



# **ARMSTRONG<sup>®</sup>** **TELEPHONE COMPANY - NORTHERN DIVISION**

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**DATE:** March 4, 2014

**FROM:** James D. Mitchell, VP – Regulatory Policy and Interconnection

**TO:** The Honorable Marlene Dortch – Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
Attn: Wireline Competition Bureau

**SUBJECT:** Expression of Interest – Armstrong Telephone Company – Northern Division  
Rural Broadband Experiment – Docket No. 10-90

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## Background

Armstrong Telephone Company – Northern Division (Armstrong) is a privately held, independent incumbent local exchange company. We are also an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier and operate under Rate of Return regulation. Armstrong currently serves part of 8 rural counties in West Virginia: Ritchie, Doddridge, Calhoun, Wirt, Wood, Jackson, Gilmer and Pleasants. Given the large geographic territory and current limitations in our network, at least 25% of Armstrong’s customers in these counties cannot receive broadband Internet access service of at least 3Mbps/1Mbps. This is due to the fact that without CAF support it is not economically feasible to deploy fiber and replace the older copper telephone plant that cannot deliver broadband Internet access service to these rural areas.

This project would permit Armstrong to deploy a high-speed, scalable, IP-based network to replace the existing copper network. With this new network, Armstrong can deliver broadband Internet access of at least 5Mbps/1Mbps to all customers in these rural areas. Information and data derived from this project would assist the Commission in exploring current assumptions regarding the economic viability of deploying broadband service to rural areas sharing the geographic and demographic characteristics of the geographic areas targeted by this project.

### Geographic Territory

The project would cover the following counties and census tracts:

Calhoun	962600
Doddridge	965000
Doddridge	965100
Gilmer	967700
Jackson	963200
Ritchie	962300
Ritchie	962400
Ritchie	962500
Ritchie	992300
Wirt	030100
Wood	010701
Wood	010702
Wood	010800

### Community Anchor Institutions Impacted

Armstrong can and has provided service to many of the Community Anchor Institutions in its service area. The following list is an illustrative (but not exhaustive) list of these Community Anchor Institutions:

Ritchie County Head Start Center, Ritchie County Humane Society, Ritchie County Family Crisis, Intervention Center, WV WIC Agency, Ritchie County Chamber of Commerce, Ritchie County 4-H Camp, Ritchie County Economic Development Authority, Ritchie County Wellness Center, Smithville Community Center, Ritchie County Courthouse, WV Department of Human Services, Ritchie County Magistrate Court, WV Division of Forestry, Ritchie County Family Services, Ritchie County Educational Trust, Harrisville Municipal Building, Town of Harrisville Water Department, Town of Harrisville Sewer Department, Ellenboro Municipal Building, WV Department of Highways, Cairo Municipal Building, North Bend State Park, Ritchie County Library, Harrisville Medical Center, Ritchie County Primary Care Medical Center, WV Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, Pineview Nursing Home, Ritchie County Ambulance Authority, Edgeview Senior/Handicapped Housing, Fairway Villa's Low Income Housing, North Bend Apartments – Low Income Housing, Ritchie County Sheriff Department, Harrisville Volunteer Fire Department, WV State Police, Harrisville Police Headquarters, Ellenboro Volunteer Fire Department, Ellenboro Water Department, Harrisville Elementary School,

Ritchie County Board of Education, WV University Extension Office, Ellenboro Elementary School, Ritchie County High School, Ritchie County Middle School, Smithville Elementary School, and TLC Pregnancy Center

These Community Anchor Institutions serve a variety of public service needs, including healthcare, education and public-safety functions. As a result, Armstrong's proposed deployment of broadband Internet access service to these Community Anchor Institutions will have a beneficial impact on the institutions and the people they serve.

#### Proposed Technology

Armstrong intends to build a fiber to the home (FTTH) network deep into its territory adding next generation IP remotes. We will build a scalable FTTH network that will serve as a platform for Armstrong to provide high speed broadband Internet access service and IP voice telephony service to end users in these rural areas.

#### State and/or Local Government Participation in and/or Support for the Project:

Armstrong is discussing a partnership with the Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council (MOVRC) for this project. At MOVRC, elected officials and economic development professionals come together to prepare the region for continued success in the 21st century. Members of the council include eight counties and twenty-two cities and towns located north, south and east of Parkersburg West Virginia located along the Ohio River. MOVRC works on regional concerns that affect all of the regions communities, focusing primarily on economic development, transportation, infrastructure and workforce. The council sponsors programs which support a regional economic development strategy that will maintain and enhance economic vitality of the Mid-Ohio Valley region.

#### Existing Providers

There are no existing providers other than Armstrong in the proposed area for development.

#### Project Timeline

Armstrong estimated that this project could be completed 12 to 18 months after the funding is provided.

#### Total Project Cost

Total project cost including network construction, customer premise work and all switching equipment is expected to be \$3.5 million, which Armstrong would expect to request on a one-time basis.