

AGENDA
Eau Claire County
Broadband Committee
Thursday, November 19, 2020
4:00 P.M. - (until 5:30 estimate)
Remote Meeting via Webex Events

Those wishing to make public comments must submit their name and address no later than 30 minutes prior to the meeting to rod.eslinger@co.eau-claire.wi.us. Comments are limited to 3 minutes; you will be called on during the public comment section of the meeting. Written comments will also be accepted and should be submitted to the e-mail address listed above.

Public Access: Dial in Number: 1-415-655-0001 Access Code: 145 323 7642
**mute your device upon entry*

1. Call to order and confirmation of meeting notice
2. Roll Call
3. Public Comment (limit to 3 minutes per person)
4. Review/Approval of Committee Minutes – **Discussion/Action**
 - a. October 22, 2020
5. Letters of Support for the Drammen and Brunswick PSC Application – **Discussion**
6. Digital Literacy Proposal – **Information/Discussion**
7. Lake Eau Claire – Astera PSC Application – **Discussion**
8. SpaceX Starlink Project – **Discussion/Action**
9. Wisconsin State Telecommunication Association (WSTA) offer – **Discussion/Action**
10. Next Steps and future meetings – **Discussion/Action**
 - a. Future Meeting: December 17, 2020
11. Adjourn

PLEASE NOTE: Upon reasonable notice, efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities through sign language, interpreters or other auxiliary aids. For additional information or to request the service, contact the County ADA Coordinator at 839-4710, (FAX) 839-1669 or 839-4735, TTY: use Relay (711) or by writing to the ADA Coordinator, Human Resources, Eau Claire County Courthouse, 721 Oxford Avenue, Eau Claire, WI 54703.

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• **Broadband Committee** •

Thursday, October 22, 2020

4:00 P.M.

Remote Meeting via Webex Events

Those wishing to make public comments must submit their name and address no later than 30 minutes prior to the meeting to rod.eslinger@co.eau-claire.wi.us.

Public Access: Dial In Number: 1-415-655-0001 Access Code: 145 345 4061

****mute your personal device upon entry***

Members Present: Lynn Thompson, Donald Mowry, Joe Alf, Scott Hoffman, Sara Lipke, Luke Hanson, Mark Zuber

Staff: Rodney J. Eslinger – Director of Planning and Development, Dave Hayden – Director of Information Systems

Others Present: Jim Kusilek 24/7 Telcom Inc., Buck Webb TCC, John LeBrun, Travis (call in)

Press: None

1. Call to order and confirmation of meeting notice

Chairperson Mowry call to order the meeting at 4:01 p.m. and he confirmed that the meeting was properly noticed.

2. Roll Call – Members present noted above.

3. Public Comment (limit to 3 minutes per person)

None

4. Review/Approval of Committee Minutes from June 25, and September 24, 2020 – **Discussion/Action**

The committee reviewed the meeting minutes of June 25th and September 24th. Joe Alf motioned to approve the minutes as presented, Lynn Thompson seconded the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

5. Update on application to the State's Broadband Connectors Pilot Program – **Discussion**

Chair Mowry and Rod Eslinger updated the committee regarding the State's Broadband Connectors Pilot Program application that was filed with the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). It was noted that Eau Claire County was not awarded to participate in the program. Mr. Eslinger stated that there were 96 applications filed with the PSC.

6. Update from 24/7 and TCC PCS Broadband Grant Applications: Buck Webb and Jim Kusilek – **Discussion**

Mr. Webb and Mr. Kusilek updated the committee regarding where they are at in the process in applying for a PSC Broadband grant. They indicated that their respective companies are gathering data and letter of supports for their applications. Both indicated they are on track to file their application the week of November 16th.

7. Review letter of support for 24/7 and TCC PCS Broadband Grant Applications – **Discussion/Action**

The committee reviewed the draft letter of support.

A motion by Lynn Thompson to approve the letter, Mark Zuber seconded the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

8. Review the “final” Eau Claire County Broadband Committee vision/mission/goals – **Discussion/Action**

Chair Mowry reviewed the updated Broadband Committee Vision Statement.

A motion by Mark Zuber to approve the Broadband Committee Vision Statement, Luke Hanson seconded the motion; motion carried on a voice vote with all in favor of the motion.

9. Resolution extending the length of the Broadband Committee for two-years – **Discussion**

Chair Mowry notified the committee that the Committee on Administration approved extending the Broadband Committee’s length of service two years.

10. Town of Brunswick 24/7 expansion project – **Discussion**

Jim Kusilek of 24/7 Telcom informed the committee that it would be making a second PSC Broadband Grant application in the Town of Brunswick. The project consists of approximately 30 residences and provide fiber to the Eau Claire Energy Cooperative site. The Town of Brunswick supports the project. The committee supported providing a letter of support for the project.

11. Next Steps and future meetings – Discussion/Action

- a. Staff to provide letter of support and survey results to 24/7 Telcom and TCC
- b. Future Meeting: November 19, 2020

12. Adjourn

Action: Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:12 p.m.

Respectively submitted by,

Rodney J. Eslinger
Director of Planning and Development



**Eau Claire County
BROADBAND COMMITTEE**
Eau Claire County Courthouse - Room 3344
721 Oxford Avenue
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54703-5212
(715) 839-4741

November 5, 2020

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator
Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs
Hill Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way, North Tower, 6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705

RE: 24/7 Telcom, Inc. Broadband Expansion Grant Application

Dear Ms. Nieto:

The Eau Claire County Broadband Committee is commenting in support of the 24/7 Telcom, Inc. Broadband Expansion Grant application to help the residents in the Town of Brunswick, Eau Claire County. The proposed broadband project is a collaborative public-private partnership between 24/7 Telcom, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, and the Town of Brunswick to improve the high-speed Internet in the project area and to provide fiber to a substation.

This project area includes 28 residences, a substation, Fire station #5 and the Brunswick Townhall. Survey results show that these properties are either unserved or underserved with broadband. In these conditions, residents are unable to reliably use the Internet for basic tasks such as finding job postings, booking business and personal travel arrangements, and managing bank accounts. Working remotely and virtual learning are extremely challenging in the Town of Brunswick due to existing infrastructure and geography limitations. Students are placed at a competitive disadvantage as they struggle to access information online with the same ease as their peers.

Further, the lack of high-speed Internet access is a major roadblock to economic development. Local businesses are losing opportunities because of poor Internet connections. The fact of the matter is that in our connected economy, access to a broadband Internet connection is an absolute necessity; without it, Eau Claire County will continue to lag in job creation and community development.

As the Chair of the Eau Claire County Broadband Committee, I urge you to approve 24/7 Telcom Inc.'s grant application for funds to expand broadband access within the project area in the Town of Brunswick. Enhanced broadband services will provide critical applications that improve the public health, public safety, social engagement, and economic development opportunities for the citizens in this project area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald Mowry, Chair
Eau Claire County Broadband Committee



**Eau Claire County
BROADBAND COMMITTEE**
Eau Claire County Courthouse - Room 3344
721 Oxford Avenue
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54703-5212
(715) 839-4741

October 22, 2020

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
Kristy Nieto, Division Administrator
Division of Digital Access, Consumer and Environmental Affairs
Hill Farms State Office Building
4822 Madison Yards Way, North Tower, 6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705

RE: 24/7 Telcom, Inc. and Tri County Communications Broadband Expansion Grant Applications

Dear Ms. Nieto:

The Eau Claire County Broadband Committee is commenting in support of the 24/7 Telcom, Inc. and Tri County Communications Broadband Expansion Grant applications to help the residents in the Town of Drammen, Eau Claire County. The proposed broadband project is a collaborative public-private partnership between two telecommunication companies, Marshfield Clinic, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, and the Town of Drammen to improve the high-speed Internet for the town's residents and businesses.

In our digital age, the poor broadband infrastructure in place leaves a detrimental impact on small, underserved, and rural communities. Residents are unable to reliably use the Internet for basic tasks such as finding job postings, booking business and personal travel arrangements, and managing bank accounts. Working remotely and virtual learning is extremely challenging in the Town of Drammen due to existing infrastructure and geography limitations. Students are placed at a competitive disadvantage as they struggle to access information online with the same ease as their peers.

It also has been reported by town officials, that due to poor access to Internet in the Town of Drammen it has led to lower property values because of either the properties are either unserved or underserved with high-speed Internet.

Further, the lack of high-speed Internet access is a major roadblock to economic development. Local businesses are losing opportunities because of poor Internet connections. The fact of the matter is that in our connected economy, access to a broadband Internet connection is an absolute necessity; without it, Eau Claire County will continue to lag in job creation and community development.

As the Chair of the Eau Claire County Broadband Committee, I urge you to approve these grant applications for funds to expand broadband access in the Town of Drammen. Enhanced broadband services will provide critical applications that improve the public health, safety, and economic development opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald Mowry, Chair
Eau Claire County Broadband Committee

Digital Literacy Development Group: Community Leadership Course

For over a year now, the Eau Claire County Broadband Committee has been working to develop a plan to bring high speed internet access to all county residents. Today, many rural areas of our county are unserved or underserved in terms of access to high speed internet. This situation exists in spite of the increasingly recognized fact that access to broadband has become an essential human right that can contribute to economic growth, global competitiveness, educational advancement, telehealth services, social engagement, and overall quality of life.

Currently, there are two grant applications being prepared for submission to the Wisconsin PSC Broadband Office. One is a co-application from two Internet Service Providers who are proposing to bring fiber optic high-speed internet to all residents of the Town of Drammen in Eau Claire County, many of whom are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet. A second grant application would extend a current fiber installment and bring fiber to 30 Brunswick households plus some businesses, the Brunswick Town Hall, and the Brunswick Volunteer Fire Department.

These grant applications are enhanced by collaborations with the community and this is where the Community Leadership Class group project could be very helpful and supportive. The Mission/Vision/Objectives adopted by the Broadband Committee includes this statement: “Encourage adoption and use of high-speed internet by identifying barriers and working to facilitate digital inclusion for all residents of the county.”

The research on high speed broadband adoption, not just access, suggests that simply providing fiber to the door does not automatically result in adoption. Many citizens who have not had access to high speed internet do not have the digital literacy skills to take advantage of the opportunities presented by gaining a physical connection.

The grants are due to the State of Wisconsin Broadband Office by December 1, 2020. The awards will be announced sometime after the new year, probably in January, and construction would commence sometime in the summer of 2021 with a start date for subscribers of August or September.

A Digital Literacy design project would enhance its prospects of being funded. There will also be a Service-Learning project developed to recruit and train digital coaches, and another project to recruit and train coaches from the Drammen Township community, such as 4H youth participants. The Community Leadership Class group could put all the pieces into place by developing some of the digital literacy curriculum, a marketing plan, a plan for ongoing operations, and a plan for an information system that would tie everything together including the project evaluation. All these services could be delivered online or through a combination of online and phone-based coaching. The actual implementation of the digital literacy program would be the fall of 2021, and the plan is to proceed with the project with or without the grant funding.

The digital literacy group would not need to author all the curriculum, especially if there are educational materials already developed. They would need to put on their thinking caps, design the project, research existing resources, fill in any gaps in the curriculum, and deliver a final plan for increasing the digital literacy of this population of citizens who have not had access to high speed internet in their homes. One initial step is finding ways to assess one’s digital literacy, and there are resources out there that are free and do a good job of identifying strengths and areas needing further education (<https://techboomers.com/best-free-online-digital-literacy-assessments>).

In general, the post-COVID-19 world is expected to be forever impacted by the experience of moving much of our personal and professional interactions to an online world. Being able to design an online educational and support program might appeal to any major and will be a valuable skill set for a post-COVID environment. This project might especially appeal to majors in marketing, management, operations, information technology. We hope that it would keep a group of 3-4 students very engaged. Thank you for this opportunity to connect the learning goals of students to needs in the community.

From: lbechtel@comcast.net <lbechtel@comcast.net>

Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2020 11:46 AM

To: 'Lake Eau Claire Association' <lakeecassociation@gmail.com>

Subject: High Speed Internet

Tired of Slow Internet Access...Here's Your Chance to Help!!

We are currently working with Astrea (<https://www.facebook.com/AstreaConnect>), a local internet provider (and a Muskie Sponsor), to potentially bring HIGH-speed internet to our area. The map below gives a general indication of where the high-speed access would potentially be available.

Astrea is looking to apply for a grant (<https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx>) to receive funding and to make this possible, we need to show support for a need for high-speed internet in our community.

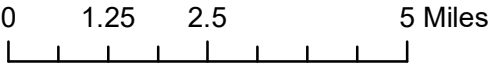
We ask that you please assist us in this effort by doing any of the following:




- Write a letter of support explaining why we need high speed internet (remote learning, work from home, telemedicine, home security, etc). Send letters by email to katie.quinn@astreaconnect.com prior to November 25th or by mail to Cory Heigl, 105 Kent Street, Iron Mountain, MI 49801 prior to November 18th.
- Spread the word about the need for support by telling other members of the community or by forwarding this email.
- Reach out to Astrea to ask how you can help by emailing katie.quinn@astreaconnect.com

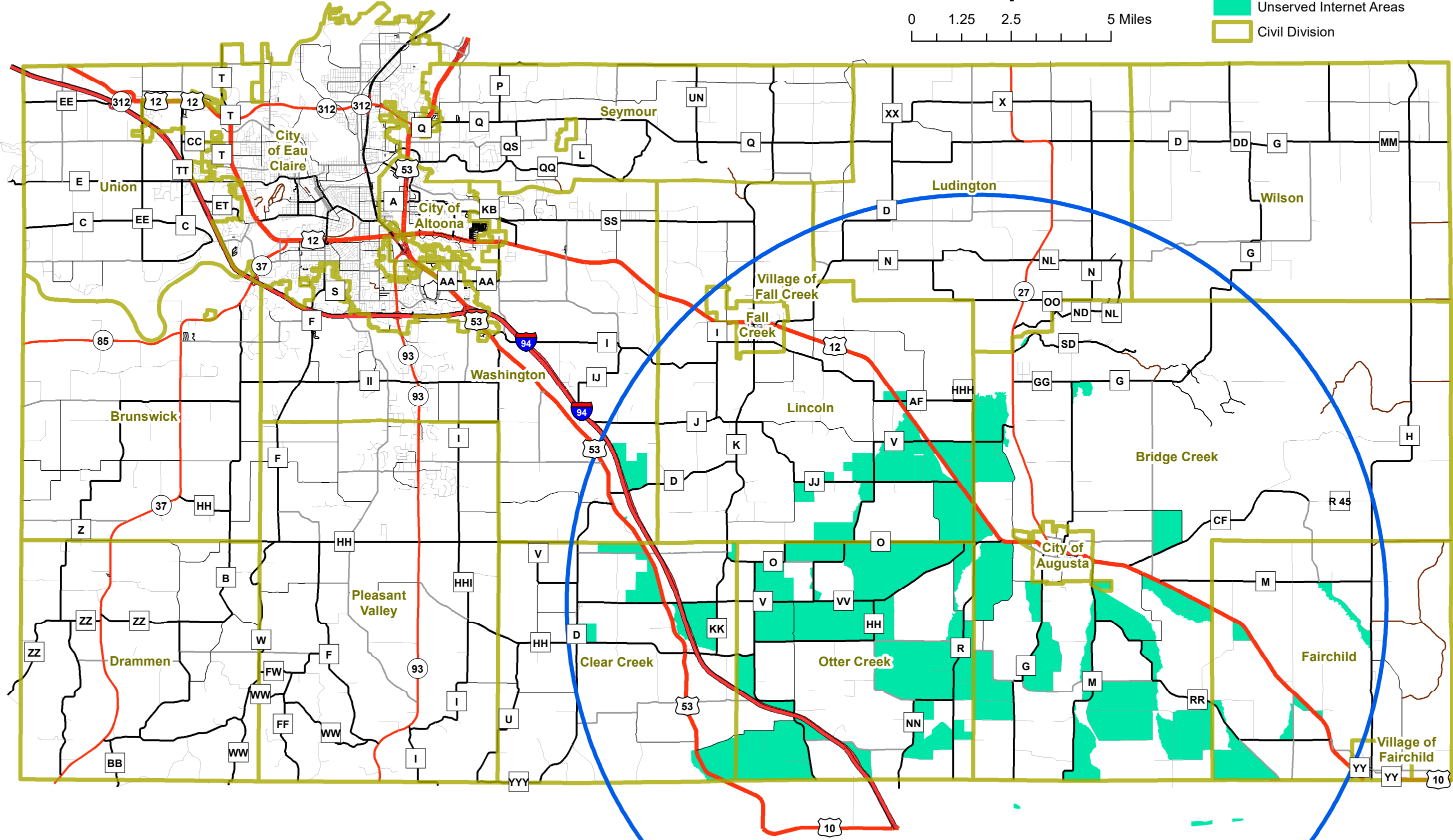
Many people have asked, so now is our chance to help bring high-speed internet to our area!



SpaceX Starlink Pilot Project



-  SpaceX Starlink Target Area
-  Unserved Internet Areas
-  Civil Division



Rod Eslinger

From: Rod Eslinger
Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020 4:04 PM
To: Kelliann Blazek
Cc: Donald Mowry
Subject: RE: Connecting to Broadband Providers

Afternoon Kelliann,

Eau Claire County would be interested in being connected with a WSTA partner. I have copied, Don Mowry, Eau Claire County Broadband Committee chair as well with this reply. The WSTA rep. can reach out to either Don or myself.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Rodney J. Eslinger, Director
Planning and Development
Office Phone: 715-839-1657
Cell Phone: 715-210-3624



"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." -*Vince Lombardi*

Beginning Monday, June 1, 2020, the Eau Claire County Government Center will be open via the Oxford Avenue entrance only. In-person business with Planning & Development staff will be by appointment only. Please call or email our staff to arrange an appointment.

From: Kelliann Blazek <kelliann.blazek@wedc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 3, 2020 1:45 PM
To: Kelliann Blazek <kelliann.blazek@wedc.org>
Subject: Connecting to Broadband Providers

WARNING!! This email originated outside Eau Claire County. Do not click any links or attachments unless you know the sender.

Hello everyone,

Thank you again for your interest in the Broadband Connectors Pilot. The Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) has kindly offered to help match any of the communities who applied for the Broadband Connectors Pilot with WSTA members if you are interested in connecting with providers.

If you would like to be connected to WSTA members, please respond to this email indicating so. I will be passing along a list of interested communities to WSTA for them to assist in making connections.

Thank you,
Kelliann

Kelliann Blazek
Director, Office of Rural Prosperity
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
201 W. Washington Ave
Madison, WI 53703

Ph: 608.210.6720



Website: <http://inwisconsin.com>

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