

Attachment C, Other Program Priorities



C. Other Program Priorities

Does this project seek to leverage grant funds through private investment?

Yes. FTC intends to leverage grant funds through its own private investment. As evidenced in the schedule below, every \$1.00 of grant funds leverages \$1.86 in investment by FTC.

Initial Construction Costs

Cable & Wire Facilities	193,551
Engineering	<u>38,710</u>
Subtotal	232,262

Cutover and Installation Costs

Installation/Connection Costs	42,846
Customer Premise Equipment	<u>58,016</u>
Subtotal	100,862

Grant/Private Investment

Total Investment	333,124
Less Grant Funds Requested	<u>116,593</u>
Private Investment	216,530

Will this project be an extension of existing infrastructure?

Yes. The PFSA will be fed from FTC's existing Valley Head and Beason's Gap network location. These locations are existing telecom huts with both battery backup and standby generator power backup to be used in extended power failure situations. These locations have fiber-optic 10 Gbps transport feeds through a fully redundant ring offering diverse paths back to the Network Operations Center (NOC) in Rainsville, AL. FTC has seven links to the public Internet:

1. Two 10Gbps links from Ider, AL to the Internet peering facilities at 56 Marietta in Atlanta, GA, carried by iRis networks.
2. Two 10Gbps links from Rainsville, AL to the Internet peering facilities at Elk Grove in Chicago IL, carried by iRis networks.
3. A 10Gbps link from Albertville, AL to the Internet peering facilities at 56 Marietta in Atlanta, GA, carried by AT&T.
4. Two 10 Gbps links from Albertville, AL to the Internet peering facilities at the DE-CIX exchange in Dallas, TX carried by AT&T.

The build will also take advantage of existing Calix Active Ethernet access cards that are currently serving other FTTH customers adjacent to the PFSA. Although additional network equipment will be added as demand requires, using the existing telecommunications huts, 10 Gbps transport feeds, and access cards will allow FTC to serve the Lookout Mountain

PFSA subscribers with the best network possible while leveraging existing infrastructure to lower costs.

Does this project serve locations with demonstrated community support?

Yes. FTC has received support from individuals within the community in hopes that the proposed project comes to fruition. Letters have been received from local and state legislative delegates, elected officials, and community leaders.



ALABAMA STATE SENATE
ALABAMA STATE HOUSE
11 SOUTH UNION STREET, 7TH FLOOR
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-4600
334.261.0876

CLAY SCOFIELD
STATE SENATOR, DISTRICT 9
DISTRICT OFFICE:
412-A GUNTER AVENUE
GUNTERSVILLE, ALABAMA 35976
256.582.0619

COMMITTEES:
CHAIRMAN, Confirmations
VICE CHAIRMAN, Rules
Finance & Taxation Education
Banking & Insurance
Fiscal Responsibility & Economic Development
Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

December 28, 2020

Mr. Kenneth Boswell, Director
Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
401 Adams Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104

Subject: 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund

Dear Director Boswell,

I strongly support Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc., Rainsville, AL (FTC) for their efforts for support through the 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund to build fiber in rural DeKalb County. The area of request is for Lookout Mountain near Wade's Gap and an area north of Little River on Hwy 35. These areas are underserved. The minimum level of service for this grant is for areas that cannot get 25/3MBPS down/up.

The residents in these communities have little option for telecommuting and students are hindered with online coursework. Students in this area are in commutable distance to several technical schools, community colleges, and universities, however, they do not have Broadband needed to take online classes or to even review assignments placed in online blackboards. As we have seen during the last year while dealing with Covid-19, telecommuting is not just an option, but in some cases a must.

In addition, the citizens of this area are unable to work via computer without reliable broadband. Many companies are allowing for telecommuting. Citizens in this area should be covered with reliable services.

I am confident that this grant will greatly enhance the quality of life for the members of these communities and appreciate any assistance you can give through favorable consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Scofield", is written over a large, stylized, handwritten "S" that serves as a signature flourish.

Senator Clay Scofield



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

DISTRICT NO. 24
DEKALB COUNTY

HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER
NATHANIEL LEDBETTER
P.O. BOX 725
RAINSVILLE, ALABAMA 35986
PHONE: (256)638-6397

COMMITTEES:
INTERNAL AFFAIRS - VICE CHAIR
RULES
WAYS & MEANS EDUCATION
COMMERCE AND SMALL BUSINESS

January 5, 2021

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
ATTN: Director Kenneth Boswell
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, AL 36130

Dear sir:

Reliable access to broadband services plays a critical role in our modern society, especially for those citizens living in rural areas of our state. Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. (FTC-Rainsville) continues to prove just how dedicated they are to ensuring that the people of my district have easy access to high-quality broadband services.

FTC is currently applying for the 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). This year, FTC is specifically looking to reach the areas of Dutton and Lookout Mountain, both of which are in need of broadband access in order to improve the lives of those living in these locations. My hope is that you will once again take into account the outstanding job that FTC has always done for our local area and that you will afford them the opportunity to continue in their expansion.

I offer my full support to FTC in their endeavor to improve telecommunications services in Dutton and Lookout Mountain, and I respectfully ask that you please consider their request in the hopes of bettering the lives of the people of Alabama.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathaniel Ledbetter", written over a horizontal line.

Majority Leader Nathaniel Ledbetter
Alabama House of Representatives
District 24



ALABAMA STATE SENATE

ALABAMA STATE HOUSE
SOUTH UNION STREET, 7TH FLOOR
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-4600
334.261.0858

STEVE LIVINGSTON

STATE SENATOR - DISTRICT 8
DISTRICT OFFICE:
POST OFFICE BOX 623
SCOTTSBORO, ALABAMA 35768

COMMITTEES:

CHAIRMAN, FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
RULES
FINANCE AND TAXATION GENERAL FUND
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY
BANKING AND INSURANCE
TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY

January 6, 2021

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
Attn: Mr. Kenneth Boswell, Director
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, Alabama 36103

Director Boswell,

It is my understanding that Farmer's Telecommunications Cooperative Inc, (FTC-Rainsville, AL) is applying for the 2021 Alabama Accessibility Fund Grant in hopes to expand their fiber network to provide high-speed broadband internet access to rural areas located in my district (SD8) in Dutton and on Lookout Mountain.

As you well know access to broadband is essential to todays' society. This year has been further testimony to the dire need of broadband in our rural areas as it has been the lifeline for many telecommuting for work and school and furthermore conducting business during the COVID 19 pandemic. Now, more than ever, our rural areas and residents need direct access to what is quickly becoming a basic necessity.

I believe strongly that this grant will enhance the quality of life for many in my district and I respectfully ask that you give this request every consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SL", written over a horizontal line.

Steve Livingston
Alabama State Senator
District 8



January 19, 2021

Kenneth Boswell, Director
Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
Post Office Box 5690
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Dear Mr. Boswell,

I completely support Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative (FTC) efforts to apply for the 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grants from ADECA to build a strong fiber optics system in rural DeKalb County in the areas of Wade's Gap and an area north of Little River/Highway35. These areas are currently underserved and cannot get internet speeds of 25 Megabytes per second download and 3 Megabytes per second upload. Providing broadband accessibility to our most rural citizens empowers their ability to provide for their family and themselves.

First, as the County's economic developer, it has been satisfying to promote the fact that our county is the first GIG ready county in Alabama! When I tell potential industries that they will be able to connect to FTC fiber optics system with speeds up to 100 times faster than the 10 megabits per second (Mbps) and 40 times faster than broadband (which is faster than Huntsville), interest to locate to our county increases. Our existing industries have set record numbers as they expand. With 17 projects and over \$17 million dollars in 2020, industries are showing their commitment to locate and stay in our county. Truly, FTC is a major part of our economic wellbeing.

Secondly, education is often overlooked as a key factor in economic growth and development. The opportunity to provide access to the internet in our rural areas unlocks options for our students such as a career in the technical and STEM pathways which gives them additional insight into their strengths and possibilities. Another powerful option is utilizing the DeKalb County Career Tech Dual Enrollment Program through Northeast Alabama Community College. The Broadband Accessibility Act will provide our rural students with the best possible education right at their fingertips.

I would be glad to talk with you about my strong support of FTC and this Broadband Accessibility Fund at your convenience. Again, I would like to reiterate how important FTC is to our County for economic growth for us now and for our future workforce.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Durham
Executive Director
DeKalb EDA



Northeast Alabama Community College

Office of the President
Dr. David Campbell

January 14, 2021

Kenneth W. Boswell
Director, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, AL 36103-5690

Dear Mr. Boswell,

Farmers Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. (FTC-Rainsville, AL) is applying for the 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant in hopes to expand their fiber network to provide high-speed broadband internet access to rural Jackson and DeKalb County areas. The areas that will receive the service are Dutton and Lookout Mountain (area near Wade's Gap and an area north of Little Rive/Highway 35).

The areas identified are currently underserved and cannot get broadband (Download 25 MBS/Upload 3 MBS).

Broadband is essential in today's information economy infrastructure. This service will help rural areas compete with information for commercial and economic development. This area is also an integral part of the Google Data Center community.

It would be helpful for our residents to have an option for telecommuting and for our students taking existing courses online. These rural areas are in the Northeast Alabama Community College service area, yet the students do not have a viable broadband option for taking online classes.

We believe these grants will greatly enhance the quality of life for the members of these rural areas and sincerely appreciate any assistance you can give us.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Campbell
President, Northeast Alabama Community College



Northeast Alabama Community College

Post Office Box 159

Rainsville, Alabama 35986-0159

256-638-7044 / 256-228-6004, ext. 2294

Fax: 256-638-3052 www.nacc.edu

Chad Gorham

Dean of Instruction- Interim

Director of Extended Day/

Distance Education Programs

gorhamchad@nacc.edu

Kenneth W. Boswell

Director, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

P.O. Box 5690

Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

January 19, 2021

Mr. Boswell,

Please accept this correspondence as my most sincere statement of support for Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc. in their effort to secure a 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant, which would help to provide broadband internet to two of the most rural and depressed areas of Jackson and DeKalb Counties. Currently, the internet service in and around the Dutton Community in Jackson County and the Wade's Gap/Lookout Mountain area of DeKalb County is weak and very unreliable. These specific communities are unable to reach internet speeds of at least twenty-five (25) megabits per second download and three (3) megabit per second upload. Overall, quality broadband internet would have a tremendous impact on these areas.

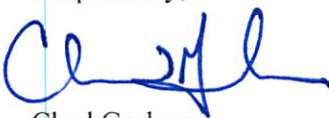
Through my employment as the Director of Distance Education at Northeast Alabama Community College (NACC) and my service to Jackson County Schools as president of the Board of Education, I fully understand the importance of reliable internet service. There are a number of students enrolled in distance education/online courses at NACC that reside within underserved broadband areas. These students often find the internet service available within their home and community leaves them at a disadvantage compared to students who live in areas where quality high-speed internet service is readily available. In order to participate in their online courses, students living in underserved areas are often forced to travel to locations that offer free public internet access, or back to the NACC campus. A fairly large number of these students are actually high school students participating in dual enrollment courses through the college. Many online courses require students to participate in live-feed presentations and other cooperative learning projects. The need for quality internet became even more evident with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in virtually all instruction, both at the K-12 and college level, being converted to an online/distance education format. Subpar internet connection and internet speed made this transition very difficult for many students, while others found themselves unable to complete courses at all due to the lack of reliable internet connection.

Students residing within the aforementioned communities in each county make up enrollments at a number of K-12 schools including the following: Pisgah High School, Section High School, Valley Head High School, Scottsboro High School, Fort Payne High School, Gaylesville High School, Dutton School, and Moon Lake School. Therefore, students from at least eight different schools, as well as those from Northeast Alabama Community College, would directly experience the impact of this grant. The majority of students in each of these K-12 schools qualifies for free or reduced-priced lunches based on total household income. Just as broadband internet would positively impact students enrolled in college residing within these areas, it would also greatly benefit the children enrolled in these local public schools. With reliable internet connection, students would be able to research topics of interest, complete school assignments, explore potential career fields, participate in virtual field trips and class meetings, get assistance with homework and school projects, and collaborate with peers within their school and from around the world.

Jackson County has experienced a decline in overall population over the past ten years. The downturn in population is due, in part, to the decline in available employment opportunities throughout the county. Many businesses and industries have either closed completely or moved operations outside of Jackson County, greatly impacting the overall spirit of our area. The same can be said for DeKalb County. The impact of losing so many textile jobs nearly ten years ago is still being felt to this day. Technology is critical in halting the downturn currently being experienced within both counties. Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc. has done a wonderful job of helping ensure that the communities we call home have the same opportunities to accessible high-quality internet service as our neighbors in more affluent cities and counties. The 2021 Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant that Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc. is seeking could prove crucial in improving the quality of life and leveling the playing field for students, citizens, and businesses of Jackson and DeKalb Counties.

I want to reiterate my sincere and unwavering support for the positive impact that Farmers Telephone, Inc. has brought to Jackson and DeKalb Counties and for their current efforts to bring critical broadband service to the underserved areas. Please carefully consider this request and help Farmers Telephone, Inc. and the other valued stakeholders move rural communities in Jackson and DeKalb Counties forward.

Respectfully,



Chad Gorham

FORT PAYNE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Office of the Superintendent

205 45th Street NE
Post Office Box 681029
Fort Payne, Alabama 35968-1611

Telephone: 256-845-0915

Facsimile: 256-845-4962

January 12, 2021

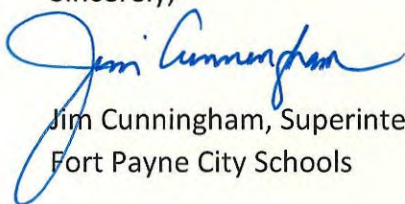
Kenneth Boswell, Director of ADECA
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, Alabama 36103-5690

Dear Director Boswell,

At Fort Payne City Schools, the Internet has become a necessary and indispensable tool in the education of students. Fort Payne City Schools uses the Internet in the delivery of curriculum content to students all day long, five days a week. Some of the many ways the Internet is used in Fort Payne City Schools is as follows: Teachers teaching with their interactive white boards, teachers and administrators using their desktops and mobile devices doing instruction and administrative tasks. The students with their 1:1 devices doing homework and classwork. As such, we must have Internet that has adequate speed and is completely reliable. Farmers Telephone Cooperative has been a great partner in providing for our Internet needs. They provide Internet with consistent speed and reliability. It is extremely rare to have any kind of Internet outage. Farmers Telephone Cooperative is very good also of informing us of any necessary maintenance outages and they always do these outside of the schools operating hours. Farmers Telephone Cooperative has been a great ally in Covid times. They have provided our students with hotspots of Internet in each of school's parking lots. They have done this free of charge to ensure that students with economic hardships due to Covid 19 have access to the Internet so that they have equitable educational opportunities. This has helped us tremendously with the cost that the Covid 19 has caused to our students and community.

As Superintendent of Education in Fort Payne, Alabama, I strongly support the efforts of Farmers Telecommunications to expand fiber network opportunities to the Lookout Mountain area of DeKalb County. If I can be of assistance in anyway, please contact me at (256) 845-0915.

Sincerely,



Jim Cunningham, Superintendent
Fort Payne City Schools

"Providing child-centered learning so every student may pursue any dream."

***Sam & Kathryn Tortorici
4123 County Road 166
Fort Payne, AL 35967***

January 4, 2021

Mr. Kenneth Boswell, Director of ADECA
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, AL 36103-5690

RE: ***Alabama Broadband Accessibility Grant for Wade Gap South/Lookout Mountain***

Dear Mr. Boswell:

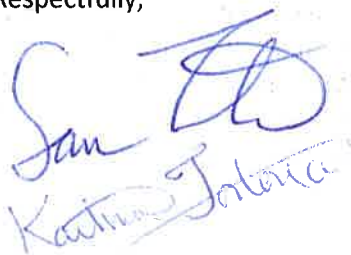
We were pleased to learn through FarmersTel of the potential Alabama Broadband Accessibility Grant for underserved portions of rural Lookout Mountain in DeKalb County. We are writing to provide further color on the hardships this lack of broadband access has been for us, especially through the pandemic.

We purchased our home (address above) in 2005. Finding any sort of decent internet service has been very difficult. About 10 years ago, we found a service called BoonLink which uses an antiquated microwave technology to send and receive internet data from remote satellites on Sand Mountain over to a dish installed at our home on Lookout Mountain. Since our property is on the brow facing west, we were one of the few in our area (referred to by FarmersTel as 'Wade Gap South') eligible for this service. Coincidentally, FarmersTel acquired BoonLink a few years after we started the service. When working, this service does fine (20MB download, 2.5MB upload on average). The problem is that the service is often down randomly for no apparent reason. We received a call from FTC/BookLink a few months ago to advise me that the service would be down for repair for a few days. It was then we learned that we were only 1 of 10 customers using this service. While decent while it works, I can only imagine FTC wanting to sunset this in the near future.

Through the pandemic, we have worked pretty extensively from this residence. When our internet service works, it works OK. But when I am on a Zoom video call and my daughter is trying to Zoom into one of her virtual online college classes, there is just not enough bandwidth for both of us. And our existing service just randomly goes out, which has caused us to be unable to video conference nor receive emails with sizeable attachments. And our daughter was unable to join several online classes as a result of loss of internet service.

For the above reasons, we would urge ADECA's support this pending grant application to provide funding for access to high-speed internet to our area of Lookout Mountain. We have been in regular contact with many neighbors in the immediate area who have the same desire which we trust that has been registered with you. We trust that you will look favorably on this grant request at the earliest possible time.

Respectfully,


Kathryn Tortorici

From: jess.tussing
To: info@farmerstel.com
Subject: Letter to support broadband accessibility grant
Date: Thursday, January 7, 2021 11:53:14 AM

Good morning! I just received your letter regarding FTC's grant application, and I'm writing this letter to let you know of our family's needs for internet service at our residence here at 4090 County Road 166, Ft. Payne, AL, 35967.

We moved into our home here on Lookout Mountain assuming we would have access to high-speed broadband internet service because of our proximity to Ft. Payne. We have tried every avenue possible to connect to high-speed internet in our home, and nothing is available by phone or satellite. Our phones (on a good day) are the only way to get internet and with our family needing access to high speed internet for work, school (especially during COVID) we are desperate for this service to be provided.

I was so relieved when I received your letter. We are hoping to start a small business out of our home over the next couple of years and this would be impossible without high speed internet access. It would be a godsend for this service to come our way over the next year or so!!

Very sincerely,
Jess Tussing
210-269-3096

Jan 4,2021

From:

John Botts
23 County Road 660
Fort Payne, Al 35967
(256) 630-9626
jbotts1@boonlink.net

To:

Kenneth Boswell, Director of ADECA
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery,Al 36105-5690

Dear Sir,

I have been an internet customer of FTC for several years since they bought the Boonlink ISP company a few years ago. Prior to that, I was a customer of the Boonlink internet ISP since its inception in the early 2000's. Boonlink service consists of line-of-sight radio transmission/reception of the internet signal.

FTC recently upgraded this antiquated technology to 25mb down/3mb up speeds. Reliability of the technology has been poor since the upgrade. Additionally, I have been informed that FTC plans to phase out this Boonlink ISP service in the near future. That leaves me no alternate source for broadband once that happens.

I currently depend on internet for church and family interface using ZOOM. I anticipate the need for broadband service to livestream TV and Movie programming for myself and, especially, for visiting family.

I know of no acceptable alternative service being planned for my area.

Currently, FTC broadband comes to within one mile of my house on the north and within 2 miles on the south. FTC is the obvious practical provider for those of us located in this vacuum of service.

I am counting on FTC to provide broadband service using their fiberoptic technology before they cancel my Boonlink service.

I am sure there are many other families in this 3 mile vacuum in the same predicament in which I find myself.

I ask you to seriously consider assisting FTC to provide their fiber broadband technology to this 3-mile area of Lookout Mountain.

Respectfully,

John Botts



January 6, 2021

Kenneth Boswell, Director of ADECA
P.O. Box 5690
Montgomery, AL 36103-5690

Dear Mr. Boswell,

I am writing to you in reference to Farmertel's request for a grant to bring a much, much needed service to our area on Lookout Mountain in Fort Payne.

We have been waiting on this for a long time. It is our understanding that finally they are applying for an Alabama Broadband Accessibility grant through the Department of Economic and Community Affairs. We would very much appreciate your time in looking into this matter, and hopefully give this grant to Farmerstel, and ultimately to the citizens on Lookout Mountain!

Our situation is this: We have a ministry that is run from our home and we desperately need to use the internet every day. Our service through Hughes Net is so hit and miss that MOST of the time we have none, or either we are kicked off the internet, or its so slow, we can't get anything done. Needless to say also, that watching a movie usually takes about 3-3 ½ hours because of buffering. Seriously, It takes us 2 days to watch a movie, IF we want to see it bad enough! (which usually we don't). Also, we do not have phone land lines here, so there is no other option to be had at this particular place for internet or phones. They used to have land lines here, but It has all gone cellular, so even our phone doesn't work half the time except on cellular data, yet still the reception is sparse. And when it is cloudy or raining, you can forget it all! We need internet service as well as a land line. My husband is 80 now, and if he ever has serious health issues, it just might be catastrophic trying to get him some help here. So, if Farmerstel could get this broadband grant, maybe they would also consider to again supply phone lines here as well...

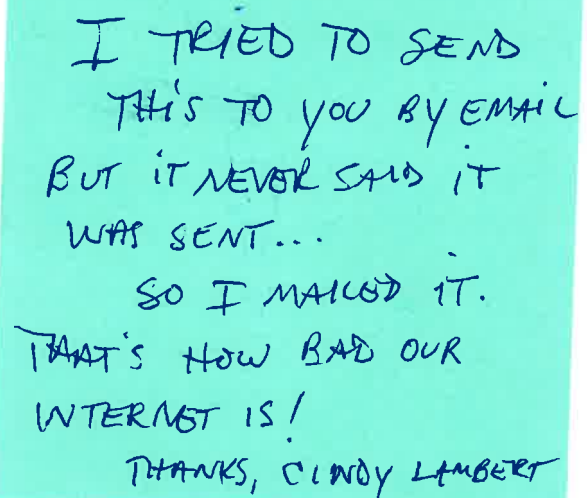
We truly would appreciate your help in these matters. Quite honestly, there are people everywhere around here that are in the same exact situation as we are.

We thank you for your time in reading this sir.

Sincerely,



Cindy Lambert
945 County Road 618
Fort Payne, AL 35967



I TRIED TO SEND
THIS TO YOU BY EMAIL
BUT IT NEVER SAID IT
WAS SENT...
SO I MAILED IT.
THAT'S HOW BAD OUR
INTERNET IS!
THANKS, CINDY LAMBERT

From: [Amber](#)
To: marketing@farmerstel.com
Subject: Amber Mitchell Grant letter and speed test
Date: Wednesday, December 30, 2020 1:21:52 PM

Please see attached signed grant letter and speed test results.

Please contact me if you need any further information. 210-300-1458

Thank you
Amber Mitchell

Will this project serve the highest number of unserved homes, businesses, and community anchor points for the least cost?

Yes. To bring gigabit services to this area, the PFSA will require approximately 6.98 route miles of buried and aerial fiber-optic cable in a mountainous region that has layers of rock to contend with throughout much of the service area. The estimated costs to place the outside plant components of this 6.98 route miles of fiber is \$212,361.00. By utilizing GPON splitter cabinets, FTC has lowered the quantity and size of the fiber optic feeds, thus reducing the OSP cost from what a 100% Active Ethernet network would have cost.

The PFSA will be fed from an existing network location. The location is an existing telecom hut already established with redundant fiber feeds back to FTC's NOC, and has existing generator backup, and 10 Gbps redundant transport equipment. The network location also has existing GPON equipment with available ports resulting in very minimal network equipment costs compared to what it would have been if FTC were not able to leverage the existing switch hut locations and associated GPON equipment and power components.

Of the 122 homes passed, FTC has projected to connect 74 homes. The cost to add a network access point (NAP) to the fiber optic cable, place an aerial or buried drop, mount an optical network terminal (ONT) at the house, and provide fiber-optic connectivity is estimated to average \$1,033.00 per home or \$76,442.00 total. Likewise, the cost to add customer premise equipment inside the home using Calix Gigaspire to deliver Mesh-Enhanced Carrier Class Wi-Fi, is estimated to be \$330.00 per home or \$24,420.00. The total cost to connect the 74 projected homes is \$100,862.00.

These estimates utilize what is considered by the industry as the most efficient and cost-effective means to deliver gigabit service directly to the home, and are backed by FTC's experience in having already deployed more than 2,180 route miles of fiber-optic cable and connecting more than 15,100 locations.

Does this project emphasize the highest broadband speeds?

Yes. Standard broadband data speeds will be symmetrical - 100 Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload, with 1 Gig (1,000 Mbps) download and 1 Gig (1,000 Mbps) upload also available.

Will this project provide material broadband enhancements to hospitals located in rural areas?

No. There are no hospitals located within the PFSA. However, with expanding broadband access to underserved areas, healthcare will improve dramatically with the use of telehealth services. Telemedicine provides 24/7 access to patient health portals, telemedicine clinicians, remote patient monitoring, telepsychiatry solutions, store and forward technologies, patient-care education, etc. Telehealth services have been vital

through the COVID-19 pandemic to help mitigate the exposure and spread of COVID-19 to healthcare personnel and other patients. Recent policy changes have reduced barriers and increased adoption by both healthcare providers and patients. With Telehealth, patients can receive necessary care that may help them avoid delayed preventative, chronic or routine care. Broadband access in rural areas of DeKalb County, AL are necessary now, more than ever, in providing proper and critical health care access. Research indicates that Telehealth reduces hospital admissions by 25% and overall length of stay by 59%. Telehealth access enables patients to have convenient access to specialists, eliminates the cost to commute long distances, reduces the hours of work missed due to travel, and now helps mitigate potential exposure during a global pandemic. It also makes doctor-patient communication easy, improves the patient's self-care ability, promotes the sharing of educational content that helps maintain and prevent poor health conditions, and promotes a comfortable environment for patient care. Broadband access can also provide important healthy lifestyle resources that may improve the quality of life for those living in this poverty-stricken area.

26% of DeKalb County, AL, is in poor or fair health. 16% of the DeKalb County population is in frequent physical distress and 16% is in frequent mental distress. Counties in the southern and Appalachian regions of the United States tend to have the highest incidence of diabetes prevalence. DeKalb County, AL, is at 13%, and the national rate is 7.2%. 21% of the county are adult smokers. 30.5% of the county's population is classified as obese adults. 32% are physically inactive and only 45% have access to exercise opportunities. It is reported that 36% of the population gets insufficient sleep. 12% experience food insecurity. 14.4% of DeKalb County's population is uninsured. The ratios for doctor to patient are as follows: Primary Care Physicians 2,390 to 1, Dentists 3,570 to 1 and Mental health providers 3,760 to 1. 30% of children in DeKalb County are in poverty. It is reported that there have been 5,868 preventable hospital stays in 2020. The serving hospital for this area is DeKalb Regional Medical Center in Fort Payne, AL.

Will this project support local libraries in this state for the purpose of assisting the libraries in offering digital literacy training pursuant to state library and archive guidelines?

No. There are no local libraries located within the PFSA.

While there are not any physical libraries within the PFSA, broadband access in rural DeKalb County would enable access to online libraries such as the Camellia Net-Alabama's Digital Library, Open Library, Project Gutenberg, Google Books, Library of Congress online, and the Alabama Virtual Library - which is free to all citizens in the state. With broadband access, libraries are available anytime and anywhere to anyone.

Is the applicant a certified Minority Business Enterprise under the Alabama Minority Business Enterprise Program? Or is it certified under another Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program?

No.