



# Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**To: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Staff**

**From: Hal Womble, MLEC President and CEO**

**Date: February 28, 2014**

**Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Trials  
Docket No. 10-90**

## **Background:**

Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative (MLEC) is not-for-profit and member-owned. We serve electricity to 35,000 homes, schools, and businesses in the western, middle Tennessee counties of Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Lewis and Perry. Formed in 1939, MLEC has a rich history of commitment and progress. We brought power to the people when others would not with the goal of bringing modern conveniences and a better way of life to those who love rural areas.

In addition to delivering affordable, reliable electricity, we maintain an active and visible role in our schools and community development. MLEC members, employees, communities and board members have been working together since 1939 to bring advancements to the area. As a Touchstone Energy® cooperative, MLEC embraces core service values – innovation, accountability, integrity and commitment to community.

Now, it is time once again to invest in a new service – fiber to the home for residents of our rural service territory. History is repeating itself because larger, for-profit companies are unwilling to invest the vision and capital it takes to deliver on this much needed service. Our members have repeatedly asked for broadband because they know that just as electricity brought a new, better way of life 75 years ago, FTTH can do the same today.

MLEC does not have an ETC license at this time; however, if funding is provided, we would meet the requirements set for by the FCC.

## **Geographic Territory:**

MLEC is proposing to serve their entire territory with FTTH. We cover five counties in rural, western, middle Tennessee. (Census tract information below.) Our territory consists of 35,000 members covering 2000 square miles, with approximately 10 members per mile of electric line.

Hickman County: <http://www.usa.com/hickman-county-tn.htm>

Census Tracts: TN081950100

TN081950302

TN081950200

TN 081950400

TN081950301

TN081950500

Lewis County: <http://www.usa.com/lewis-county-tn.htm>

Census Tracts: TN101970100

TN101970200

Perry County: <http://www.usa.com/perry-county-tn.htm>

Census Tracts: TN135930100 TN135930200

Humphreys County: <http://www.usa.com/humphreys-county-tn.htm>

Census Tracts: TN085130100 TN085130400 TN085130200  
TN085130500 TN085130300

Houston County: <http://www.usa.com/houston-county-tn.htm>

Census Tracts: TN083120100 TN083120200 TN083120300

### **List of Anchor Institutions:**

#### **Hickman County:**

**Schools:** *Hickman County High, East Hickman High, Centerville Intermediate, East Intermediate, Hickman Middle, East Hickman Middle, Centerville Elementary, East Elementary, Seventh Day Adventist.*

**Libraries:** *Hickman County Public Library, East Hickman Public Library.*

**Government Centers:** *Hickman County Courthouse, Centerville City Hall, Other Government Offices, Hickman County Health Department, Hickman County Agriculture Extension Office, South Central Human Resources Agency.*

**Health Centers/Hospitals:** *St. Thomas Hickman Hospital, St. Thomas Hickman Medical Clinic, Fast Pace Medical Clinic, Three Rivers Community Health, DMA Medical Clinic, Excel Physical Therapy.*

#### **Lewis County:**

**Schools:** *Lewis County High, Lewis County Middle, Lewis County Intermediate, Lewis County Elementary, The Farm, General Assembly Academy, Tennessee Technology Center at Hohenwald.*

**Libraries:** *Lewis County Public Library.*

**Government Centers:** *Lewis County Courthouse, Hohenwald City Hall, Other Government Offices, Lewis County Health Department, Lewis County Agriculture Extension Office, South Central Human Resources Agency.*

**Health Centers/Hospitals:** *Joey Hensley, MD, Alex Heffington, MD, Hohenwald Medical Clinic, Fast Pace Medical Clinic, Lewis Health Center, Maury Regional Physical Therapy.*

#### **Perry County:**

**Schools:** *Perry County High, Linden Middle, Linden Elementary, Lobelville Elementary.*

**Libraries:** *Perry County Public Library and Lobelville Public Library.*

**Government Centers:** *Perry County Courthouse, Linden City Hall, Other Government Offices, Perry County Health Department, Perry County Agriculture Extension Office, South Central Human Resources Agency.*

**Health Centers/Hospitals:** *Perry County Community Hospital, Perry County Medical Center, Lobelville Clinic, Dr. Andrew Averitt Office, the Averitt Medical Group, Rapid Care Clinic.*

**Humphreys County:**

**Schools:** *Waverly Central High, Waverly Junior High, Waverly Elementary, McEwen High, McEwen Elementary, McEwen Middle, Lakeview, St. Patrick's, Humphreys County Vocational, Humphreys County Center For Higher Education.*

**Libraries:** *Humphreys County Public Library.*

**Government Centers:** *Humphreys County Courthouse, Waverly City Hall, McEwen City Hall, New Johnsonville City Hall, Other Government Offices, Humphreys County Health Department, Humphreys County Agriculture Extension Office, Highland Rim Resources Agency.*

**Health Centers/Hospitals:** *Three Rivers Hospital, Three Rivers Specialty Clinic, King Family Medical, Nestor A Ojeda, MD, Memorial Clinic, New Johnsonville Family Health, Waverly Family Medicine, Coleman Family Care Clinic. Also, offices of Noel R. Domnguez, MD, Waverly Pediatric Center, Dr. Kenneth Salhany, Maysoon Ali, MD, Subhi Ali, MD.*

**Houston County:**

**Schools:** *Houston County High, Houston County Middle, Erin Elementary, Tennessee Ridge Elementary.*

**Libraries:** *Houston County Public Library.*

**Government Centers:** *Houston County Courthouse, Erin City Hall, Tennessee Ridge City Hall, Other Government Offices, Houston County Health Department, Houston County Agriculture Extension Office, Highland Rim Resources Agency.*

**Health Centers/Hospitals:** *Houston County Community Hospital, Hillcrest Clinic, Covenant Care, Houston County Community Hospital Rehabilitation.*

**Proposed Technology:**

MLEC is planning to offer FTTH service to our members with future potential for voice. Initial service speed offerings will start at 10 Mbps and range to 100 Mbps. Going forward, it is conceivable to approach Gigabit speed services. Anchor institutions will be served. (We are currently looking at pilot options with some anchor institutions within our territory.) These service offerings will be priced according to the tiers of service on a monthly fee, i.e. \$40 (10 Mbps), \$70 (20 Mbps), and \$100 (100 Mbps).

**State and/or Local or Tribal Government Participation in and/or Support for Project:**

All monetary investment to build our fiber core and development and implement potential pilots has been covered by the cooperative. Undertaking a FTTH project would also include leveraging the utility's rights of way and infrastructure, which reduces costs and accelerates deployment.

MLEC is not just another service organization or business. We play a vital role in community development and have long-standing, solid relationships with local, county and state governments. MLEC is also an active member of local chambers of commerce and development associations, as well as a partner with local businesses of all sizes. The connection we have with local schools and other anchor institutions is part of the cooperative success story. These groups would experience positive growth momentum with broadband access and would gladly lend their support and that of those they serve in a project of this type.

**Existing Providers:**

There is one provider with “advertised” speeds of up to 30 Mbs, but covers less than 1 percent of our service territory. Likewise, there are a few providers currently offering 4 Mbps down and 1 Mbps up; however, they are only available in approximately 10 percent of our service territory. With 2000 square miles and 35,000 potential customers in our territory, this is minimal coverage and insufficient for today’s needs, let alone for future applications.

**Project Timeline:**

MLEC is in the beginning stages of a pilot project to take FTTH to certain areas feasibly located to our fiber core. The budget is set at \$155,000 and studies and equipment are being evaluated for project implementation by the end of 2014. We are also just beginning to explore the potential for a pilot with some area anchor institutions such as county governments or public libraries.

**Scalability:**

MLEC has five distinct territories, and we would work on them one at a time using organized methods and check points to reach the full area. This is a tried and proven method for production in our area, as we used the same project design in deployment of our AMI (automated meter infrastructure) and the construction of our fiber core.

**Total Utility Investment:**

\$10 million – which includes the costs already incurred for the construction of our fiber core and ongoing commitment of resources, testing, etc.

**One Time Capital Infrastructure Investment Needed:**

\$60 million

**Total Project Cost:**

\$70 million



Celebrating 75 Years Of Light