittenberg Telephone Company, d/b/a Wittenberg Wireless LLE, to amend its grant application after the filing deadline to include partnership agreements it has worked out with the Town of Wolf River and Langlade County.

Option A: Approve the request of Wittenberg Telephone Company, d/b/a Wittenberg Wireless LLC, to supplement its grant application.

Option B: Do not approve the request of Wittenberg Telephone Company, d/b/a Wittenberg Wireless LLC, to supplement its grant application.

Decision Option 2:

The second decision option concerns the selection of the grant recipients for FY16 Broadband Expansion Grants.

Option A: Review the applications for a broadband expansion grant and determine which of the applicants should be awarded a grant for FY16.

Option B: Do not determine which of the applicants should be awarded a grant for FY16, and return the matter to Commission staff for additional investigation as appropriate.

Request for Additional Information as an Award Condition

The Commission can impose reasonable conditions upon the award of a broadband grant. A grant recipient would have to comply with those conditions in order to receive a grant payment from the program. Two conditions are proposed for this grant cycle. The Commission may direct staff to include one or both conditions in the grant award order and grant approval letters:

Option A: Condition any interim or final payment upon the submission of a construction progress report, using an appropriate form developed by Commission staff.

Option B: Condition any interim or final payment upon the submission of data reporting the results of the grant project at street address level detail, using an appropriate form developed by Commission staff.

DK:DL: 01272355

Key Background Documents

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|---|---|
| Attachment A: | List of FY16 Grant Applicants - (DL: 1273116) |
| Attachment B: | List of public comments - (DL: 1273117) |
| Attachment C: | Panel recommendation - (DL: 1274012) |
| Map of grant application areas overlaying areas eligible for CAF II funding - | (DL: 1273120) |

Attachment A

Fiscal Year 2016 Broadband Expansion Grant Applications

1. Amery Telecom Inc. [PSC REF#: 275688](#) and [PSC REF#: 275645](#)
2. Bertram Communications LLC. [PSC REF#: 275912](#)
3. Big Top Chautauqua. [PSC REF#: 275773](#)
4. John Blanchard. [PSC REF#: 275414](#) and [PSC REF#: 275413](#)
5. CenturyTel of the Midwest – Wisconsin, LLC (Cumberland project). [PSC REF#: 275758](#)
6. CenturyTel of the Midwest – Wisconsin, LLC (Sullivan project). [PSC REF#: 275759](#)
7. Chequamegon Communications Cooperative, Inc. [PSC REF#: 275565](#)
8. Chippewa County, WI, LLC. [PSC REF#: 275797](#)
9. ChoiceTel LLC. [PSC REF#: 275793](#)
10. Cochrane Cooperative Telephone Company. [PSC REF#: 275458](#)
11. GogebicRange.net, Iron County Resource Development Association. [PSC REF#: 275772](#)
12. MCS Networks Inc. [PSC REF#: 275064](#)
13. Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, Northwoods Connect LLC. [PSC REF#: 275774](#)
14. City of Reedsburg, Reedsburg Utility Commission. [PSC REF#: 275757](#)
15. Sheboygan Falls, Charter Communications. [PSC REF#: 275718](#)
16. Siren Telephone Co. (Webster project). [PSC REF#: 275799](#)
17. Siren Telephone Co. (Voyager project). [PSC REF#: 275798](#)
18. SonicNet. [PSC REF#: 275741](#)
19. Star Communications LLC. [PSC REF#: 275755](#)
20. Town of Delavan. [PSC REF#: 275740](#)
21. Town of Sumpter. [PSC REF#: 275680](#)
22. US Cellular (Arena project). [PSC REF#: 275721](#)
23. US Cellular (Cambridge project). [PSC REF#: 275723](#)
24. US Cellular (Fall River project). [PSC REF#: 275729](#)
25. US Cellular (Ridgeway project). [PSC REF#: 275733](#)
26. US Cellular (Wauzeka project). [PSC REF#: 275736](#)
27. Wittenberg Telephone Co. (Silver Birch Ranch project). [PSC REF#: 275760](#), [PSC REF#: 276634](#) and [PSC REF#: 277548](#)
28. Wittenberg Telephone Co., Village of Mattoon (Mattoon project). [PSC REF#: 275701](#)

Attachment B

Fiscal Year 2016 Broadband Expansion Grant public comments

1. Amery Telecom Inc.

| | | |
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| Allen Libby, Chairman, Town of Vance Creek | In support | PSC REF#: 275645 (App) |
| Tammy Polta, Library Media Specialist, Clayton School District | In support | PSC REF#: 275688 |

2. Bertram Communications

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 4, 7 |
|-------------|---------------|---|

3. Big Top Chautauqua

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 2, 5, 7 |
| Bayfield County Board of Supervisors resolution | In support | PSC REF#: 275773 (App) |
| Mark Abeles-Allison, Bayfield County Administrator | In support | PSC REF#: 275773 (App) |
| Debra S. Lewis, Mayor, City of Ashland | In support | PSC REF#: 275773 (App) |
| Scott J. Kluver, Administrator, City of Washburn | In support | PSC REF#: 275773 (App) |
| Larry J. MacDonald, Mayor, City of Bayfield | In support | PSC REF#: 275773 (App) |

4. John Blanchard

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 2, 5 |
|-------------|---------------|---|

5. CenturyLink (Cumberland project), Barron County Economic Development Corporation.

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|-------------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Sen. Janet Bewley | In support | PSC REF#: 276502 |
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6. CenturyLink (Sullivan project)

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| Sen. Scott Fitzgerald | In support | PSC REF#: 276504 |
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7. Chequamegon Communications Cooperative, Inc.

| | | |
|---|------------|--|
| Larry Ludzack, Chairman, Town of Cable | In support | PSC REF#: 275565 (App) |
|---|------------|--|

8. Chippewa County

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| Frank Pascarella, County Administrator, Chippewa County | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Heidi Eliopoulos, Superintendent, Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Gregory S. Hoffman, Mayor, City of Chippewa Falls | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Charlie Walker, President/CEO, Chippewa County Economic Development Corporation | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |

| | | |
|---|------------|--|
| Tom Huffcutt, VP of Operations, Chippewa Valley Technical College | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Donald Gutkowski, Director, Bureau of Traffic Operations, Division of Transportation System Development, WI DOT | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 |
| Rep. Kathy Bernier | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Rep. Tom Larson | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Gregory Dachel, Director of IT, Silicon Graphics International Corp., Milpitas, CA | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| John K. Walton, President, Advanced Laser Machining Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Lisa Bruhn, Operations Manager, Marshfield Clinic, Lake Hallie Center | In support | PSC REF#: 275797 (App) |
| Cray, Inc. by Rich Morrison, Sr. Financial Analyst, Cray Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 276002 |
| Joan M. Coffman, President and CEO, HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital | In support | PSC REF#: 276003 |

9. ChoiceTel LLC

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Dan Balog, Town Chairman, Town of Land O'Lakes | In support | PSC REF#: 275793 (App) |

| | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|
| Wendy Powalisz | In support | PSC REF#: 276586 |
| (Jeri) Lynn Richie | In support | PSC REF#: 276597 |
| Deborah Magee | In support | PSC REF#: 276602 |
| Scott Foster | In support | PSC REF#: 276608 |
| US Rep. Sean P. Duffy | In support | PSC REF#: 276651 |
| Lorine M. Waters, Town Clerk, Town of Presque Isle | In support | PSC REF#: 276651 |
| Richard Nelson, President, Nicolet College | In support | PSC REF#: 276651 |
| James P. Bouché, Principal/DA, Lakeland Union High School | In support | PSC REF#: 276651 |
| Dr. Mike Richie | In support | PSC REF#: 276651 |
| Harlan Leusink | In support | PSC REF#: 276642 |

10. Cochrane Cooperative Telephone Company

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| TDS Telecom | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276605 |
| Douglas Kane, Chairman, Buffalo County Board of Supervisors | In support | PSC REF#: 275458 (App) |
| Jim Wilkie, Mayor, City of Alma | In support | PSC REF#: 275458 (App) |
| Sen. Kathleen Vinehout | In support | PSC REF#: 275458 (App) |

11. GogebicRange.net

| | | |
|--|---------------|---|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 4, 8 |
| Rita Franzoi, Events Director, Hurley Area Chamber of Commerce | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Joe Pinard, Mayor, City of Hurley | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Kathy Brauer, Town Clerk, Town of Saxon | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Dan Soine, Town Chairman, Town of Knight | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Bob Walesewicz, Chairman, Town of Carey | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| John Smith, Town of Kimball Supervisor | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Mitch Koski, Mayor, City of Montreal | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Sen. Janet Bewley | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |
| Rep. Beth Meyers | In support | PSC REF#: 275772 (App) |

12. MCS Networks Inc.

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 2, 5, 8 |
|-------------|---------------|--|

13. Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, Northwoods Connect, LLC, Oneida County, Town of Newbold

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |

| | | |
|---|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| 8 messages reprinted in the application | In support | PSC REF#: 275976 |
| Mark Fetzner, Chief, Newbold Fire Department and Dave Kroll, Chairman, Town of Newbold | In support | PSC REF#: 275976 |
| Sen. Tom Tiffany, Rep. Rob Swearingen, Rep. Mary Czaja | In support | PSC REF#: 275976 |
| Harlan Leusink | In support | PSC REF#: 276642 |

14. Reedsburg Utility Commission, City of Reedsburg, Buckhorn Property Owners Association, Inc., Calix

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 9 |
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Lawrence Volz, Town Chair, Town of Delton | In support | PSC REF#: 275757 (App) |
| Sen. Jon Erpenbach and Rep Dave Considine | In support | PSC REF#: 275757 (App) |
| Darrell E. Wilson | In support | PSC REF#: 276007 |
| Jeanne Miller, President, Buckhorn Property Owners Association | In support | PSC REF#: 275977 |
| Craig J. Boehlke | In support | PSC REF#: 276149 |

15. City of Sheboygan Falls, Sheboygan Falls Chamber Main Street, Town of Sheboygan Falls Fire/Rescue Department, Charter Business

| | | |
|--|------------|--|
| Scott H. Kissinger, President, Alternative Solutions Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275718 (App) |
| Dane Checolinski, Director, Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation | In support | PSC REF#: 275718 (App) |
| Town of Sheboygan Falls Fire Department by Travis A. Lehn, Firefighter-IT Administrator | In support | PSC REF#: 275718 (App) |
| Sen. Devin LeMahieu and Rep. Terry Katsma | In support | PSC REF#: 275718 (App) |

16. Siren Telephone Company (Webster project)

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 9 |
| Jeff Roberts, Village President, Village of Webster | In support | PSC REF#: 275799 (App) |
| Burnett County Development Association by Scott Domagala, Treasuer | In support | PSC REF#: 275799 (App) |
| Bill Esbeck, Executive Director, WSTA | In support | PSC REF#: 275799 (App) |
| Don and Lori Nichols | In support | PSC REF#: 275799 (App) |
| Nate Ehalt, County Administrator, Burnett County | In support | PSC REF#: 276594 |

| | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|
| James E. Erickson, District Administrator, School District of Webster | In support | PSC REF#: 276496 |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|

17. Siren Telephone Company (Voyager Village project)

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 10 |
| Burnett County Development Association by Scott Domagala, Treasurer | In support | PSC REF#: 275798 (App) |
| Bill Esbeck, Executive Director, WSTA | In support | PSC REF#: 275798 (App) |
| Nate Ehalt, County Administrator, Burnett County | In support | PSC REF#: 276593 |

18. SonicNet Inc., Vilas County Economic Development Corporation, Town of Manitowish Waters, Town of Presque Isle, Town of Boulder Junction

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 4, 10 |
| Richard Nelson, President, Nicolet College | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |
| Rep. Rob Swearingen and Sen. Tom Tiffany | In support | PSC REF#: 276558 |
| Dr. Mike Richie, District Administrator, Northland Pines School District | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |
| Dennis J. Reuss, Chairman, Town of Boulder Junction | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |
| Dr. Delnice Hill, School District of Phelps | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |

| | | |
|---|------------|--|
| Larry Holster | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |
| Charles Kotke, Regional Manager, Ministry Spirit Medical Transportation | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 (App) |
| Lorine M. Waters, Town Clerk, Town of Presque Isle | In support | PSC REF#: 275741 |
| US Rep. Sean P. Duffy | In support | PSC REF#: 276579 |
| Karen Hartman | In support | PSC REF#: 276596 |
| Harlan Leusink | In support | PSC REF#: 276642 |

19. Star Communications

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 pp. 4, 11 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| William J. Lichtfuss | In support | PSC REF#: 276589 |
| Mark Zabel | In support | PSC REF#: 276562 |
| Andy Jensen, Supervisor, Town of Lind | In support | PSC REF#: 276610 |
| Nichole J. Schweitzer, School District of Shiocton | In support | PSC REF#: 276611 |
| Micky & KaSandra Pagel | In support | PSC REF#: 276563 |
| Harley M. Griesbach | In support | PSC REF#: 276564 |
| Paul Steffensmeier, Chief Financial Officer, Rawhide | In support | PSC REF#: 276565 |
| Allan Woodin | In support | PSC REF#: 276566 |
| Ann & Chad Pagel | In support | PSC REF#: 276588 |

20. Town of Delavan

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 2 |
| Mike Hill, Charter Communications | In support | PSC REF#: 275740 (App) |

21. Town of Sumpter

| | | |
|--|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Sen. Jon Erpenbach and Rep. Dave Considine | In support | PSC REF#: 276506 |

22. US Cellular Corporation (Arena project)

| | | |
|--|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 |
| Sen. Jon Erpenbach and Rep. Dave Considine | In support | PSC REF#: 276507 |

23. US Cellular Corporation (Cambridge project)

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Sen. Scott Fitzgerald | In support | PSC REF#: 276503 |
| Rep. Joel Kleefish | In support | PSC REF#: 276530 |

24. US Cellular Corporation (Fall River project)

| | | |
|--|---------------|---|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4, 12 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| Rep. Keith Ripp and Sen. Luther Olsen | In support | PSC REF#: 276532 |

25. US Cellular Corporation (Ridgeway project)

| | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4 |
| Charter Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276650 |
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Sen. Jon Erpenbach and Rep. Soudy Pope | In support | PSC REF#: 276507 |

26. US Cellular Corporation (Wauzeka project)

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---|
| CenturyLink | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276639 p. 4, 13 |
| Rep. Lee Nerison | In support | PSC REF#: 276531 |
| Sen. Jennifer Shilling | In support | PSC REF#: 276393 |

27. Wittenberg Telephone Co. (Silver Birch Ranch project)

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| Frontier Communications | In opposition | PSC REF#: 276582 |
| Rep. Paul Tittl | In support | PSC REF#: 275677 |
| James W. Lienau, VP of Corporate Technical Services & Chief Financial Officer, Cellcom | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |

| | | |
|--|------------|--|
| John Kopecky, VP of Administration, Silver Birch Ranch, Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Dave Wagner, President, Silver Birch Ranch | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Mary Lee Heise, Town Clerk, Town of Wolf River | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Steve Sanford, President, Nicolet Bible Institute | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| D. Wagner, VP, Wolf River Lakes & Streams Assoc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Joe Grennell, President, Village of White Lake | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Jeff Strommen, Executive Director, HopeNet 360 | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Mike LeMay, Station Manager, Q90 fm | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Michael A. Cornell, General Manager, WRVM Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Bob and Lynn D'Amato | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Darcie Kopecky | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Don R. Shire, President, Don Shire Ministries | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Bill Esbeck, Executive Director, WSTA | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| William Fisher, District Administrator, White Lake School District | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Tony Kleier, IT Manager and James H. Stoehr III, | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |

| | | |
|---|------------|--|
| Owner/President/CEO, Robbins, Inc. | | |
| Sarah A Caley, Director of Operations, Northern Health Centers, Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Don Skarlupka, President, SMI | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| Rob D'Amato, Owner, White Lake Market | In support | PSC REF#: 275760 (App) |
| David J. Solin, Chairman, Langlade County Board of Supervisors | In support | PSC REF#: 276595 |
| Donna Shepard | In support | PSC REF#: 276725 |
| Angela Schreiber, Executive Director, Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation | In support | PSC REF#: 276647 |
| Al Mahnke, VP & CEO, Wittenberg Telephone Co. | In support | PSC REF#: 276634 |

28. Wittenberg Telephone Co. (Village of Mattoon project)

| | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|
| Brian Owen, President, Village of Mattoon | In support | PSC REF#: 275701 |
| Donald B. Childs, Interim District Administrator, Unified School District of Antigo | In support | PSC REF#: 275701 |
| Dennis L. Heling, Chief Economic Development Officer, Shawano County Economic Progress, Inc. | In support | PSC REF#: 275701 |
| Bill Esbeck, Executive Director, WSTA | In support | PSC REF#: 275701 |

| | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|
| Angela Schreiber, Executive Director, Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation | In support | PSC REF#: 276648 |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|

Attachment C

| | Applicant(s) | Grant Amount Requested | Proposed Match | Total Project Cost | Technology | County | Description |
|---|--|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------|--|
| 1 | Amery Telecom Inc. | \$99,000 (20.1%) | \$393,200 (79.9%) | \$492,000 | FTTH | Barron | Project is in the Town of Vance Creek, in the Amery Tel. Clayton exchange. Project will pass 150 locations. Amery expects to serve about 110 of those locations. There is no existing broadband service currently. |
| 2 | Wittenberg Wireless LLC (Silver Birch Ranch project) | \$150,000 (36.0%) | \$266,125 (64.0%) | \$416,125 | backbone facilities, WiFi and FTTH | Langlade | Build a fiber route east and north to vicinity of Sawyer Lake and Silver Birch Ranch. Will initially serve potential of 305 households and seasonal residences in the Sawyer Lake/Silver Birch Ranch area, and the Cellcom cellular tower in White Lake. Wittenberg Wireless would also expand fiber service south to the Village of White Lake in 2017. There is no existing broadband service. |
| 3 | Siren Telephone Co., Burnett County Development Assoc. (Webster project) | \$150,000 (16.1%) | \$778,854 (83.8%) | \$929,354 | FTTH | Burnett | Project will provide fiber service to potentially 310 homes in the Village of Webster. Siren Telco also intends to expand this project to over 1,000 homes and small businesses in Webster area in future years. There is a dispute about the extent of existing broadband service. |
| 4 | Chequamegon Communications Cooperative, Inc. | \$98,000 (44.3%) | \$123,095 (55.7%) | \$221,095 | FTTH | Bayfield | Project is in the Town of Cable, southwest of City of Cable, WI. Will serve 65 locations. Town of Cable will contribute \$5,000 and assist future development by securing easements and rights of way. Customers are currently served by copper facilities and limited broadband service. |
| 5 | Big Top Chautauqua, Norvado | \$42,030 | \$0 | \$42,030 | WiFi | Bayfield | Build a fiber route to property owned by Ashabay Outdoor Education Foundation and leased by Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua to provide WiFi service to potential 48,000 visitors annually. No existing broadband service. |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 6 | Chippewa County, Wisconsin Independent Network, LLC | \$286,165 (52.4%) | \$260,000 (47.6%) | \$546,165 | fiber backbone | Chippewa | Build a 5.4 mile fiber route to connect two business parks on the south side of Chippewa River to existing fiber facilities. The extent of existing broadband service is disputed. The county asserts that existing broadband service to the industrial parks is inadequate. |
| 7 | GogebicRange.net, Iron County, Iron County Resource Development Association | \$41,914 (53.3%) | \$36,785 (46.7%) | \$78,699 | fixed wireless | Iron | Build 3 wireless towers in northern Iron County, 1 in Hurley and 2 others west of Hurley. Potential service to 30 businesses and 2,293 residences. Limited existing broadband service outside of Hurley. |
| 8 | City of Reedsburg, Reedsburg Utility Commission | \$110,000 (34%) | \$213,300 (66%) | \$323,300 | FTTH | Sauk | Extend fiber service to 2 rural subdivisions in Town of Delton in Sauk County. Potential service to 100+ residences in the 2 subdivisions. The extent of current broadband service is disputed. The residents of the subdivisions consider themselves to be unserved. |
| 9 | ChoiceTel LLC, Town of Land O' Lakes (Land O' Lakes project) | \$249,093 (50%) | \$249,092 (50%) | \$498,185 | fiber backbone, and FTTH | Vilas | Build an 18 mile route to serve locations in Conover and land O' Lakes Townships in Vilas County. Potential service to 59 businesses and 250 residences with this project, would expand to cover potential 97 businesses and 1,184 residences within 2 years. Limited existing broadband service. |
| 10 | Town of Sumpter | \$148,312 (74.8%) | \$50,000 (25.2%) | \$198,312 | FTTH | Sauk | Project is north of Sauk City/Prairie du Sac, adjacent to Hwy 12 and west of the old Badger Ordinance property. Will serve 61 residences, 7 farms, 2 businesses. Limited existing broadband service. |
| 11 | Star Communications LLC | \$22,312 (50%) | \$22,312 (50%) | \$44,624 | fixed wireless | Outagamie / Waupaca / Winnebago | Build 8 new access points in rural areas of 3 counties. Company projects it will serve 300 to 400 households out of a potential 937 available. |
| Total | | \$1,396,826 | | | | | |

If the Commission were to fund the projects above in full, it would leave a remaining balance of \$103,174. The funds could be divided among the following proposals either as full or partial awards.

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|----------|--|
| Siren Telephone Co., Burnett County Development Assoc. (Voyager project) | \$200,000 (14.2%) | \$778,854 (89.3%) | \$1,409,287 | FTTH | Burnett | Project will provide fiber service to potentially 200+ homes in the Voyager Village / Birch Island Lake area in Eastern Burnett County. Siren Telco anticipates providing service to potential 1,150 full-time, seasonal and retirement homes in Birch Island Lake area in future years. |
| SonicNet | \$43,388 (50%) | \$43,387 (50%) | \$86,775 | wireless | Vilas | Build 4 wireless towers in the Towns of Presque Isle (2), Boulder Junction and Manitowish Waters. Provide 10/2 mbps service to potential 818 households and 20 businesses in towers' footprints. |
| Town of Delavan | \$37,967 | \$0 | \$37,967 | Charter Comm - coaxial cable | Walworth | Extend Charter Cable service to 16 residences northwest of Williams Bay adjacent to Hwy 50. |
| Cochrane Cooperative Telephone Company | \$350,000 (37.7%) | \$577,758 (62.3%) | \$927,758 | FTTH | Buffalo | Project would extend fiber network along Hwy 35 to 325+ locations in Alma, WI. TDS Tenney Telco provides dsl broadband service in Alma at speeds less than 4 mbps. |
| Wittenberg Telephone Company, Village of Mattoon | \$70,000 (48.7%) | \$73,608 (51.3%) | \$143,608 | backbone facilities, and FTTH | Shawano | Build a fiber route from Village of Phlox on Hwy 47 south to Village of Mattoon, provide fiber to the home service a potential 15 businesses and 180 residences in Mattoon, and an additional 20 residences along fiber route. |

The evaluation panel found that the following applications had some deficiencies when compared to those listed above.

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Bertram Communications LLC | \$89,055 (50%) | \$89,055 (50%) | \$178,110 | wireless | Columbia (2) / Fond du Lac / Shawano / Manitowoc | Build 3 new towers and build antennas on 2 existing structures. Potential service to 2130 residences. |
| John Blanchard | \$86,520 | \$0 | \$86,520 | Charter Comm - coaxial cable | Washington | Extend Charter Cable service to 26 residences in the Town of Wayne, between Allenton and West Bend and north of Hwy 33. |
| CenturyTel of the Midwest - Wisconsin, LLC (Cumberland project) | \$222,000 (50%) | \$222,000 (50%) | \$444,000 | fiber backbone, and DSL | Barron / Polk | Construct 9 mile fiber route and upgrade electronics at five serving devices. Potential service to 34 businesses and 490 residences. |
| CenturyTel of the Midwest - Wisconsin, LLC (Sullivan project) | \$228,600 (60%) | \$152,400 (40%) | \$381,000 | fiber backbone, and DSL | Jefferson | Construct 7.3 mile fiber route and upgrade electronics at two serving devices. Potential service to 15 businesses and 242 residences. |
| MCS Networks Inc. | \$53,204 | \$0 | \$53,204 | FTTH | Trempealeau | Project is north of Galesville, in the CL Galesville exchange. Project already completed (6/9/2015). Serves 1 business and 4 residences. |
| Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, and other partners | \$98,204 (62.5%) | \$58,900 (37.5%) | \$157,104 | wireless | Oneida | Build 1 new tower in Town of Newbold, install Northwoods Connect broadband service an an existing tower in Malvern, and upgrade Northwoods broadband service at four existing towers. Potential service to 3,728 new households. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Sheboygan Falls | \$48,337 (50%) | \$48,337 (50%) | \$96,674 | Charter Comm - coaxial cable | Sheboygan | Project extends Charter cable internet service to a new business park. Sheboygan Falls will install streets, curb and gutter, sewer and utilities to a 62 acre park beginning spring 2016. 1 existing customer at this time. |
| U.S. Cellular Application #1 (Arena project) | \$297,799 (50%) | \$297,800 (50%) | \$595,599 | cellular wireless | Iowa | Build 1 cellular tower and deploy 4G LTE wireless broadband service in vicinity of Arena. Provide service to potential 9,700 persons within the tower's footprint. |
| U.S. Cellular Application #2 (Cambridge project) | \$297,799 (50%) | \$297,800 (50%) | \$595,599 | cellular wireless | Dane / Jefferson | Build 1 cellular tower and deploy 4G LTE wireless broadband service in vicinity of Cambridge. Provide service to potential 1,457 persons within the tower's footprint. |
| U.S. Cellular Application #3 (Fall River project) | \$297,799 (50%) | \$297,800 (50%) | \$595,599 | cellular wireless | Columbia | Build 1 cellular tower and deploy 4G LTE wireless broadband service in vicinity of Fall River. Provide service to potential 20,000 persons within the tower's footprint. |
| U.S. Cellular Application #4 (Ridgeway) | \$297,799 (50%) | \$297,800 (50%) | \$595,599 | cellular wireless | Iowa | Build 1 cellular tower and deploy 4G LTE wireless broadband service in vicinity of Ridgeway. Provide service to potential 13,000 persons within the tower's footprint. |
| U.S. Cellular Application #5 (Wauzeka project) | \$297,799 (50%) | \$297,800 (50%) | \$595,599 | cellular wireless | Crawford | Build 1 cellular tower and deploy 4G LTE wireless broadband service in vicinity of Wauzeka. Provide service to potential 3,000 persons within the tower's footprint. |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| Wittenberg Telephone Company, Village of Mattoon | \$70,000 (48.7%) | \$73,608 (51.3%) | \$143,608 | backbone facilities, and FTTH | Shawano | Build a fiber route from Village of Phlox on Hwy 47 south to Village of Mattoon, provide fiber to the home service a potential 15 businesses and 180 residences in Mattoon, and an additional 20 residences along fiber route. |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|--|

Broadband Expansion Grant Applicants, Fiscal Year 2016

Broadband Technology Type

Mobile Wireless

Fixed Wireless

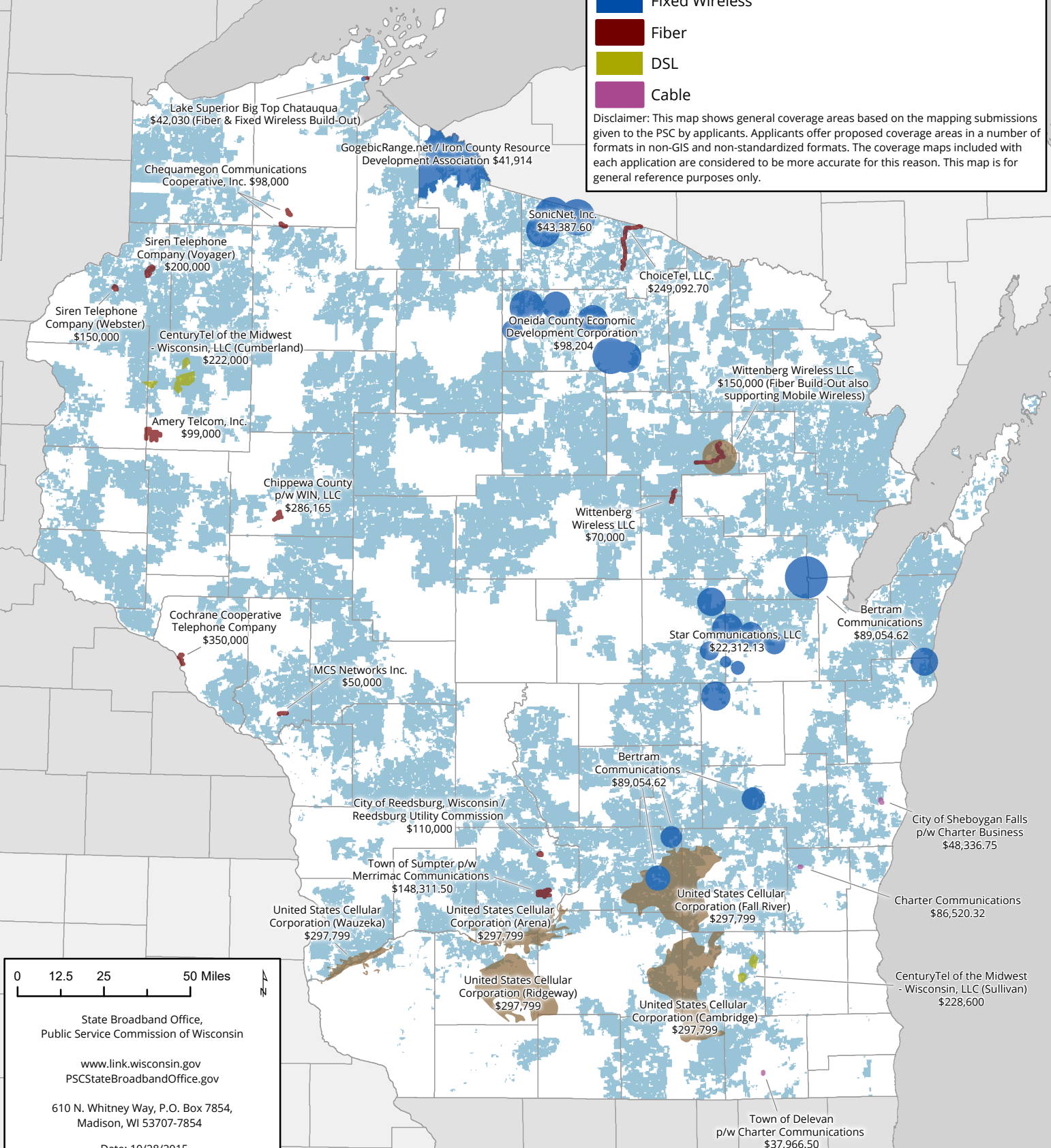
Fiber

DSL

Cable

CAF II Funding Eligible Areas

Disclaimer: This map shows general coverage areas based on the mapping submissions given to the PSC by applicants. Applicants offer proposed coverage areas in a number of formats in non-GIS and non-standardized formats. The coverage maps included with each application are considered to be more accurate for this reason. This map is for general reference purposes only.



0 12.5 25 50 Miles

State Broadband Office,
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

www.link.wisconsin.gov
PSCStateBroadbandOffice.gov

610 N. Whitney Way, P.O. Box 7854,
Madison, WI 53707-7854

Date: 10/28/2015

