

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Marshall County, IN

Project Title: Marshall County MetroNet

Project Type: Middle Mile

Executive Summary

The Interstate Highway transportation system built in the 1950's and 1960's was designed to efficiently move raw materials and finished products throughout the United States. It was imperative for national security and the economic development of the country that this roadway infrastructure be built. Not surprisingly, cities and towns located along this "superhighway" infrastructure developed and prospered more quickly than those cities off the major routes. Today, the infrastructure needed to compete nationally and globally is the "information superhighway." The experts have expanded the definition of public infrastructure beyond sewer, water and roadway, to include the network that will allow government and business to move data as well as raw materials and finished products. To do this, a high speed, competitively priced, fiber optic broadband infrastructure is required. The goal is to make this "information superhighway" a reality by connecting key points in Marshall County, Indiana to the fiber optic national backbone at Union Station in South Bend, Indiana. This project involves installing approximately seventy-three (73) miles of middle mile broadband infrastructure conduit from the south side of South Bend, Indiana to the major cities in Marshall County, and pulling twenty-nine (29) miles of dark fiber optic cable through the conduit. The cost of the project is four-million, seven-hundred and five thousand, nine-hundred and fifty dollars (\$4,705,950). Once this project is complete, multiple private sector telecom providers will compete for the business of Marshall County's small businesses, public safety entities, and critical community organizations. Marshall County and The St. Joe Valley Metronet are focused upon creating high paying jobs, increasing investment by current and future businesses in the state and county, and establishing a seamless electronic delivery of government and educational services. It is estimated that this project will save or create over 1500 jobs in the next five years. An excellent source of high-paying jobs for Marshall County are information-based, high-tech type companies that rely upon broadband technology for both Internet access and internal Information Technology data transfer needs. The local broadband environment is restricted with respect to access and services, and non-competitive with respect to pricing. Marshall County is currently not competitive in attracting or growing companies that rely upon moving large quantities of data from Point A to Point B. If left to develop under existing conditions, the current broadband market will continue to be under a single provider and will be unable to allow Marshall County to grow, retain and attract companies and organizations that require high speed data communications. The entire population of the County (47,000) and the surrounding area will benefit from the improved access to government services, the enhanced access to Healthcare, and the increased employment base, and those benefits will be multiplied many times over. This project will serve the communities of Argos, Bourbon, Bremen, Culver, La Paz, Lakeville, and Plymouth. There are a total of 23,290 Households in the project area, of which

10,233 are underserved for broadband needs. There are also 1,707 employer businesses in this project area. There are 31 strategic institutions, including community anchor institutions, public safety entities, and critical community organizations passed or involved with the project. From a subscriber standpoint, it is estimated that this project will connect over 6300 Household Subscribers, 40 plus Business Customers, and over 31 Strategic Institutions. Marshall County is partnering with the St. Joe Valley Metronet, a 51-mile dark fiber network which links local users to long-haul trunk lines found at Global Access Point's Union Station in South Bend, Indiana. This project is an expansion of the existing, successful, economic development partnership between the St. Joe Valley Metronet and the City of South Bend to Marshall County, Indiana. This project takes advantage of the existing track record and professional management of this vendor-neutral dark fiber network and enables Marshall County to connect to all of the service vendors and telephone companies who are already subscribers to the network. St. Joe Valley Metronet is governed by a Board of Directors and Executive Committee. The board is comprised of members from the community representing education, healthcare, local government, private sector, etc. The project consists of extending the existing St. Joseph County dark fiber network that is owned by St. Joe Valley Metronet into Marshall County. The pricing that has been established by the St. Joe Valley Metronet for leasing these point to point fiber circuits is exceptionally low, which makes it affordable to anyone who requires bandwidth that only fiber access can give. This network enables companies, libraries, hospitals, educational institutions, public safety organizations, etc. to get much more than just inexpensive Internet access. It allows these organizations to take advantage of all of the other applications that vendors from all over the country have to offer. The St. Joe Valley Metronet dark fiber network is, at its heart, a vendor neutral network which opens an unlimited number of service offerings at unheard of competitive pricing. This coupled with the fact that Union Station is an endpoint on the St. Joe Valley Metronet, means that 21st Century Gigabit applications will be available and affordable immediately to Marshall County allowing the area to be competitive in regional, national and international markets. St. Joe Valley's reciprocal license use agreement with Marshall County will give Marshall County access to 18 pair of fiber— free of charge — for the duration of the agreement. This enables all of Marshall County Government, including the Public Safety Entities, i.e. Emergency Management, County Highway Department, Sheriff's Office, and others to eliminate a tremendous amount of existing costs and opens up exciting new possibilities for applications that are only made possible by the Gigabit+ capabilities of fiber optics. Marshall County and the St. Joe Valley Metronet commit to the principles contained in the FCC's Internet Policy Statement (FCC 05-151, adopted August 5, 2005). Specifically, the project's policies will not favor any lawful Internet applications and content over others. This middle mile, carrier neutral dark fiber project will display network management policies in a prominent location on the project's web site. The project, as a carrier neutral project, is inherently not a private closed network, but seeks to connect users with over twenty (20) telecom providers currently connected to the network. The speed and bandwidth to be made available to St. Joe Valley Metronet users in Marshall County are many times in excess of that currently available to this underserved area. We are committed to rates and terms far below that which is currently offered in the service area. The system proposed is an open architecture model consisting of available pathways to enable service providers and end users to install their own fiber optic cable to meet their unique needs and a fiber optic backbone that can be leased for point to point and point to multipoint connections. The design of the system will provide for current and future needs while

minimizing upfront costs to construct. Current users include competitive local exchange providers, hospitals, educational institutions, Internet Service Providers, and Data Storage/Disaster Recovery hosting companies. While wireless service providers are anticipated as end-users of the system, wireless technology is not part of the system. While it is important to continue to support and grow our industrial base, studies have shown that our future job growth will come from the transition of traditional jobs into the high wage, high skill jobs in an information-based, technology-driven environment. This project will put in place the infrastructure necessary to attain strong economic growth in the technology sector, and provide for the well-being of the citizens of Marshall County over the next 25 years. Additionally, like the private sector, government increasingly relies on electronic means to conduct its operations. It is these operations that support the delivery of our most basic services, including education, public safety and healthcare, as well as essential administrative functions, and this project provides the infrastructure for those operations. The Chief Information Officer of the State of Minnesota recently stated, "To move forward, the public sector must change the way it thinks about its technological investments. Like roads and bridges, the IT infrastructure is critical to America's economic vitality. Like the private sector, government increasingly relies on electronic means to conduct its operations. It is these operations that support the delivery of our most basic services, including education, public safety and healthcare, as well as essential administrative functions. We need a coherent strategy that leverages public-private partnerships in the technology sector. Just as bricks and mortar were the foundation of our nation's economic vitality during the 20th century, our Digital Cyber Complex (infrastructure) will support our competitive advantage in the 21st century." The Marshall County Metronet middle mile project puts in place the broadband infrastructure needed to support and advance the county's public and private sectors, and without this grant funding, the area will be left behind and suffer the fate of a rural area that is without the needed broadband infrastructure to compete in the 21st century.