



## BTOP Comments/Ideas

Dear NTIA Representatives,

I am offering comments and concerns that I hope you will consider in the grant awards decision making process.

MTCO Communications is a family owned business in Central Illinois that provides voice and high speed data services throughout several counties, both as an ILEC and CLEC utilizing line share agreements with Verizon and AT&T. We started in Broadband before either Verizon or AT&T in our areas, so we have 12+ years experience in the business.

I have posted previously that I have concerns over rules that seem to promote ideas/concepts/plans that could only be accomplished with this grant money. This appears to be directly opposite to all the other stimulus programs, which all call for shovel-ready projects to have sole priority.

Having been in Broadband virtually from day-one, we have seen many competitors fail over the years because they lacked the a) long term commitment b) resources for ongoing operation c) understanding of the technologies and customer needs. I see a similar roadmap here if established companies with experience and resources to cover the 20% requirement are pushed aside in favor of startups with no experience or financial resources to see these complex projects through.

We have on the drawing board a 70 mile fiber optic extension between our sites in Metamora and Marseilles IL. This approximately \$3.3M project will completely satisfy the intent of the BTOP program:

- The entire route is rural, passing 6 small communities. The route is planned not in a straight line, but to make sure we reach all these communities with FTTH and VDSL2 services.
- The project will allow us to access bandwidth from Chicago by connecting to an in-place fiber connection at Marseilles. This will allow us to increase our backbone bandwidth and decrease our costs by 60% or more. We can effectively break AT&T's stranglehold on bandwidth in our Peoria market. Bottom line is higher speeds and lower costs for our customers!
- This fiber connection also opens the door for video services for our companies utilizing a shared head end. Again, offering next-gen services like IPTV to rural areas that will never get this service from their incumbent providers. Increasing our foot print and cutting costs opens the door for additional jobs to be created. These are meaningful, well compensated positions that improve the lives of those who get them. There will also be significant construction dollars available on this and subsequent projects.

As you can see, our project fits the criteria for the BTOP program, and we are committed to providing our share of the costs for this project. I urge you to consider our project and our long-term commitment to serving rural America's broadband needs as defined by the BTOP guidelines.

Thank you for your consideration,  
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