

DATE: March 6, 2014

FROM: [Austin Vision 2020, Community Wide Technology Committee](#)

TO: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Staff

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

Background

(Paragraph about your utility: Who you are – describe what being a coop or muni means. Additionally talk about why you are starting to consider this project.)

The Austin Vision 2020 Community Wide Technology Committee represents the interests of the Austin area community as well as portions of Mower County in Southeastern Minnesota. We are interested in creating a partnership with Austin Utilities and possibly Freeborn Mower Cooperative to provide 1 gigabit broadband speed to the area.

While the city of Austin, Minnesota is served by a large cable entity, just outside the city and the rest of the county and associated school districts are in underserved areas. In addition, because of the socio-economic nature of the workforce in Austin there exists a large population that are unable to afford high speed internet within the city as well as the outlying areas. In fact, approximately 54% of the students attending school are receiving aid for school lunches.

By providing higher internet speed to the communities/school districts and libraries in the area, our intent is to improve the educational experience, create opportunities for economic development, provide telemedicine possibilities to an underserved market as well as improving the quality of life for residents within Mower County and possibly Freeborn County as well.

Currently there isn't an ETC license but should funding be provided we would meet the requirements set forth by the FCC.

Geographic Territory –

(Description, size, Census Block Numbers, number of customers to be served and density)

Mower county is roughly 700 square miles with an approximate population of 39,000. There are roughly 23 households per square mile with 60% of the population residing in Austin.

Our project intends to serve roughly 75% of the county with FTTH in combination with wireless to the more rural areas to maximize coverage and minimize overall expense of the project

List of Anchor Institutions

(Schools, Libraries, Health Care Centers, Hospitals, and Government)

Our anchor institutions would include the Austin school district, the Mayo Clinic Health System, Mower county government as well as the Austin city government, and libraries in Austin, Leroy and Brownsdale.

Proposed technology

(Describe Technology, Services Offered & Proposed Speeds to be offered, Price)

We are looking at providing a 1 gigabit FTTH network in the city of Austin (including the school district) as well as the surrounding area. Where feasible/cost efficient it will be fiber to the home and in those more rural areas surrounding Austin it will be a combination of fiber to the premise and wireless.

We are currently considering all options for service (triple play, internet and phone, internet only) and are in the process of completing a feasibility study which should be finalized by the middle or end of March. This will give us greater insight as to which service offerings will be part of the package offered as well as suggestions on associated pricing for those offerings.

Our intent, as stated earlier, is to provide a 1 gigabit speed at affordable rates to interested parties within the geographic territory. It will likely not be feasible to have that speed to the more rural areas, however, what will be offered will be far greater than what is available today.

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

(Describe funding, expedited permitting, access to rights of way, etc)

We are planning to have this be a public/private partnership with bonding as well as receiving grant money from a variety of sources, especially for the underserved areas. We will partner with both Austin Utilities and Freeborn Mower Cooperative to gain access to rights of way.

Existing Providers

(If there are any- state who and where and if service is insufficient to needs)

Currently three entities service the city of Austin, but don't go much if at all outside the city limits. Those providers are Charter, Century Link and Jaguar who does primarily businesses within the Austin community. The underserved/unavailable rural areas have some internet satellite, dial up and limited dsl services.

Project Timeline

(Estimate of readiness)

The feasibility study is expected to be completed in mid March. Within that study will be the timeline for funding and implementation. We are hoping for a 2015 implementation assuming funding can be secured for the project.

Scalability

(Describe how and if project is scalable)

We would start with the city of Austin (including the school district boundaries that lie outside of Austin) and move outward, connecting the libraries and other anchor institutions. Within the city of Austin we'd further define the initial build out areas based on interest and progress throughout the city. Ultimately, once we have the city, school districts and anchor institutions connected in the rural areas we'd likely add both wireless towers and fiber to specific areas based on efficiency, speed and cost.

Our hope is that we're able to expand the project and include portions of Freeborn county as well in conjunction with a potential partner, Freeborn Mower Cooperative. At this point in time we're looking at connecting the rural areas through a combination of wireless and fiber and this will allow further expansion.

Total Utility Investment

The estimated investment is around \$20 million.

One Time Capital Infrastructure Investment Needed

The one time Capital Infrastructure investment is approximately \$25 million based on a preliminary estimate.

Total Project Cost

The total project cost is estimated at \$45 million per preliminary estimates.