Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Totah Communications, Inc.

Project Title: Totah Broadband Expansion Project

Project Type: Last Mile Non-Remote

_______________________Executive Summary_______________________

Totah Communications, Inc. (Totah) is a rural Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier providing facilities based telecommunications service and broadband access to subscribers in their Northeastern Oklahoma and Southeastern Kansas exchange areas. Ever since E.R. and Lela Belle Gailey purchased the Ochelata Telephone Company in January of 1954, Totah has been committed to the future and welfare of its rural customer base and the rural communities in which it provides service. Ochelata, the first Totah exchange, is located in Washington County in Northeastern Oklahoma and has grown from 72 customers in 1954 to 691 today. The first expansion undertaken by Totah was with the creation of the exchanges of Oglesby, OK and Talala, OK which at the time were remote, unserved territories. Burbank, OK, Elk City, KS Havana, KS, Tyro, KS, Wann, OK, Liberty, KS, Elgin, OK and KS, and Hewins, OK and KS were acquired in that order and became a part of the Totah Telephone system. The most recent addition was the Lenapah, OK exchange which was purchased in 1968. Today, Totah Communications, Inc. (name change from Totah Telephone Co., Inc. in 2004) has approximately 3,000 voice service subscribers and more than 1,100 DSL subscribers in rural Oklahoma and Kansas. All of Totah’s service area is rural, sparsely populated with a population density of less than 2 people per square mile. Totah currently passes 4,034 homes with facilities; of those homes 2,934 voice customers subscribe to service with 1127 of those subscribers taking Internet services as well. Of the 1127 current Internet customers, 95 have subscribed to broadband Internet service exceeding 768kbps downstream. Totah’s continuing mission is to provide high quality telecommunications services including, but not limited to, voice and xDSL to their customers. In the process, Totah is focused on the economic development of the communities within its service area along with the creation and retention of jobs for their neighbors and customers. Totah believes that by increasing the availability of broadband connectivity along with enabling access to higher speeds for more of their customers, they will in turn assist in spurring economic development in these rural communities, increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for their rural residents. In its continual commitment to supporting rural development and creating critical community and technology infrastructure, as well as forging cooperative partnerships with various community anchor institutions and centers, Totah Communications, Inc. is looking for a total of $8,512,465 of funding for their project. The proposed ARRA funds will allow Totah to implement fiber routes utilizing OC-12 fiber connectivity and transport plus the replacement of copper based DSL electronic components to provide high speed broadband to areas that are currently restricted to dial-up or first generation DSL facilities. Totah will be able to deliver broadband speeds up to 3Mb and at a minimum of 768kbps via its proposed fiber facilities which will provide an economic stimulus to these rural areas. Connectivity in the proposed funded service areas will be provided via ADSL2+ technology.
The logistics behind this design will allow all subscribers access to broadband service. Remote cabinets in the proposed funded service areas are currently fed by copper-based transport systems. These cabinets will all be upgraded with OC-12 fiber connectivity, capable of delivering 622 Mb of bandwidth to each remote cabinet location. Totah utilizes standards based technology to deliver voice and data services and has standardized with a single vendor platform in order to gain economic efficiency when purchasing additional equipment. The customers in some of the proposed funded service areas are currently outside the reach of ADSL2+ electronics. By reducing the distance the end user customer is from ADSL2+ electronics, we will be significantly increasing the effective broadband rate customers can attain. Totah will be placing new remote electronics cabinets and constructing fiber facilities to these new remote sites to enable all customers to increase their broadband speeds. An additional 400 broadband subscribers is forecasted with this project, while an estimated 50-60 jobs could be saved and / or created. With the ARRA funds, Totah will significantly increase the broadband availability and speeds for the rural remote areas of the Ocheleta, Lenapah, Talala and Wann exchanges in Northeastern Oklahoma and the Elgin and Hewins exchanges located in Southeast Kansas. Populations for the exchanges range from 509 people in Ochelata to 71 people in Elgin. Because of the rural nature of the area and the population density of less than 2 people per square mile and combined with the scope and magnitude of this endeavor, this project would not be possible without ARRA Federal Funding Assistance. In addition to the homes and businesses discussed above, Totah will be reaching a total of 15 anchor institutions, including elementary schools (2), Community Centers (3), Senior Citizen Centers (2), Fire & Police stations (5) and a library and a City Hall. All these institutions would greatly benefit by the additional high speed broadband availability at a discounted rate, made possible by Totah’s proposed expansion. In addition to its excellent voice and additional services (caller ID, Call waiting, etc), Totah will provide high speed broadband (xDSL) for its residents. Totah Communications, Inc. has been in the Gailey family since its creation in 1954. Current President and General Manager Mark Gailey is the 3rd generation of the Gailey family to preside over the day-to-day operations of the phone company, having succeeded his father in 1998. Totah currently has 20 full-time employees; many of whom live in the Communities served, some having worked for Totah for over 35 years. (See also Answer to Question 37 – Management Team Resumes). Mark Gailey’s expertise in the Industry has not gone unnoticed; He is currently the Chairman of the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) which represents more than 600 independently owned local exchange carriers (LECs) and their affiliate telecommunications companies throughout the United States. He serves on the Board of Directors of Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) along with the Oklahoma Telephone Association (OTA) and the Kansas Telecommunications Industry Association (KTIA). He is also involved in various Committees and social activities in and around his hometown of Ochelata. He serves on the local advisory board of BancFirst - Bartlesville Branch as well as being a Board member of the Bartlesville Development Corporation and the Washington County Industrial Trust Authority. For the last 55 years, Totah has been an integral part of the communities in which the company provides telecommunication service. Its employees live and work throughout its service area and are focused on the growth, development and community reinvestment opportunities that the ARRA funding will allow to be implemented.